

Freethought Today

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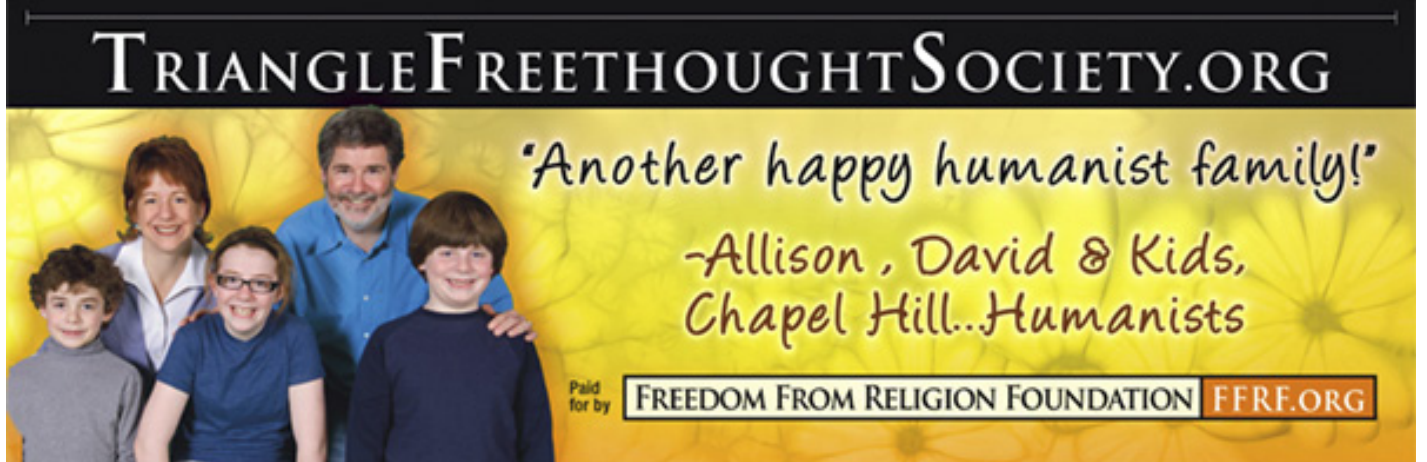
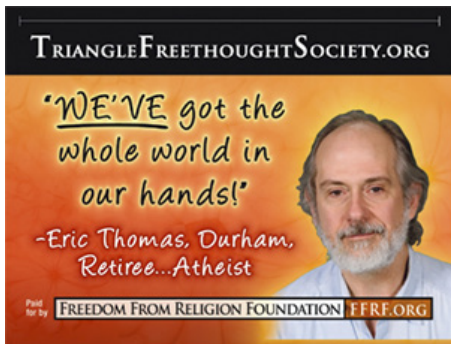
Vol. 28 No. 3

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April 2011

FFRF chapter members come 'Out of the Closet'

North Carolina gets *non*-religion



A dozen eye-catching billboards are blanketing Raleigh, N.C., and dispelling myths about atheists and agnostics in FFRF's exciting "Out of the Closet" campaign with its chapter, the Triangle Freethought Society.

The Foundation, a state/church watchdog based in Madison, Wis., is also the nation's largest association of atheists and agnostics with more than 16,500 members, including about 350 in North Carolina.

Motorists in Raleigh, Pittsboro, Durham and Smithfield are whizzing past colorful billboards bearing the

friendly faces of local nonbelievers and their freethought "testimonies." The billboards are creating quite a stir, with lots of media coverage.

"I'm saved . . . from religion!" announces Curtis Clayton, of Raleigh, identified as a "truck driver and atheist" on the billboard.

Colette and Sophia Winkler, two pretty teenage sisters from Orange County, smile and hug against a purple backdrop and say, "We put all our faith in science." Colette says she was harassed in elementary school by another student over evolution.

A bright yellow billboard proclaims "Another happy humanist family" and features big smiles from "Allison, David & Kids" of Chapel Hill. A billboard featuring the Zepp family — father, mother and toddler — identifies them as "Raleigh Secular Humanists" and says, "This is what a secular family looks like!"

FFRF debuted the "Out of the Closet" campaign in Madison last fall. Raleigh is the second stop for the national campaign which introduces, one region at a time, local "friendly neighborhood atheists and agnostics and skeptics" to their neighbors.

"It worked for the gay rights movement. It's time for atheists and agnostics to come out of our closet," said Annie Laurie Gaylor, who co-directs FFRF with Dan Barker.

"Many faces make enlightenment work. We know many people in North Carolina have never knowingly met an atheist or unbeliever, much less someone who is proud to advertise their

Continued on page 23

Third National Day of Prayer suit filed

Arizona Day of Prayer challenged

If the Freedom From Religion Foundation has its way, Arizona Gov. Janice K. Brewer will be ordered by a court to refrain from issuing her usual Arizona Day of Prayer on the first Thursday of May. FFRF and four of its Arizona members filed a lawsuit in federal court March 15 seeking to enjoin Brewer from issuing a prayerful proclamation in conjunction with the National Day of Prayer.

FFRF asks the court to find Gov. Brewer in violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution for declaring last year's "Arizona Day of Prayer" on May 6. Not only did Brewer call for an Arizona Day of Prayer in 2009 and 2010, but she even called for a Day of Prayer for the *budget* on Jan. 17, 2010. Jokes Richard Morris, one of two attorneys filing the case on FFRF's behalf: "And, as we know, nothing fails like prayer."

The lawsuit is FFRF's third legal challenge related to the National Day of Prayer.

FFRF won its landmark federal court ruling in *FFRF v. Obama* last year

in a case argued by attorney Richard L. Bolton. U.S. District Judge Barbara Crabb of Wisconsin declared the National Day of Prayer unconstitutional:

"In this instance, the government has taken sides on a matter that must be left to individual conscience. When the government associates one set of religious beliefs with the state and identifies nonadherents as outsiders, it encroaches upon the individual's decision about whether and how to worship."

Continued on page 3

Inside This Issue



Joan's good without god
Page 2

FFRF appeals godly pledge to SCOTUS

Page 5



Freethinking Filipino
Page 14



Katie got debaptized and you can too!
See story on page 3.

Meet a Member

Good without god in New York City

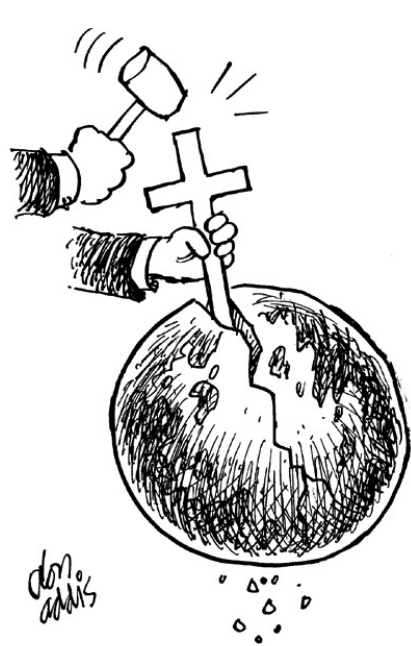


Joan Reisman “surfs” during a family pilgrimage to a Florida theme park.

Name: Joan Reisman.
Where I live: New York, N.Y.
Where and when I was born: Morristown, N.J., when role models were Ozzie (Nelson, not Osbourne), The Beaver and the original Mouseketeers, and when father knew best.
Education: I started as a religion major at Smith College but transferred after my freshman year to a school that didn’t offer a major in religion. I ended up with a B.A. in English literature from the University of Chicago, an M.A. in English lit from the University of Michigan and an M.B.A. in marketing and management from New York University.
Occupation: Former editor, science writer and pharmaceutical public relations/marketing consultant. One of my assignments was the press kit for Viagra, which helped make erectile dysfunction a household phrase.
I now focus on helping my family (my husband and two “tweens”) and myself decide what we want to be when we grow up.
How I got where I am today: Where I am today is putting together this “Meet a Member” piece, which I assure you is not as easy as it looks! This came about because a couple of years ago, I saw something about FFRF’s billboard and bus sign campaign, went to the website, joined, started reading Freethought Today and receiving Freethought of the Day and news updates. I found myself immersed in a brave new world of

kindred souls and goals.
Where I’m headed: Finding my path to demonstrate that people can be good without god, whether it’s producing two terrific kids who think for themselves, cultivating parks and gardens around New York City or writing funny essays about serious topics.
Person in history I admire: People throughout the ages who have stood up for what’s real and just, especially those who discovered new truths and championed unpopular ones, despite personal risk. Right now my heroes include Julia Sweeney, Ricky Gervais, Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert, who are shining light on uninformed insanity with well-informed comedy.
Quotations I like: In my high school yearbook, my favorite quote was “I think, therefore I am” (Descartes). Since then it’s been “No matter where you go, there you are” (first encountered in the movie “Buckaroo Bonzai” and then “Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome”).
It turns out my brother (who also rejected our religion) also favors that quote, but he got it from yet another movie source. It is also attributed to Confucius. The fact that both of us coincidentally latched onto the same line could be genetic, or it could have something to do with our upbringing. Lately, I’ve been admiring “It’s nice to be nice,” attributed to my grandmother by my mother.

These are a few of my favorite things: Humor, honesty and balance. Dealing with shades of gray, even when you desperately crave black or white. The idea that everything evolves (even religions). The Internet for making facts and ideas universally accessible. Reproductive choice through medical science, whether it be preventing unwanted children or fostering desired ones. Extraordinary human accomplishments, whether they’re up for Oscars or Grammys or Tonys or Nobels or Pulitzers (but not sainthood). And random acts of kindness.
These are not: People who simultaneously advocate both the Golden Rule and wiping out whole chunks of humankind. People who value faith over fact. People who lie and people who promote lies, especially those who know they are lying and those who don’t bother to reflect on what they believe. Arguments for the present and future that are stuck on the past, such as who was there first or who dealt the first blow thousands of years ago, or what was written in some ancient document.
My doubts about religion started: When my nominally Jewish family had no interest in the stuff I was being forced to learn in Sunday school. When I noticed that every version of the Ten Commandments was different, that some of the ten weren’t commandments at all, and that “Thou shalt not kill” seemed to carry as much weight as “Honor the Sabbath,” even though hardly anyone I knew actually did. When I was required to read Hebrew words but not understand them. When the more I learned about religions, the less I admired. When people pushed me to embrace religion, propelling me to push back until I soared into an entirely different orbit.
Why I’m a freethinker: Because I’m a thinker. What I don’t understand is why everyone isn’t a freethinker, especially in America, where we have so much information and freedom to be rational.
Ways I promote freethought: Trite as it sounds, I’m trying to figure out what truly constitutes a good person and then be one. Whenever it seems constructive, I let people know where I stand on religion. I actively support FFRF and other efforts to defend and nurture secular, reasonable society. And I religiously practice irreverence.



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FFRF welcomes 11 new ‘Lifers’

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is pleased to welcome 11 new Lifetime Members to its nonprophet ranks. They are:
RW Brennian, Karl Butcher, Karen Griffin, Frank Hribar, Bryan Merryman (gift from Dave Kinsey), Paul Morsey, Stephanie Ragusky, Chris Reichl, Richard Rockwell, Dawn Thom and Teri Tracey.
States represented are Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin.
Lifetime Memberships of \$1,000 designated for membership or renewal go into FFRF’s rainy day (safe) endowment, with interest spent on FFRF projects, and mean never another renewal notice! Like all dues and donations to FFRF, they are much appreciated by FFRF and are deductible for income tax purposes.
FFRF sends warmest thanks to Teri, Dawn, Richard, Chris, Stephanie, Paul, Bryan, Frank, Karen, Karl and RW!

Correction

Cenk Uygur’s Emperor Has No Clothes Award acceptance speech [March11] should have stated that Jacob, not Abraham, “had sex with his wife, her sister, his maid and his sister’s maid.” The bible recounts that Jacob was married simultaneously to Leah and Rachel and that he had 12 sons (the eventual 12 tribes of Israel) and at least one daughter with them and their maidservants, Bilhah and Zilpah, whom he also married.
Thanks to Henry Steinberger, Wisconsin, for pointing this out.

A Note to Subscribers

Your address label shows the expiration date of your membership in FFRF, which includes your subscription to Freethought Today and “Private Line.” If your label shows April or earlier, your subscription has expired. Your prompt renewal (\$40-single membership; \$50-household; \$100 sustaining; \$25-student) saves us time and postage, and is tax-deductible. (Subscription-only is \$20/ year.) Freethought Today is published 10 times a year, with combined issues in Jan/Feb and June/July. Send to FFRF, Box 750, Madison WI 53701.

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

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The only freethought newspaper in the United States

Suitable for framing: FFRF's DeBaptismal Certificate

Still smarting over having been dunked in a church baptismal tub at age 12? Indignant that a congregation stills claims you as a believer based on baptismal records? Wishing you could formally renounce a religion that was imposed on you as a helpless babe in swaddling clothes?

The Freedom From Religion Foundation has the answer: a genuine "DeBaptismal Certificate."

FFRF is issuing an attractive, frameable certificate on parchment paper, complete with a gold seal embossed with FFRF's name, which is personally and ironically affirmed by ex-reverend Dan Barker, FFRF co-president. Dan, who is the author of *Godless, The Good*

Atheist and *Losing Faith in Faith: From Preacher to Atheist*, still technically bears the stain of ordination.

The certificate bears the tongue-in-cheek saying of 19th century freethinker Robert G. Ingersoll: "With soap, baptism is a good thing."

The certificate reads:

"I, having been subjected to a Christian baptism before reaching an age of consent, or having submitted to baptism before embracing freethought and reason, hereby officially renounce that primitive rite and the Church that imposed it. I categorically reject the creeds, dogmas, and superstitions of my former religion, particularly the pernicious doctrines of 'Original Sin' and damnation.

"I further denounce as an affront and defamation to humanity the false and demeaning belief that any baby is born with 'Original Sin' and must be cleansed of it by baptism. From this day forward, I wish to be excluded from any claims of religious affiliation or membership based on baptismal records."

There's room for



the debaptized's name, signature and date of debaptism "in the Year of No Lord." The motto at the bottom reads, "Freedom depends upon freethinkers."

"With a majority of Foundation members growing up in religious homes," noted Annie Laurie Gaylor, Foundation co-president, "we know there are a lot of freethinkers out there who wish they could be debaptized." Annie Laurie, by the way, is one of the lucky 18% of FFRF members who grew up in a freethinking home and was spared baptism by water, fire or Sunday school.

"Although our DeBaptismal Certificate has some light touches, we think it's time to spur some serious public debate over the meaning of baptism," Gaylor added. "We would like to remind the public that people have been killed, schisms fostered and 'holy' wars sparked over debates on when to baptize and how to 'sprinkle' babies.

Childhoods and peace of mind are still being blighted today by ignorant and vicious sermons promising hell and damnation as a punishment for not being baptized.

"It should be utterly repugnant to people of conscience to tarnish newborns with the idea of 'original sin' or to subject any child or young person to this primitive ritual."

Two original embossed frameable copies on parchment signed by Dan Barker may be ordered online at ffrf.org/shop/. Or send \$5 to FFRF, Attn: DeBaptism, Box 750, Madison WI 53701. After the minimum order of two for \$5, additional copies going to the same address are \$2 apiece.

FFRF is also making a free version of its certificate downloadable via the Internet. Go to ffrf.org/shop/debaptism for a color copy (minus embossed seal and Dan's signature.).

Be the first on your block to frame a "DeBaptism Certificate!"



Certificate designer/FFRF staffer Katie Daniel, a baptized Roman Catholic, with FFRF Co-President Dan Barker after signing her debaptism certificate.

Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer's Day of Prayer gets FFRF challenge

Continued from front page

A ruling in the appeal by Obama is expected this spring by the U.S. 7th Circuit Court of Appeals. FFRF is also challenging a gubernatorial proclamation of the National Day of Prayer in state court in Colorado.

At the behest of Rev. Billy Graham, Congress passed Public law 82-324 in 1952:

"The President shall set aside and proclaim a suitable day each year, other than a Sunday, as a National

Day of Prayer, on which the people of the United States may turn to God in prayer and meditation at churches, in groups, and as individuals."

Evangelical groups lobbied Congress in 1988 to change the National Day of Prayer from a floating date to the first Thursday in May to make it easier to organize. The evangelical National Day of Prayer Task Force targets all governors to issue National Day of Prayer proclamations and lobbies mayors to coordinate a "Day of Prayer" with the national law, creating a cascade of state/church entanglements.

"Prayer proclamations by government officials, including proclamations by Governor Brewer, convey to nonreligious Arizona citizens the message that the Arizona state government expects them to believe in a god," the FFRF legal complaint charges.

The governor's official promotion of prayer creates "a culture of govern-

ment-sanctioned religiosity" and "a hostile environment for nonbelievers, who are made to feel as if they are second class citizens."

Gov. Brewer not only exhorts constituents to pray, but her proclamations "further call forth and encourage other public officials to engage in public ceremonies endorsing religion," such as the prayer proclamation by the Phoenix mayor last year. The mayor's proclamation referenced "the biblical theme pre-selected by the National Day of Prayer Task Force, a Christian evangelical group, thus removing all doubt as to the Christian preference of the official proclamation."

The complaint calls the gubernatorial prayer practices a violation of Article II, Section 12 of the Arizona Constitution. The complaint cites U.S. secular history, such as the Treaty of Tripoli, which specifically states that the United States is not founded on the

Christian religion. It quotes Thomas Jefferson's famed letter to the Baptists of Danbury contemplating "with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church & State."

"Neither Congress, the President, nor Gov. Jan Brewer has any constitutional authority to dictate to citizens that they should pray, much less to set aside an entire day for prayer every year, or to 'turn to God in prayer,'" says Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president.

FFRF Co-President Dan Barker notes that FFRF has more than 400 members in Arizona, and that 17% of Arizona citizens are nonreligious. "These Arizonians reject the notion that the natural laws of the universe may be suspended by wishful thinking, and are offended at their governor telling them to believe in a god who answers such prayer.

"On behalf of FFRF, we warmly thank the all-important local plaintiffs — Mike Wasin, John S. Compere, Michael Renzuilli and Justin Grant — who make possible the Arizona challenge, and attorneys Richard W. Morris and Marc J. Victor, who are both FFRF members," Barker added.

Catch an interview with attorney Richard Morris about the lawsuit on Freethought Radio, March 19, 2011:

ffrf.org/news/radio/shows/

Include FFRF In Your Estate Planning

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

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

FFRF
P.O. Box 750
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*Freedom Depends
on Freethinkers*



FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION
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What is the Freedom From Religion Foundation?

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

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

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

Heads Up

A Poetry Column by Philip Appleman

Maxims For Diverse Occasions

Bedeviled by malaise and moral cancers,
Everyone is hot for easy answers:
What this country needs, before cremation,
Is two cents' worth of Instant Meditation.
So, little rhymes, go spread your moral jargon:
Wisdom's rare, but preaching is a bargain.

Education

Education is whatever you cannot forget:
Answers are easy, questions are always a threat.
Ignorance hurts, in surgeons and taxi drivers.
When truths drop dead, paradox whips the survivors.

Religion

Creeds are easier to learn than unlearn:
Fanatics end with sainthood or with sunburn.
Theology's the sport of the upper classes.
Masses are the opiate of the masses.

Art

Art is what's left when you burn away the fact:
A poem, like prayer, is an unnatural act.
Brick is forever, marble is frightfully fickle.
Without symbolism, two dimes would buy a nickel.

Style

Style is what keeps bread from being cake:
Hamburger is the very quintessence of steak.
Strong views, like strong eggs, need a pinch of salt.
Mold is an accident, Roquefort is somebody's fault.

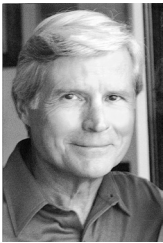
Civilization

Civilizations depend on garbage men:
Progress can turn a lake into a fen.
To own a tree is shameless impudence.
Good fences always make good arguments.

Platitudes come easy, silence hard.
Advice is always simple to discard.
So go, little rhymes, but don't be in a hurry:
When chaos whispers, men say, "What, me worry?"
Most prefer hot cures to cool prevention.
Wisdom shrugs when no one pays attention.

© 2011 Philip Appleman

Freethought Today is pleased to publish this new poem.



Philip Appleman is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Indiana University. His eight published volumes of poetry include *Darwin's Ark* (new 2009 edition) and *Karma, Dharma, Pudding & Pie* (2009). His nonfiction work includes the widely used *Norton Critical Edition, Darwin*, and the *Norton Critical Edition of Malthus' Essay on Population*. His poetry and fiction have won many awards, including a fellowship in poetry from the

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

He and his playwright wife, Marjorie Appleman, are both Lifetime Members (five times over) of the Freedom From Religion Foundation. They recorded an excerpt of "Noah," Philip's comic masterpiece, for the Foundation's newest musical CD, "Beware of Dogma," featuring Dan Barker. That CD also includes Phil's poem "Fleas," set to the music of "Trees." *New and Selected Poems* is available for sale from FFRF for \$23 ppd. *The Norton Critical Edition, Darwin*, is \$22 ppd, *Karma, Dharma, Pudding & Pie*, \$27 and *Darwin's Ark*, \$23 (ffrf.org/shop/).



Overheard

It is a rather wonderful relationship. I won't say he doesn't pray for me, because I think he probably does, but he doesn't discuss it with me. He agrees that his medical experience does not include anything that could be described as a miracle cure — he's never come across anything. **Christopher Hitchens, on his friend Francis Collins, a Christian scientist who directs the U.S. National Institutes of Health**
U.K. Telegraph, 3-25-11



I have a hunch, and it is only a hunch, because opinion polls suggest otherwise, that there are more atheists among social and economic conservatives than Americans realize. The Religious Right has done such a good job of equating secularism with liberalism that some of its own most vociferous adherents don't realize how many of their supporters worship no God but the God of the market, where no one is his brother's keeper. **Columnist Susan Jacoby, "Surprise, right-wing atheists do exist"**
The Washington Post, 2-24-11



No attempt to apologize to us has ever been made. It wasn't the parishioners who were being raped in the back of a car by a priest when they were 8 years old. It was me.

Heath Bromley, 35, North Creek, N.Y., on the bishop of Albany's visit to a church to apologize to parishioners for Fr. Gary Mercure's pederasty
Albany Times Union, 3-11-11

You lied to me. You jerked me around while you played this game and came to me in tears. **Philadelphia Judge Renee Cardwell Hughes, admonishing accused child rapist Fr. James Brennan for falsely saying he had no money to pay a lawyer and ordering him to reimburse the state \$1,350**
New York Times, 3-14-11

Let me spell it out for you. Avery, Engelhardt and Shero picked a child and singled him out. **Judge Renee Cardwell Hughes, answering a lawyer's question about adding criminal conspiracy to charges faced by his client, accused child rapist Bernard Shero, a former Catholic parochial school teacher**
Courier Times, 3-27-11

Faith is what you use to oppress, to justify, to judge in the name of God . . . a means to rationalize more evil in this world than anything in history. If there were a devil, faith would be his greatest invention. **Author James Frey, on his novel The Final Testament of the Holy Bible in which the Messiah is a reformed alcoholic who impregnates a prostitute**
New York Post, 3-14-11

YOUR WEEKLY ANTIDOTE TO THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

TUNE IN TO FREETHOUGHT RADIO

produced by the
Freedom From Religion
Foundation



Hosted by Dan Barker and
Annie Laurie Gaylor

Broadcasts and streams Saturdays at 11 a.m. Central, Progressive Talk The Mic 92.1 FM, Madison, Wis., and over several other stations.

iTunes or podcasts archived at: ffrf.org/news/radio

Slightly irreverent views,
news, music & interviews

Spend Independence Weekend at Lake Hypatia fest



Pat Cleveland



Jim McCollum



Betty McCollum



Sgt. Justin Griffith



Annie Laurie Gaylor



Mark Zumbach



Bill Dusenberry

The 21st annual Independence Weekend Celebration at Lake Hypatia, Ala. is set for Friday, July 1 through Sunday, July 3, at FFRF's southern Freethought Hall and Freethought Advance.

Hosted by the Alabama Freethought Society, an FFRF chapter, and its director **Patricia Cleveland**, the annual advance (not retreat!) takes place in rural Talladega, where FFRF owns an air-conditioned auditorium and meeting space. FFRF's impressive granite Atheists in Foxholes monument is nestled amid pines on grounds opened up to freethinkers for the event by the Cleveland family. The land abuts a small lake and the Talladega National Forest.

Speakers this year include **James McCollum**, who as a schoolchild was involved in the landmark Supreme Court decision outlawing religious public school instruction. The case, *McCollum v. Board of Education* (1948) is the subject of a new documentary, "The Lord Was Not on Trial Here," airing in May on PBS TV.

McCollum, a Lifetime Member from Arkansas, is a retired attorney and edu-

cator. His wife, **Betty McCollum**, who teaches courses in philosophy and religious studies, will join the roster to talk about women and religion.

Invited to be an "Atheist in Foxhole" awardee is **Justin Griffith**, who has exposed state/church violations at his base in Fort Bragg, N.C., and whose attempt to organize a "Rock Beyond Belief" event to counter a Billy Graham event on base had to be canceled due to military nonsupport.

Foundation Co-Presidents **Dan Barker** and **Annie Laurie Gaylor** will speak about current FFRF actions, and Barker will team up with cartoonist and ex-Mormon **Steve Benson** for a reprise of Tunes 'n' Toons, a musical cartoon revue on religion. Joining Pat Cleveland to speak about organizing in the bible belt will be **Mark Zumbach**, director of the Triangle Freethought Society, the Raleigh-Durham FFRF chapter,



Arizona Republic cartoonist Steve Benson (left) with Dan Barker.

and **Bill Dusenberry**, an organizer with the new Tulsa FFRF chapter.

Other speakers will be announced.

"We're putting the emphasis on activism for state/church separation and freethought," said Cleveland.

The Clevelands generously open up their personal grounds surrounding Freethought Hall for registered participants who reserve in advance for RVs or primitive camping. Showers and washrooms are available onsite. There are many motels in the area. For lodging, map, directions and more about Lake Hypatia, visit:

ffrf.org/outreach/lake-hypatia/

This is a relaxed, family-friendly event. Events take place in the air-conditioned facilities and meals are served in the lakeside pavilion. The event includes the traditional Poetry in the Pines led by Alice Cleveland, a nature demonstration by retired zoo-

keeper Bob Truett, the annual "atheists vs. agnostics" football match and a freethought trivia game.

You can register online at ffrf.org/outreach/lake-hypatia/ or use the form on the Freethought Today back wrapper. You can also download a registration form online to mail in to Alabama Freethought Society, PO Box 571, Talladega, AL 35161.

Registration is \$35 per FFRF member, \$40 per nonmember, \$5 per FFRF student member and \$10 per non-member student.

Four catered meals will be offered (Friday night, Saturday lunch, Saturday dinner, Sunday brunch) and are \$12 per adult, \$6 per student. (There's usually an inexpensive hot dog/veggie dog lunch offered by a private couple on Friday.)

There are no nearby restaurants so order meals now. Meal orders and early registrations must be in hand by June 22. There is a \$10 late fee per person for registration after June 22. No meals may be ordered after that cutoff.

FFRF asks SCOTUS to remove 'under God' in pledge

FFRF is asking the U.S. Supreme Court to declare unconstitutional the practice of requiring public school students to recite or listen to the religious Pledge of Allegiance. Attorney Michael Newdow filed a petition of certiorari in late March, appealing a November

2010 decision by the 1st Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in *Freedom From Religion Foundation v. Hanover School District*.

A New Hampshire couple who are FFRF members and have children in school filed suit in 2007 to challenge a 2002 state law requiring daily recitation of the pledge.

U.S. District Judge Steven J. McAuliffe ruled against FFRF in 2008. A three-judge 1st Circuit panel ruled last fall against FFRF's challenge of the New Hampshire School Patriot Act.

The challenge raised the ire of 51 members of Congress, who won court permission to intervene in the case, including three U.S. religious senators — Sam Brownback, James Inhofe and Ted Stevens. (Brownback is now Kansas governor and Stevens is dead.) A number of other religionists and the Catholic Knights of Columbus, which spearheaded the drive to insert "under God" into the formerly secular pledge in 1954, also intervened.

FFRF continues to get many complaints from members and public school students who are offended, stigmatized, embarrassed or even disciplined for not wishing to recite a pledge that ties pa-

triotism to piety.

Newdow argues that various circuit court decisions upholding the religious pledge give entirely different, often contradictory, and sometimes illogical reasons for allowing schools to interfere with the religious views of its atheist students.

"It is possible that what unifies these diverse holdings," Newdow suggests in the petition, "is that all of them manifest the evil that the Establishment Clause exists to stifle — i.e., 'political division along religious lines.'"

He cites authorities and even statements by President George W. Bush to show that the pledge is indeed a prayer and therefore should be barred from public schools. The petition challenges the history behind many lower court decisions. Although some judges have argued that religion in the pledge merely "acknowledges" our religious heritage, Newdow asks: "[W]hat does 'acknowledging' religion have to do with patriotism?"

The petition continues, "This case involves the nation's most disenfranchised religious minority. It is hoped that this Court, in particular, will be sensitive to this problem, since each of the current justices is a member of a minority religion, that, like Atheism, was also (at one time) despised and



Photo: Brent Nicastro

Mike Newdow, M.D.

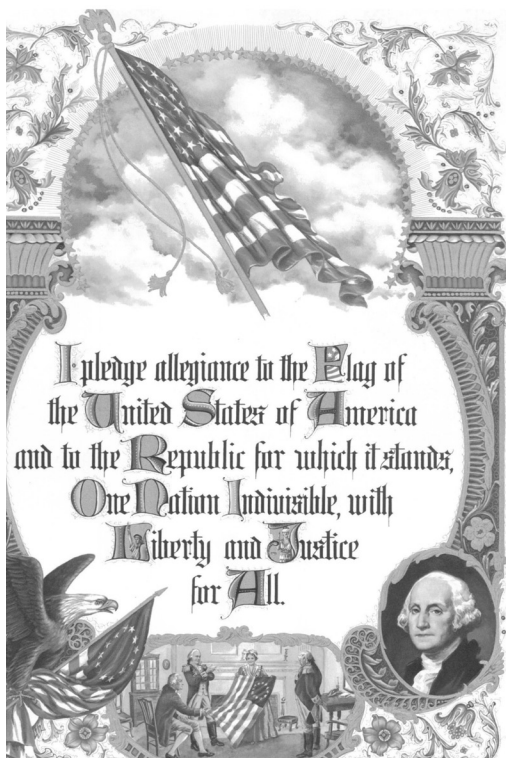
disenfranchised.

"In fact, the God that most public school teachers proclaim this nation to be 'under' each morning apparently advocates for murdering the plaintiffs here: 'Whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death'" [Leviticus 24:16].

"We are hoping," says FFRF Co-President Dan Barker, "that the Supreme Court will realize that the time has come to stop disenfranchising non-theists. We are 'one nation indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.'"

FFRF would like to publicly thank the New Hampshire plaintiffs who have made the lawsuit possible, and Newdow, who has worked pro bono with brilliance and dedication.

Read the entire Writ of Certiorari: ffrf.org/uploads/legal/Petition_For_Writ_of_Certiorari.pdf



The Pledge of Allegiance as the author intended, for all.

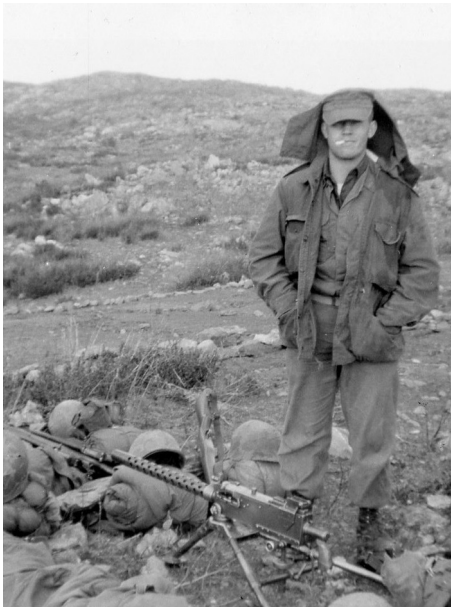
Meet a Member

His BS detector kicked in early

Name: Raymond “Jim” Lynch.
Where I live: Northglenn, Colo., a northern suburb of Denver, where we’ve lived in the same home since 1966.
Where and when I was born: Jan. 7, 1942, the youngest of eight siblings, in Scottsbluff, Neb., a city of about 15,000 in the county bordering Wyoming.
Family: Carol, my wife of 48 years; my son, Jeff, 47; and daughter, Cindy, 46.
Education: I have an associate of arts degree in fire science technology from Red Rocks Community College at Denver, “informal” education from Uncle Sam’s Misguided Children, as well as classes from the Armed Forces Academy while I was a Marine. I’ve attended the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Md., many times during my 30-year firefighting career.
Occupation: Fire captain with a specialty in hazardous materials response. I retired in 2002.
Military service: U.S. Marines from 1960-64, serving in the blockade around Guantanamo, Cuba; in North Africa and the Mediterranean but mostly in the 2nd Marine Division.
How I got where I am today: My dad was killed when I had just turned 12, so I kind of did a lot of things on my own, mostly by trial and error. That was about the time my mom really got into the church, but the church wasn’t into her so much. They gave everyone donation envelopes so they knew who was giving what. The few coins that she gave every week didn’t even merit so much as an acknowledgment from the pompous priest standing outside after Mass, gladhanding all the rich business owners.
She insisted that I attend catechism every week with the nuns. That’s where I got really good at saying “Oh bullshit” under my breath every time they would spout some of that garbage out of the little brown book. I soon discovered that the Saturday track meets were much more fun. I never went back, and nobody missed me. I did dream though about lacing the communion wafers with Mary Jane. (Yup, it grew around western Nebraska in those days, too).
It would take a whole book to tell about my life after the Marines in the fire service, which I’m thinking about writing. I tried out in 2005 for the reality show “Survivor” and was chosen

for the Guatemala season. The first challenge was a 15-mile, 24-hour race through the jungle. That was one of the toughest things I’ve ever done. The temperatures were about 125 degrees with 95% humidity. I pulled a bicep muscle and got voted off, but it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience.
People always ask how much money I made doing it, and I tell them I earned enough to buy my wife an SUV (slightly used vacuum). I also fly sport helicopters and am in the process of rebuilding one which I crashed a couple of years ago.
Where I’m headed: Up Mount Kilimanjaro the first of next year to celebrate making it 70 years on this rock. (I’m hoping to start a rumor that the Ark is actually on Kilimanjaro, so maybe I can lead some of the gullible, er, I mean faithful, up there to help pay for my trip.)
Around home I’m always on the lookout for Mormon young people who walk around the neighborhoods trying to engage folks in conversation about that silly religion. I always oblige. It’s great to be able to cast some doubt in those young minds. I’m an atheist warrior when it comes to this stuff because it’s so important to reach the young.
Sometimes I ask them if they realize that the first mention of an automobile was in the bible? They say no way! Sure, I say, the bible says “The disciples were all in one accord.” “Or how about your belief that the universe was created by god in six days?” I ask. “Which day was it that he created fossils?” Silence, big silence — just one thing to get them thinking that maybe this is not true. Now we can talk!
I also like catching Jehovah Witnesses putting the Watchtower on my door. I say, “Hey, I thought you guys were in the Jehovah Witness Protection Program. What are you doing out walking around?” They think they really have a live one, little do they know!
A person I admire and why: Craig Venter, for his role in sequencing the human genome and work with synthetic cells and stem cells. (On “60 Minutes” in 2010, answering Steve Kroft’s question if he believed in God, Venter said, “No. The universe is far more wonderful.”) The Venters of our time are out there striving to find new ways to heal our illnesses, feed our overpopulated planet and battle the “You’re

playing god” crowd.
I also admire all of the people from the past and the present who have the strength to stand up against enormous odds and fight for what they know is right.
A quotation I like: I’ll take two, please. “This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples, no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness.” (the Dalai Lama, via *The Atheist’s Bible*)
The other is a response to those I mentioned earlier who accuse us of “playing god”: “If we don’t play god, who will?” (James Dewey Watson, co-discoverer of the structure of DNA) I’ve used it with great effect on my very Catholic sister.
These are a few of my favorite things: World travel, flying, chocolate and a good brandy after shoveling snow.
These are not: Holy men or women of any type. Any person who has been in and around religion for any length of time and reads the scriptures knows full well that this is all BS, but this is their life now. It feeds them and gives them secure retirements. In many cases, it gives them an opulent lifestyle along with the adoration of the flock.



Jim Lynch joined the Marines in 1960.

Look at the “Black Collar Crime Blotter” in this paper, then think how many get away compared to the few who get caught.
My doubts about religion started: As I said earlier, it was when I was around 12 or 13. At first it was just that I was frightened of the whole business of the church — the vestments, the incense. It’s even worse for a kid who can’t say they want no part of such craziness.
As the years went by, and I saw all the hate that came from religion, I knew it wasn’t for me. Oh, I almost forgot, the choir really sucked, too.

Overheard

We pray, Lord, that you help us show reverence to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life.” In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ our savior, we pray.
Baptist Pastor Dennis Campbell’s invocation March 14 before the Minnesota Senate
Minnesota Independent, 3-15-11
It makes anyone who doesn’t pray through Jesus Christ, or believe in Jesus Christ — it makes them feel like they don’t belong. It makes me feel like I don’t belong on the Senate floor to which I was duly elected by my constituents. In a government chamber, I and others should not be made to feel that way.
Minnesota state Sen. Ron Latz, who is Jewish, objecting to Rev. Campbell’s prayer
St. Paul Pioneer Press, 3-16-11



ist, on winning prizes as a child at her Baptist church for memorizing religious texts
The Australian, 3-22-11
When Jimmy was 11 and his mother passed away, he began to be molested by his minister. I think that haunted him the rest of his life. In fact, I know it did. We talked about it a lot. During “Giant” [in 1956], we’d stay up nights and talk and talk, and that was one of the things he confessed to me.
Elizabeth Taylor, who in 1997 pledged to keep James Dean’s molestation off the record until she died
MSNBC, 3-25-11



The very real concern is that little Johnny the preacher’s kid is apt to run home and tattle if the teacher suggests, for example, that the story of Adam and Eve is an allegorical variation on common mythology and lore and that maybe the fruit was not really fruit and that maybe the serpent was not really a serpent, but that they represent temptation and sin. Someone somewhere is going to find himself in a raucous special school board meeting with Reverend Holy Roller all up in his face. You see, Reverend Holy Roller does not see the bible as something to study with academic detachment, or to scour for symbolism and narrative inspiration, but as a marching order for him to impose his view of religion.
Columnist John Burnett, “Good luck teaching the bible in school”
Arkansas News, 3-13-11



“Survivor” Jim Lynch knows about reality shows and doesn’t include heaven or hell in that category.



Prime Minister Julia Gillard, an athe-

It Pays for FFRF to Complain

Wisconsin jurors get secular oath option

After its Feb. 11 letter of complaint, FFRF was assured March 14 by the clerk of Circuit Court in Washington County, Wis., that jurors will be informed “of the option of a secular affirmation or oath” when being sworn.

A county resident had complained to FFRF after being summoned for jury duty that the panel was sworn in with an oath that ended with “so help me God” and was not offered the option of a secular affirmation.

The U.S. Supreme Court has held that “neither a state nor the federal government can constitutionally force a person to ‘profess a belief or disbelief in any religion,’ ” wrote Rebecca Markert, FFRF senior staff attorney. Wisconsin law also provides for a secular option.

School stops offering religious MLK ribbons

FFRF stopped the Beloit Turner School District in Wisconsin from asking staff to wear a ribbon with an image of a Christian cross and the name of a ministry to observe Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

On Jan. 14, William Beckley, director of curriculum and staff development, e-mailed staff: “[W]e will be delivering the Dr. King ribbons this a.m. All staff are asked to wear the ribbons today and on Monday.” In addition to the cross, the ribbon said at the bottom, “Beloit Community Ministers Fellowship.”

Patrick Elliott, FFRF staff attorney, in his March 10 letter, said, “While honoring Dr. King is laudable and a worthy cause . . . the Latin cross is universally understood to represent Christianity. Non-Christians and nonbelievers do not wish to display this Christian symbol on their person. Students may perceive the ribbons as an endorsement of Christianity and the Beloit Community Ministers Fellowship.”

Superintendent Dennis McCarthy responded by e-mail March 14: “At times the good intentions of individuals may cause unintended consequences for others. It will not be an issue in the future.”

Secular counselors get free parking

Thanks to letters of complaint by FFRF Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert, secular counselors will join clergy in getting free parking at the University of Kentucky Hospital in Lexington.

FFRF began its investigation after a query in late August from a Kentucky resident who wondered if it was legal to give free parking to ministers visiting hospital patients but not to nonreligious counselors.

Markert first wrote in November to Dr. Michael Karpf, UK executive vice president for health affairs. Free parking for clergy, Markert wrote, “is an impermissible practice because it affords a specific religion-based preference for access to a public accommodation. Chapter 344 of the Kentucky Statutes

protects individuals against discrimination.” She also cited federal anti-discrimination law, including the Civil Rights Act.

Receiving no response, FFRF followed up with another letter Jan. 4.

On March 10, Clifton Iler of the UK Office of Legal Counsel replied: “In reviewing our current policy related to clergy, the university has concluded that there are likely patients treated at the University of Kentucky Hospital who do not hold religious beliefs.

“Consequently, the university has amended its policy providing clergy with free parking so that any professional who provides emotion of spiritual support to patients at the University of Kentucky Hospital is eligible to receive free parking.”

FFRF stops school lunchtime prayer

A teacher at Chadbourn [N.C.] Elementary School has been ordered to “cease and desist from any prayer time or references to prayer” after the district received a Jan. 28 letter of complaint from FFRF Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert.

Third-grade teacher Becky McClellan had instructed students to say this prayer before lunch:

*“Thank you for the world so sweet,
Thank you for the food we eat,
Thank you for the birds that sing,
Thank you God for everything.”*

Superintendent Dan Strickland had been notified of the violation before FFRF complained, but the prayers continued.

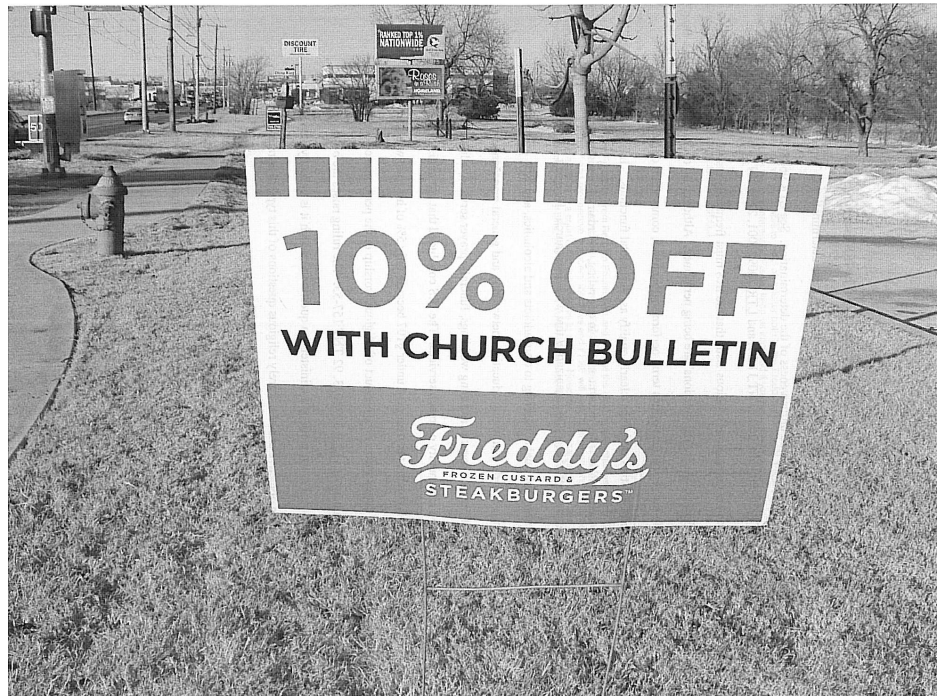
An attorney for the School District responded Feb. 8: “[W]e are well aware that it is violative of the U.S. Constitution and the various court cases that have been brought under the principle of separation of church and state.” He wrote that each year, teachers are briefed on the issue, “but being in the ‘Bible Belt’ it is oftentimes forgotten. We have taken the appropriate measures to address it and will monitor the situation to be sure that it does not occur again.”

FFRF member exposes Christian roots myth

Ralph Stewart, FFRF member and former U.S. Marine, won one for nontheists in March when the Johnson County Commission in Mountain City, Tenn., voted unanimously to add his display at the courthouse in order to ward off his lawsuit challenging the Ten Commandments in the public building’s lobby.

The commission voted last May to deny Stewart’s request to put two posters alongside the Ten Commandments and other historical documents, including bible verses, that purport to show America is a Christian nation. In January, Americans United sued Johnson County on Stewart’s behalf for using a public forum to promote religion.

Stewart’s posters are titled “On the Legal Heritage of the Separation of Church and State” and “The Ten Commandments Are Not the Foundation of American Law.” It features quotations from the U.S. Constitution, Declaration of Independence, three U.S. Supreme Court cases, and other law-related historical sources.



FFRF freezes Freddy’s Frozen discount

A Feb. 24 letter from FFRF Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert stopped federal civil rights and local ordinance violations at Freddy’s Frozen Custard and Steakburgers in Oklahoma City, where a sign offered a church bulletin discount. “Any promotions should be available to all customers regardless of religious preference or practice on a nondiscriminatory basis,” Markert noted. On March 7, Sharol Rasberry, vice president of Freddy’s franchise, responded graciously: “We have immediately ended this promotion. Thank you for bringing this to our attention.”

They Said What?

Sitting on a toilet isn’t a place one would normally expect to think about God. But the two-man chaplain team at Spin Boldak [Afghanistan] wants soldiers to do just that. . . . Holy Crap: Chaplain’s Thought of the Week, where bible verses and inspirational messages are posted on the doors of bathroom stalls, is just one of the many creative programs run by this holy team.

News story, “Chaplain duo reaches soldiers in an unusual way”

www.army.mil, 3-8-11

What Does the Bible Say About Tsunamis?

Press release from Comets of God author Jeffrey Goodman, “an archeologist and geologist who has spent years researching the bible’s stories of catastrophe”

Christian News Wire, 3-14-11

But it also comes to my mind that the earthquake could be a warning from God to Japan, which has become an increasingly material-centric, secular and idol-worshiping country. From a religious point of view, the Japanese people have lost a great deal of faith in God over the years.

Rev. Cho Yong-gi, Yeouido [South Korea] Full Gospel Church, “Pastor under fire for remarks on quake”

Korea Times, 3-14-11

Japanese politics is tainted with egoism and populism. We need to use the tsunami to wipe out egoism, which has attached itself like rust to the mentality of the Japanese people over a long period of time.

Shintaro Ishihara, Tokyo governor, describing the tsunami as tembatsu (divine punishment)

The Guardian, 3-15-11

God — what God does is God’s business, I have no idea — but I’ll tell you this: Whether you call it Gaia or whether you call it Jesus, there’s a message being sent. And that is, hey, you know that stuff we’re doing? Not really working out real well. Maybe we should stop doing some of it. I’m just sayin’. And

yesterday I got home and I was thinking about all the messages that I could bring in, all the things that I could tell you, and oh, I’ve got stuff on Hezbollah. Oh, I have stuff on radical Islam in America that’ll make your eyes fall out. Or I could just tell you the answer, and the answer is: Buckle up. Buckle up, ‘cause it’s going to be a bumpy ride.

Glenn Beck, tying the tsunami to lack of religious faith

“The Glenn Beck Program,” 3-14-11

The bible says if you call to Him, He will answer us. Is it going to do any good? Well, yeah!

Rev. Dave Motta, Calvary United Methodist Church, to attendees at a Red River “pre-flood prayer service” in North Dakota

Fargo Forum, 3-14-11

America works, freedom works, when people have that internal gyroscope that comes from a belief in God and biblical faith. Once we push that out, you no longer have the capacity to live as a free person without the external controls of an authoritarian government. I’ve said it often and I believe it: The bigger government gets, the smaller God gets — as people become more dependent on government, less dependent on God.

Sen. Jim DeMint, R-S.C., interview with the Family Research Council’s Tony Perkins

thinkprogress.org, 3-15-11



We’re seeing how Catholic politicians, following the first Catholic president, have followed his lead, and have divorced faith not just from the public square, but from their

own decision-making process. Jefferson is spinning in his grave.

Potential GOP presidential candidate Rick Santorum, telling a Catholic Citizenship group he’s “appalled” by President Kennedy’s 1960 call to keep state and church separate

The Boston Globe, 3-14-11

One Nation Under God: A Bible History



Photo: Brent Nicastro



We are pleased to present the fourth installment of “One Nation Under God: A Bible History,” written and illustrated by Mike Konopacki. It was part of the coursework for his master of fine arts degree in 2010 from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and was also presented at FFRF’s convention in October.

Anne Hutchinson

John Winthrop was governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. He is famous for his speech “A Model of Christian Charity” where he claimed that the Puritan settlement in the new world must be, “As a City upon a Hill.” This declaration, taken from **Matthew 5:14**, would be interpreted to mean that America was a land chosen by God for Christians to live in freedom.

Apparently, God chose not to allow women the same religious rights as men. One Puritan who demanded the freedom to worship in her own way was Anne Hutchinson. She dared to challenge the religious authoritarianism of Gov. Winthrop and was tried as a heretic. She was subsequently exiled from the colony and killed by Indians. Below is an excerpt from her trial:

Mrs. Anne Hutchinson: What have I said or done?
Gov. John Winthrop: Why for your doings, this you did harbor and countenance those that are parties in this faction that you have heard of.
Mrs. Anne Hutchinson: That’s matter of conscience, Sir.
Gov. John Winthrop: Your conscience you must keep, or it must be kept for you.
Mrs. Anne Hutchinson: Must not I then entertain the saints because I must keep my conscience.
Gov. John Winthrop: Say that one brother should commit felony or treason and come to his brother’s house, if he knows him guilty and conceals him he is guilty of the same. It is his conscience to entertain him, but if his conscience comes into act in giving countenance and entertainment to him that hath broken the law he is guilty too. So if you do countenance those that are transgressors of the law you are in the same fact.
Mrs. Anne Hutchinson: What law do they transgress?
Gov. John Winthrop: The law of God and of the state.
Mrs. Anne Hutchinson: In what particular?
Gov. John Winthrop: Why in this among the rest, whereas the Lord doth say honour thy father and thy mother.

The Bible vs. Women

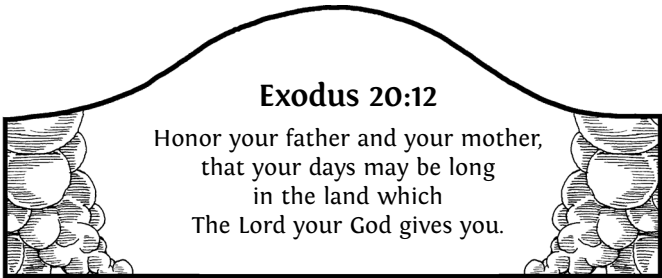
The Christian right hates feminism. Douglas Wilson wrote, “Feminists, in rebellion against God, invert the order of the home established by God. They do so in a way that seeks to rob women of their beauty in submission and their security in being loved.”

For centuries Biblical passages have been used to subjugate women. For example, **Colossians 3:18**: “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord.” **1 Corinthians 11:9**: “Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.” **1 Corinthians 14:35**: “For it is a shame for women to speak in the church.”

In 1895, a group of American suffragists was so dissatisfied with the Bible’s treatment of women that they wrote their own version. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and a committee of women called theirs the *Woman’s Bible*. Below is part of the Introduction:

“The Bible teaches that woman brought sin and death into the world, that she precipitated the fall of the race, that she was arraigned before the judgment seat of Heaven, tried, condemned and sentenced. Marriage for her was to be a condition of bondage, maternity a period of suffering and anguish, and in silence and subjection, she was to play the role of a dependent on man’s bounty for all her material wants, and for all the information she might desire on the vital questions of the hour, she was commanded to ask her husband at home. Here is the Bible position of woman briefly summed up.

“Those who have the divine insight to translate, transpose and transfigure this mournful object of pity into an exalted, dignified personage, worthy of our worship as the mother of the race, are to be congratulated...”



State/Church Bulletin

Lawyers scotch judge's bible-based sentences

Judge John Clinton, who presides over Harris County Criminal Court in Houston, has agreed to stop substituting bible study as an option to community service.

Clinton, a retired police sergeant, sentenced nine defendants in March to read "The Heart of a Problem" and come back later and discuss it with him. Attorneys blew the whistle on Clinton because the workbook touts its "insights for victorious Christian living."

"That is illegal, unconstitutional and unfair," defense lawyer Dan Gerson told KHOU News. "We are offended, as far as preaching from the bench, especially by requiring people, or asking people that they perform religious study in lieu of serving their sentence."

Clinton said he's stopped the practice and will "regroup and find the right thing to try and fit what I'm trying to do."

Judge: Florida atheist suit can proceed

U.S. District Judge Elizabeth Kovachevich ruled March 15 that an Atheists of Florida lawsuit to stop prayer at Lakeland City Commission meetings can proceed. The judge's order states the major issue to be determined in the lawsuit is whether the city used a prayer policy to "proselytize or advance any one, or to disparage any other, faith or belief."

The suit alleges that 33 of 34 speakers invited to pray at meetings after May, 18, 2009, were Christians. The other speaker, a Jewish cantor, was asked to pray after AoF sent a letter of complaint to the city, the Lakeland Ledger reported.

Mayor: Swear on your own bibles

WTAE News in Pittsburgh reported March 9 that Pennsylvania taxpayers spent \$7,300 on bibles that were given to House members to be sworn into office on. Each time a legislator gets re-elected, he or she receives a new bible.

"If they need a bible, they should bring their own bible," said Forest Hills Mayor Marty O'Malley.

Jehovah Witness fights Santa outfit and wins

Charlotte, N.C.-based Belk Inc. will pay \$55,000 and furnish other relief to settle a discrimination lawsuit filed by the U.S. Equal Employment Commission, the EEOC announced March 16. The EEOC alleged Belk failed to accommodate a Jehovah Witness's beliefs and fired her due to her religion.

During the 2008 Christmas holiday season, Belk required Myra Jones-Abid to wear a Santa hat and apron while working at its Raleigh store. She refused and was fired.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires employers to make reasonable accommodations to sincerely held religious beliefs of employees as long as they pose no undue hardship. Belk was ordered to provide annual training on religious discrimination to all supervisors at the Raleigh store.

Belk has more than 300 fashion department stores in 16 Southern states.

MRFF skeptical about Air Force review

Retired Air Force Gen. Patrick Gamble, now University of Alaska president, was appointed to take an "independent, subjective look at the overall climate at the U.S. Air Force Academy relating to free exercise of religion," the Air Force said in a statement March 11.

The Air Force said the review is not an investigation and no detailed report is expected.

Mikey Weinstein, president of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, criticized the scope of the review as outlined in the Air Force statement, reported The Associated Press.

The problem is not restrictions on religion but unwanted proselytizing by fundamentalist Christians, Weinstein said.

Insincere prayers = low test scores?

Principal Jael Yon's call for prayer the second year in a row at Baltimore's Tench Tilghman Elementary/Middle School drew fire for mixing religion and public education.

A flier for the March 5 event in advance of the Maryland School Assessments, a standardized test for third through eighth grades, promoted it as a way to "come together, as one, in prayer and ask God to bless our school to pass the MSA."

After investigating, school officials said in a statement that, "[W]hile we as a district understand that prayer plays an important role for many in our school communities . . . it is not appropriate for public institutions of education to promote any particular religious practice."

FFRF staff attorney Rebecca Markert wrote the superintendent: "You have an obligation under the law to make certain that subsidized teachers do not inculcate religion. Baltimore City Public Schools must take immediate action to ensure that prayer events organized by school officials do not occur in the future."

The 30-minute, voluntary prayer service culminated Saturday classes the school held to prepare students for the test. The flier, which included images of praying hands and bible verses, was distributed to staff to give to the school's 400 students and their families.

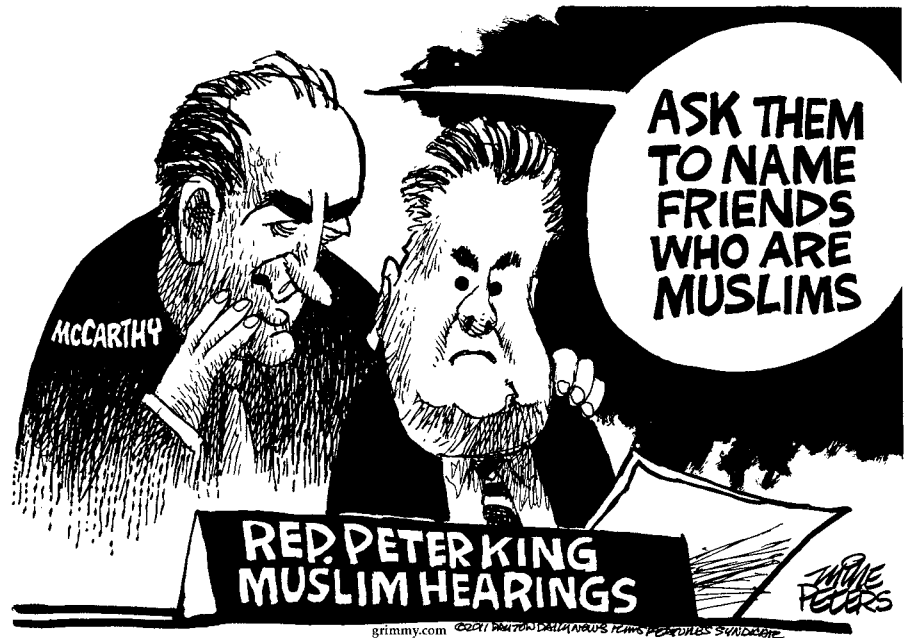
Yon was asked by parents at the school to hold the Saturday classes, as well as the prayer service, according to Gittings. He said Yon "was doing what she thought was right."

Yon, in her second year as principal, declined to comment.

Court: Get thee to a public school

The New Hampshire Supreme Court upheld on March 16 a lower court that ordered an 11-year-old girl to attend public school after her father claimed his ex-wife's strict Christian teachings socially isolated her.

"While this case has religious overtones, it is not about religion. While it involves home schooling, it is not about the merits of home versus public schooling," the court wrote in its unanimous ruling. "This case is only about resolving a dispute between two parents, with equal constitutional parent-



ing rights and joint decision-making responsibility, who have been unable to agree how to best educate [their] daughter."

The parents divorced when the girl, who lives primarily with her mother but regularly visits her father, was 2 months old. The lower court ordered her to attend Portsmouth public school after her parents couldn't agree on an alternative to home schooling.

Court upholds Italy's crucifixes in school

Crucifixes in Italy's public school classrooms don't violate a student's freedom of conscience, the European Court of Human Rights ruled March 18 in a verdict praised by the Vatican. The case was brought by a Finnish-born woman living in Italy with two children in school.

Initially, the Strasbourg, France-based court sided with the mother but Italy appealed. The reversal has implications in 47 countries, opening the way for Europeans who want religious symbols in classrooms to petition their governments to allow them.

Massimo Albertin, the students' father and an atheist, expressed disappointment. "Freedom of religion, freedom from discrimination, freedom of choice are fundamental principles, and in this case they weren't respected."

Jewish judge ordered to bear a cross

Italy's highest court of appeal on March 16 upheld the firing of a judge who refused to hear cases with a crucifix in the courtroom.

Luigi Tosti, 62, appealed to the Cassation Court after the Italian judiciary's self-governing body, the Supreme Council of Magistrates, removed him last May. He is Jewish. Tosti said he'll appeal to the European Court of Human Rights. "I was hired to serve a secular court, not an ecclesiastic one. Should my appeal fail, my battle for secularity and freedom will continue in the appropriate courts."

Creationist teacher keeps his job

Beau Schaefer, a science teacher at Libertyville [Ill.] High School who espoused creationism in the classroom, was warned to stop but won't be fired, the school announced March 22.

FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott wrote a letter of complaint that same day to School District 128 in Vernon Hills.

In a statement, Superintendent Prentiss Lea said "the United States Supreme Court and several other federal court decisions have found that creationism may not be referenced or

taught in public school science classrooms."

Lea said the teacher "cooperated fully" with officials investigating the allegations, and he has been told not to discuss creationism in the future.

Alabama school bible probe underway

Superintendent Barry Carroll said he'll investigate bible distribution at Blue Springs Elementary School in Athens after getting a letter March 22 from ACLU of Alabama.

"A parent had expressed concern and we are going to investigate it," Carroll told the Huntsville Times. "We have a policy that all outside materials, not just bibles, are placed in a designated area at a school, and if a student wants to take any of the materials, fine."

The ACLU letter also said that a fifth-grade teacher who refused to teach evolution had admitted endorsing creationism.

The parent alleged that a teacher put bibles in several classrooms and told students to "come get it."

Australians challenge religion in school

A Melbourne law firm has lodged a legal challenge against the way religion is taught in Victoria public schools, the Australian Broadcasting Corp. reported March 23.

Attorney Andrea Tsalamandris filed the complaint with the Equal Opportunity Commission against the state of Victoria Education Department. She alleged that students who opt out of religious education classes are sometimes left unsupervised and that forcing children to opt out of the classes is discriminatory.

"For them to identify themselves as nonbelievers and walk out of the classroom is distressing for them, and these are the kind of stories we are hearing from the parents."

Army chaplains deal with DADT repeal

CNN reported March 25 that the U.S. Army is training its 2,900 chaplains as it implements repeal of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy that let gays serve in the military if they kept quiet about their sexual orientation.

The chaplain corps training stresses that those who cannot "reconcile" the change in policy can ask for voluntary separation.

Lt. Col. Carlton Birch of the Army Chief of Chaplains office said chaplains won't be asked to change their beliefs on homosexuality. "Chaplains will be able to continue to preach and teach according to the dictates of their faith." He said he's never heard chaplains inveigh against gays.

Voucher floodgates would destroy public schools, enrich parochial at taxpayer expense

In early March, FFRF blasted a budget proposal by Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker to eliminate the enrollment cap and the low-income requirement for participation in the Milwaukee school voucher program. Wisconsin is one of several states entertaining unprecedented voucher school proposals which disproportionately benefit religiously segregated schools.

"If enacted, Walker's voucher proposals would ultimately destroy the dream of our common schools — secular public education in Wisconsin," said Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor.

Article X, Section 3 of the Wisconsin Constitution establishes "district schools, which shall be as nearly uniform as practicable; and such schools shall be free and without charge for tuition to all children between the ages of 4 and 20 years; and no sectarian instruction shall be allowed therein."

"Parents may choose to send their children to parochial schools, but all citizens should not be forced to support those religiously segregated schools," Gaylor said, noting that the Catholic



Conference of Bishops has waged an unending campaign demanding since the 1880s to force taxpayers to support parochial education. The "choice" program has been a windfall for Catholic schools in Milwaukee and for Lutheran and nondenominational evangelicals.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court disastrously approved the choice program, which includes religious schools, in 1998. Limited to low-income children who live in Milwaukee and attend city schools, the program and its expenses have increased yearly. Private, overwhelmingly religious schools receive \$6,442 from the state for each voucher student. That money is subtracted from aid to Milwaukee public schools.

More than 20,000 children are

enrolled in the Milwaukee voucher program for 2010-11. Roughly 80% of about 100 voucher schools are religious. St. Anthony Catholic School enrolls more than 1,400 voucher students and Messmer High (Catholic) has close to 1,000. Other religious schools include Believers in Christ Christian Academy, Carter's Christian Academy, Yeshiva Elementary School, Word of Life Evangelical Lutheran School and 22 schools whose names are prefaced by "Saint."

Walker's personal religious views are Christian evangelical. At his Inauguration Day prayer breakfast, Walker said: "I'm proud to say I'm a born-again Christian. I hope you appreciate the fact that it is not freedom from religion, it is freedom from a state religion that we celebrate. The great creator, no matter who you worship, is the one from which our freedoms are derived, not the government."

Walker's proposal would open up the program to any students in Milwaukee, even from wealthy families, who wish to attend religious or pri-

vate schools at taxpayers' expense. (A student currently attending a private school this year would be ineligible for the program next year.) It would potentially generate huge revenues for parochial and other private schools, which could charge tuition to families above what the state would pay if the family income is 3.25 times the poverty level.

Walker would remove a recent requirement that students in choice schools take state tests, enacted to try to measure whether the program has improved achievement. At the end of March, state test scores showed voucher students scored lower in reading and math proficiency than public school students.

While Walker's budget would decrease funding to all public schools, Milwaukee's private school voucher program could see huge infusions of state money.

A Republican Assembly leader announced plans for expansion of Milwaukee's voucher program to other school districts in the state.

Reminder of 1844 riots, deaths over religion in Philadelphia schools

FFRF blasts Philly council's prayer resolution

The Freedom From Religion Foundation sent a strong letter of complaint to the Philadelphia City Council after it unanimously passed a resolution March 10 "inappropriately meddling" with the prayer practices of public school students.

The resolution by council member Jannie Blackwell, calls for the council's Committee on Education to hold hearings on prayer in Philadelphia Public Schools:

Whereas, prayer can promote more virtuous living and may have a positive impact on student behavior in schools; and

Whereas, encouraging students to not only pray for themselves but to pray for others can cause students to think more of their fellow classmates than of themselves, to lead lives of thankfulness; and

Whereas, exercising compassion and understanding when engaging with other faith communities is important to achieve harmony and right relationships with others including students, teachers, parents, school administration and community leaders; and

Whereas, we support students who have an interest in their faith; and

Whereas, we encourage all students to use their faith in their daily living and when necessary to keep a positive attitude and give their best in school to ensure a bright future.

FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor, in a March 15 letter on behalf of the Foundation's 16,500 members, including 550 in Pennsylvania and a Philadelphia chapter, called the measure "a shamelessly overt attempt by a city government to promote prayer and religion to public school students. Nonbelievers take umbrage at Blackwell's unfactual assertion that religious students are 'more virtuous,'" Gaylor wrote.

"A city government may not play favorites based on citizen faith or lack thereof, or take sides on matters which must be left to individual conscience.

"It is absolutely beyond the purview of any government body or official to encourage 'students to not only pray for themselves but to pray for others' and to say such students 'think more of their fellow classmates' and 'lead lives of thankfulness,' much less to 'encourage all students to use their faith in their daily living. All students are not religious. The Philadelphia City Council is offending large numbers of young people and their parents with such inappropriate pronouncements."

Gaylor said Philadelphia history "so graphically shows the danger of mingling government and religion. In fact, Philadelphia appears to hold the unenviable record of being the only U.S. city where people have even died because of inappropriate religion in its public



schools!" She noted the "prayer riots" of 1844 in which Protestants and Catholics took up arms against each other, with at least 30 people killed, after Catholic Bishop Francis Kenrick petitioned the School Board to let Catholic children read the Catholic bible.

She cited a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision against prayer and religion in public schools that originated in the Philadelphia area. In *Abington Township School District v. Schempp* in 1963, the court overturned a Pennsylvania law that mandated bible reading and the recitation of the Lord's Prayer.

"That case was bravely fought by the Schempp family," Gaylor noted. "Elery Schempp, now a Lifetime Member of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, was disciplined as a high school student when he attempted to protest the unconstitutional actions of his school district. Every morning as pupils attended their home rooms, religious exercises were broadcast into each room in the school via the PA system, with select students reading 10 verses of the bible, followed by recitation of the Lord's Prayer, not only over the PA system but by students in the various classrooms, who were asked to stand and join in repeating the prayer in unison. The Supreme Court, in declaring such actions unconstitutional, sagely noted:

"The place of religion in our society is an exalted one, achieved through a

long tradition of reliance on the home, the church and the inviolable citadel of the individual heart and mind. We have come to recognize through bitter experience that it is not within the power of government to invade that citadel, whether its purpose or effect be to aid or oppose, to advance or retard. In the relationship between man and religion, the State is firmly committed to a position of neutrality."

Gaylor wrote: "We question why a City Council facing an unprecedented economic crisis — high unemployment and joblessness, foreclosures and citizens in desperate need of practical benefits — would misdirect precious time and resources in a diversionary and divisive attack upon respect for secular principles in Philadelphia Public Schools?

"What can be the intent and meaning of the City Council calling for 'hearings on prayer in Philadelphia public schools' if not to impermissibly advance religion, inflame passions and interfere with students' First Amendment right to believe, or disbelieve, as they desire?"


FFRF called on the council to rescind its unlawful resolution.

Contact:

Council President Anna Verna
Members of the City Council
City Hall, Room 405
Philadelphia PA 19107-32
anna.verna@phila.gov

School Reform Commission
(School Board)
440 North Broad Street
Suite 101
Philadelphia, PA 19130
druggiano@philasd.org

One Woman's Fight



One Woman's Fight. Historic 1948 Supreme Court decision.

Warmly told from family's perspective, with family photos.

Ppb, 240p

Mem. \$15

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FFRF.org/shop

FFRF

PO Box 750

Madison WI 53701

by Vashti McCollum

FFRF's landmark litigation educates

Help protest National Day of Prayer!

The Freedom From Religion Foundation won a sweet victory in April 2010 in *Obama v. FFRF*, when a federal judge issued a historic decision and ruled the National Day of Prayer unconstitutional:

"The same law that prohibits the government from declaring a National Day of Prayer also prohibits it from declaring a National Day of Blasphemy. [Congress may no more declare a National Day of Prayer than it] may encourage citizens to fast during the month of Ramadan, attend a synagogue, purify themselves in a sweat lodge or practice rune magic."

Although President Obama was enjoined from issuing a National Day of Prayer proclamation, U.S. District Judge Barbara Crabb stayed that injunction pending his appeal. A decision by an appeals court is expected by summer.

Please personally contact President Obama and your governor to let him or her know that you are deeply offended to be told to set aside a day for prayer by your nation's and state's chief secular executive. If your mayor, county executive or dogcatcher jumps on the prayer bandwagon, complain!

"Know thine enemy" by checking out local events organized by the Christian fundamentalist National Day of Prayer Task Force, headed by Shirley Dobson, which often expressly seeks to unite church and state, and often take place on public property:

nationaldayofprayer.org/about/find-an-event/

You may wish to protest or organize your own "let's call the whole thing off" or "national day of reason" rally. A National Day of Reason website lists some events: nationaldayofreason.org/

Note: The NDP Task Force website has undergone many crafty changes since FFRF's lawsuit, but not its requirements that you must be evangelical Christian to work with them. Before you can post an event, you have to confirm that:

"I believe that the Holy Bible is the inerrant Word of The Living God. I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the only One by which I can obtain salvation and have an ongoing relationship with God. I believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, his virgin birth, his sinless life, his miracles, the atoning work of his shed blood, his resurrection and ascension, his intercession and his coming return to power and glory. I believe that those who follow Jesus are family and there should be unity among all who claim his name."

The NDP was not hijacked by the Christian fundamentalists. It was created by them as the brainchild of Rev. Billy Graham. Tens of thousands of NDP Task Force events across the country have often created divisiveness when non-Christians are pointedly excluded.

The Task Force lobbies every public official from the president on down to issue their theme and bible verse as part of the proclamation. Public officials, including past presidents, have often obliged, which was part of FFRF's legal argument in challenging the 1952 and 1988 laws calling the first Thursday in May the "National Day of

The government has taken sides on a matter that must be left to individual conscience.

Prayer."

Read Judge Crabb's beautifully written decision against the National Day of Prayer: ffrf.org/uploads/legal/SummaryJudgementNDP.PDF

Contact the White House to comment

Please express your disappointment over the fact that the Obama administration is defending a McCarthy-era law entangling religion and government:

The Honorable Barack Obama
The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

White House Comment Line: 202-456-1111

Switchboard: 202-456-1414

FAX: 202-456-2461

whitehouse.gov/contact/

Contact local elected officials

Last year all 50 governors proclaimed a National Day of Prayer, even though the federal law does not require them to. In recent years, more than half of governors have used the proclamation wording, scripture verse or themes ghostwritten for them by the Task Force.

Ask your public officials to refrain, in their official capacity, from proclaiming or participating in the National Day of Prayer. (Please thank mayors and local officials who respect the separation between state and church.)

Use this online directory to find links to e-mail and postal addresses, and phone numbers for key elected officials: <http://www.usa.gov/Contact/Elected.shtml>

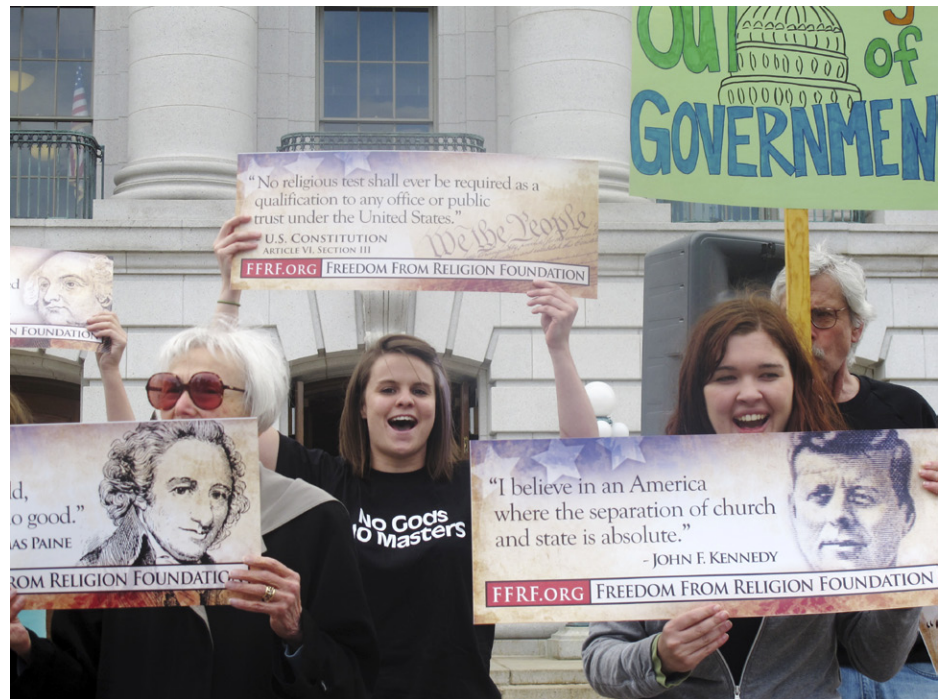
Monitor related government-religion entanglements

If you see related violations, such as "mayor's prayer breakfasts," contact our legal department at:

ffrf.org/legal/report/

Write letters to the editor

Send a succinct letter about why you oppose the National Day of Prayer, particularly if there is any coverage in your area, why it violates the Constitution or why it is an affront to you as a nonbeliever. Respond to religious op-eds and letters promoting the NDP and religion in government.



'Let's Call the Whole Thing Off'

Staffers and volunteers at the "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off" anti-National Day of Prayer rally sponsored by FFRF last May at the Wisconsin Capitol in Madison. (Photo by Ryan Foley)

Donate to FFRF's Legal Fund

FFRF is in a "David vs. Goliath" battle. Help defend the decision.

NOTE: Both the Alliance Defense Fund and the American Center for Law and Justice have done massive fundraising over FFRF's National Day

of Prayer case. The Religious Right is making robocalls. (A few members thought FFRF was making the calls. FFRF will never phone you asking for money!) But you can fight back by making a tax-deductible donation to FFRF's Legal Fund at:

ffrf.org/get-involved/donate/legal/ or to FFRF, Box 750, Madison WI 53701.



Overheard

Either God can do nothing to stop catastrophes like this, or he doesn't care to, or he doesn't exist. God is either impotent, evil, or imaginary. Take your pick, and choose wisely. The only sense to make of tragedies like this is that terrible things can happen to perfectly innocent people. This understanding inspires compassion. Religious faith, on the other hand, erodes compassion. Thoughts like, "this might be all part of God's plan," or "there are no accidents in life," or "everyone on some level gets what he or she deserves" — these ideas are not only stupid, they are extraordinarily callous. They are nothing more than a childish refusal to connect with the suffering of other human beings. It is time to grow up and let our hearts break at moments like this.

Neuroscientist and author Sam Harris, on the March 11 earthquake and tsunami

CNN Belief Blog, 3-20-11

The idea that Japan needs prayer seems to be about the single most impotent response that you could have to this crisis.

Michael Dippold, op-ed, "Japan needs aid, not prayer"

The Northern Iowan, 3-24-11

Despite its title, "The Book of Mormon" is less about religion than credu-

lity and the need to believe, as well as the singular American gift for dreaming up great stories and enduring symbols — and then selling them to everybody on the planet.

Theater critic Elisabeth Vincentelli, calling the Trey Parker-Matt Stone Broadway musical "a hit and a hoot"

New York Post, 3-24-11

Oh I can't wait to read this one. What do I get to do now that I didn't get to do before, and what about all that be-gatting in the ol' timey versions? Yee-haw!

Commenter gigip300, on the Ash Wednesday release of a new translation of the Catholic bible, which substitutes, e.g., "plunder" for "booty," "burnt offering" for "holocaust" and "virgin with child" for "young woman with child"

The Washington Post, 3-11-11

Man, I sound like a broken record, don't I? said Benedict, opening to a random page of his new book and pointing out a "crazy" number of references to the Son of God. It's just Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. Page after page of nothing but Jesus. Who wants to read that?

Story headlined "Pope to ease up on Jesus talk"

The Onion, 3-16-11



Freethought road rally

Some adventurous members of the Triangle Freethought Society (North Carolina) went on a “road rally” April 2, starting at a Raleigh restaurant for lunch, then driving more than 200 miles to hit each of 12 “Out of the Closet” billboards up in the area. They ended the day with a party at the house of Joey Carabetta, chapter treasurer, who provided the beautiful photographs.

A Freethought Oasis sprouts in Texas



A group of Texas freethinkers would not ever be accepting donations FFRF’ers Tracy Black (left) and Rodney Hinds of Freethought Oasis in Amarillo, Texas, delivered some literary food for thought March 28 to Tascosa High School’s library.

brought enlightenment to one Amarillo high school after being turned down at another one. Tracy Black, Freethought Oasis treasurer and event organizer, recounts the story:

“We started the book fund a few months ago. Area public libraries have very few books for atheists. The catalogue shows just two copies of *The God Delusion* for the entire area. The high schools are even worse. A search for ‘atheism’ doesn’t bring up a single book, yet any given library has dozens of devotionals, bible studies and Christian living books. So we decided to make our point of view more accessible and began raising money for the books.”

Black and her husband, Mike, are FFRF members and have four daughters, ages 7, 9, 12 and 18. Freethought Oasis President Rodney Hinds is also a Foundation member. The group was founded in 2009 as the Panhandle Pastafarians.

“Our first attempt did not work out,” Black said. “The head librarian at Randall High School at first agreed to accept our donation, but after receiving our list of books, put us off for two months before making it clear that he

from us.”

The Randall High library didn’t even have a copy of Darwin’s *On the Origin of the Species*.

“Tascosa High School went much easier,” said Black. “The head librarian approved our list almost immediately. All 10 books we donated are hardback, and most are going in the 200s [Dewey Decimal System] alongside the religious books.”

Librarian Meg Hedrick noted in a letter of thanks that the school serves “over 2,300 students with various interests and cultural backgrounds, so the donation is treasured.”

Tascosa students and staff can now read:

The God Delusion by Richard Dawkins; *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism* by Susan Jacoby; *Why People Believe Weird Things: Pseudoscience, Superstition, and Other Confusions of Our Time* by Michael Shermer; *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark* by Carl Sagan; *The Evolution of God* by Robert Wright; *Infidel* by Ayaan Hirsi Ali; *Misquoting Jesus: The Story Behind Who Changed the Bible and Why* and *Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible* by Bart Ehrman;

Good Without God by Greg Epstein; and *Letter to a Christian Nation* by Sam Harris. Dawkins and Jacoby are FFRF Honorary Board members.

Black said plans are to expand the list and find more libraries willing to accept free books. [Wouldn’t you think that would be *every* library?]

“I hope that other groups or individuals in rural areas will consider this,” Black said. “During my own path to atheism in my teens, I had no one to talk to and no access to any materials. I was pretty much on my own and didn’t even meet another atheist until my 20s. I’d like the journey to be easier for the next generation.”

Freethought Oasis also has its name on a Texas Adopt-A-Highway sign for keeping two miles of road litter-free and participated in a historical museum’s Christmas open house. “We have a great museum. Everything they do is educational and secular, even the Christmas open house, so no one even batted an eye at volunteering,” Black said.

Members also volunteer at the Amarillo Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and at a local community garden and worked during a drive that collected 3,500 pounds of staples for a food bank. Some battles were lost,

like protesting a courthouse Ten Commandments monument in a neighboring county.

The story as recounted at freethoughtoasis.org/ is: “One of our members, a resident of Hutchinson County, had contacted county officials before construction began, informing them that the monument was unconstitutional, and that a James Madison quote which was to appear on the monument was likely fabricated in the 1930s. The completed monument includes the bogus quote, along with that pesky commandment on bearing false witness.”

In a welcome to “All Rational Humans,” FO member Jamie Farren writes: “Superstition, ‘New Age’ books, chiropractors and religion — you don’t have to look far in the Texas panhandle before being confronted with the stewards of irrationality. For those of you who feel the pressure of those around you to accept such ideas yet courageously choose to press on with the sovereignty of your own minds, this website is dedicated to you.

“Let this be a place where ideas may be judged on their own merits, with their success or failure to be determined by the highest of human virtues: Reason.”

U.S. House approves D.C. religious school vouchers

A bill to continue a defunct school voucher program in Washington, D.C., passed the U.S. House on March 30 by a vote of 225 to 195. One Democrat — Illinois Rep. Dan Lipinski — joined majority Republicans, nine of whom opposed the bill.

The program has been criticized as ineffective and as a tool to funnel taxpayer money to religious schools. President Obama released a statement the day before the vote urging members to vote “no.”

The Scholarships for Opportunity

and Results Act lets low-income Parents in D.C. get \$7,500 federal vouchers. A pilot version of the program started during the Bush administration and expired in 2009. Subsequent studies of student performance have shown no increase in student achievement.

‘The Lord Is Not on Trial Here Today’

‘McCollum’ documentary airs on PBS in May

A one-hour PBS documentary, “The Lord is Not on Trial Here Today,” tells the compelling story of the landmark First Amendment case that established the separation of church and state in public schools. The film recounts what plaintiff Vashti McCollum later described as “three years of headlines, headaches and hatred,” but eventually led to a decision that still resonates in the church-state conflicts of today, more than 60 years after *McCollum v. Board of Education* was decided.

Written, produced and directed by Jay Rosenstein, the Peabody Award-winning documentary is narrated by former “M*A*S*H” TV star David Ogden Stiers. Check your local station for exact date and time of the May PBS broadcast in your area. If it is not in

the lineup, ask your station to schedule it. It’s available for purchase by educational institutions from New Day Films (website below).

“When U.S. Senate candidate Christine O’Donnell expressed her confusion about separation of church and state in a debate during the 2010 election, the video of it quickly went viral,” Rosenstein said. “But O’Donnell is not alone: Many Americans have no idea about the source and legitimacy of the phrase ‘separation of church and state.’”

The late Vashi McCollum was an honorary FFRF officer and appeared several times at FFRF conventions. The Foundation has kept in print her classic book, *One Woman’s Fight*, about winning the 1948 Supreme Court

case. FFRF also interviewed her for its film, “Champions of the First Amendment.” Her son, Daniel McCollum, has published *The Lord Was Not on Trial: The Inside Story*. FFRF distributed more than 400 copies of Dan’s book to Illinois public and public school libraries and to law libraries around the nation.

Vashti, a young mother of three from a small central Illinois town, was called “that awful woman” by her neighbors and “that atheist mother” by newspapers across the country. Her friends stopped returning



Vashti McCollum

phone calls rather than risk speaking with her. She was branded a communist, and the Illinois Legislature nearly outlawed her and her husband from ever working at the state university again. She got as many as 200 letters a day. Some of the writers claimed they would pray for her; many others wished her much worse.

All because, in 1945, she filed a historic lawsuit that forever changed the relationship between religion and public schools in America.

Learn more:

thelordisnotontrial.com

facebook.com/thelordisnotontrial

newday.com/films/thelordisnotontrial-heretoday.html

Getting acquainted with: Billy Ferguson

From Sacramento, Calif., Billy Ferguson writes:

I read every page of your wonderful newspaper every month, except possibly the Black Collar Crime Blotter, which is so disgusting that I sometimes pass over it. I sometimes give copies to acquaintances or extended family members. I doubt that they read much of it because they are not the least interested in having their beliefs challenged. But at least they have it if they should decide to think for themselves.

Many of the stories are by people who once believed in God and found their way to reason. My story is quite different. I was born Aug. 24, 1936. My mother was from a Dutch family who migrated to the U.S. by way of Dutch New Guinea. She eloped with a Scottish coal miner and spent the next seven years in a tarpaper shack in a coal mining camp near Irondale, Ala. She had three live children and three miscarriages in seven years and, she later discovered, undiagnosed tuberculosis.

After serving in World War II, my father got a job with Birmingham transit, and we were raised in that Alabama city. He drank, gambled, womanized, lied and stole and caused us a lot of pain. When I was about 13, I established lifelong values mostly based on not behaving like my father.

I attribute my atheism to the fact that I was born an atheist, and the adults in my life waited too long to attempt to destroy my confidence in myself and turn me on to mysticism.

When I started school at age 6, the teacher came to our home and informed my mother that she couldn’t teach me because I behaved like a pagan and wouldn’t accept her authority without question. My mother decided to save me and spent the next nine years trying to Christianize me, all to

no avail. I tried to keep quiet, even on occasion pretended to believe, but eventually it would all come unraveled. My failing was that I had too much respect for the truth. I always felt really bad at these times because I loved my mother very much and I felt like I was breaking her heart.

At age 15, I got my first job at Hill’s Grocery. My first pay was \$12.50 for 25 hours work. Since my father was still carousing and we were always in debt, my mother demanded the money to buy food. At first I resisted, but then I saw the perfect solution. I would give her the money, and the money that I earned every week in the future, if she stopped making me attend church.

She refused. I told her that she couldn’t refuse, that if she took the money, then she must leave me alone. She took the money and she never seriously bothered me again. The arrangement lasted until I joined the U.S. Army at age 18.

A helping hand

A man named Walter C. Andrews significantly contributed to my ability to become a success in life. Mr. Andrews, married with two young children, was attending the University of Alabama Dental College on the G.I. Bill and delivering newspapers to supplement his income.

He stopped by Hill’s for a soft drink and, when he saw the way I was being treated, waited outside to offer me a job rolling his morning newspapers at twice what I was making in the store. Eventually he turned his routes over to me and had me babysit in his fine home in the hills south of Birmingham when he and his wife went out.

He took me to his school and gave me the first dental care I’d ever had, filling practically every tooth in my head. But most of all, he gave me a vision of what a person can do to make their life better. He’s probably long



Billy Ferguson with his wife, Mimi, and their daughter, Celebration, who is studying chemical engineering at UCLA. All three are FFRF Lifetime Members.

He’s still alive in my mind — the only immortality any of us get.

dead, but he’s still alive in my mind — the only immortality any of us get.

Interestingly enough, I was an outspoken atheist while in the military and suffered no discrimination or harassment for my beliefs. I performed my assigned duties to the best of my ability and was honorably discharged in 1958 as a sergeant after three years of duty.

As I became older, I became more outspoken. By the time I graduated from the University of Michigan with a master’s degree in civil engineering at age 25, I was completely open about my disbelief.

I am now 74 and retired. I worked about 20 years for the state of California and about 20 years for private consultants, mostly overseas (Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iran and Indonesia). I have always been an open atheist and, as far as I know, have never been harassed or held back from advancement for my beliefs.

Once during a census in Indone-

sia, the college student who came to my home asked me my religion. I said atheist. He wrote Christian on the form. I told him to change it to atheist. His reply was that if I wanted to stay in Indonesia, that I should leave it to say Christian.

Apparently, any religion is acceptable in Indonesia, 95% of which is Muslim, but having no religion is not acceptable.

I am still engaged in civil engineering. After retiring in 1999, I decided it was time to give something back to the society that had treated me so well.

For the past seven years, I have been refurbishing and reprogramming old computers for children in south Sacramento. So far, I have installed computers in the homes of almost 1,200 children who did not have one at home. I set the computers up, show the kids how to access the programs and repair or reprogram computers when they crash.

When parents say “God bless you” as I am leaving, I tell them that I will accept their blessing, but that God doesn’t exist, so “God bless you” is meaningless.

When they ask what I believe in, I tell them that I believe in them and their children and that people should help people and forget about pleading for help from a nonexistent God.

Lack of religion is natural state of mind



By Sarah Sodemann

This world would be a much better place in the absence of religion. This is too brief a space in which to completely explain why, but there is an abundance of literature on the matter if one were interested.

I will not suggest, however, that we deny people their freedom of religion for several reasons. One, I am aware that to successfully alter the opinions of billions of indoctrinated people is

unrealistic at best. Second, I was raised with a “live and let live” mentality. If someone is not infringing on my rights as a human being, then I have no business trying to change their mind.

Following that statement, however, I will say that forcing one’s children into a religion before they are old enough to decide for themselves is indeed encroaching on their rights as human beings. My sister and I were raised to decide theological issues for ourselves, and I am thankful to my parents every day for that. I would like everyone to have that same, simple opportunity.

We must encourage rational thought and reason in our schools. Let our children learn all they can and decide what they want to believe (or not believe). If people really think that their religion is the best and only true religion, then they should, in theory, have no problem allowing their children to think for themselves, trusting that they will choose the “right way,” perhaps with the guidance of a specific higher being.

My thinking is that if they refuse to do such a thing, they do not have complete faith in their religion, in which case one might ask, why would they force it upon anyone else, let alone their children?

I say this not to be accusatory or

confrontational. I only wish to elicit some serious thought on the matter. Too many people never get the proper chance to obtain enough information before they are simply told what is “right” and are discouraged from asking questions about it.

Why do different religions seem to be more concentrated in certain places around the world? The answer is simple: Thoughts of a higher being and an afterlife are not inborn ideas. They stem from a time when so little was known about the world that it was the only feasible explanation and was passed down through the generations as fact. I can hardly blame these cultures of 10,000 years ago, but now that the vast majority of worldly phenomena can be explained through science, religion truly has no place.

The point at which I think one is ready to decide whether or not a particular religion is a proper explanation for the world is after obtaining a large knowledge base. We need to teach about as many different religions as possible. Teach the origins and histories of these religions, the similarities and the differences. Teach about other cultures, world history and literature as well as the sciences of biology, chemistry, physics, etc.

I am fascinated by the world around

me. Every new bit of information I discover entices me to learn more. The biological processes responsible for the existence and maintenance of every living thing on Earth are amazing in the true sense of the word. A scientific understanding of our world is vital to improving it.

The explanatory power of the sciences is too great a tool for our future to not pass along to the next generation. Instead of praying for a miracle when our loved ones are ill, we can cure them ourselves through scientific means. Instead of watching the environment fall to pieces around us, we can find ways to preserve it. Instead of trusting that there is “a plan” for the suffering of those in Third World countries, we can find actual ways to lessen that suffering.

It is my feeling that when children grow up unindoctrinated, they will find no need for religion. If the only way to keep people believing in a faith is to withhold information, that merely proves my point.

Sarah Sodemann, a member of the La Crosse Area Freethought Society, is studying archaeology and biology at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. This essay is one in an ongoing series by LCAFS members published by the La Crosse Tribune.

Red Tani: freethinking Filipino

By Red Tani

Two and a half years ago, I came out to my relatives as an atheist. This mattered because ours was a close-knit family, and next to blood, what held it together was religion. Together with the sacraments, we have yearly Christmas reunions, and the organizers put their devoutness at the center of every celebration.

This devotion overflowed into the family mailing list. Most of the e-mails I received from the Yahoo Group were religious chain letters. They often began with “This is a true story” (although a quick visit to Snopes.com would debunk this), and they’d often end with “Forward this to seven people and a miracle will happen.” Aside from the hassle of deleting such messages, my increasing interest in secular issues and literature made the letters more annoying.

One day, I’d had enough. I decided the mailing list needed a more rational perspective. So I forwarded an essay by Dan Barker, co-president of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, an organization that protects the separation of state and church in the U.S.

The essay criticized religion with logical arguments, meticulous research and hard evidence. Most of my relatives were lost at “criticized religion.” Some even admitted that they didn’t read the entire essay. Because Dan Barker disparaged religion, they disparaged Dan Barker. They said that

he was an attention craver (*papansin*) who had nothing better to do with his time. Most of all, he should be ignored because he was an atheist, they said.

Then I told them, “So am I.”

That I did not get their support is an understatement. I was told that I was wasting my intelligence, that I should not argue with my elders because that was disrespectful. But it was my intelligence that led me to my conclusions, and it was out of respect that I expected them to understand my arguments. After a few days, the exchanges stopped, but no closure was reached. I guess ignoring my arguments the way they ignored Dan’s left them content.

But I wasn’t content. I still had thoughts that I needed to share, and my family wasn’t the group I could share them with. So I looked for one. I found a group of Filipino atheists online. I was glad to finally find people who thought the way I did, and I wanted to meet them as soon as possible. I figured that since Filipino atheists were few, the ones that did know each other would be close friends.

I was disappointed. I learned that though the group had been in existence since 2005, they seldom did anything other than discuss on mailing lists and comment on each other’s blogs. They seldom met, and at each meeting only a handful would show up. I told the group about my disappointment, and soon we were debating the merits of changing the group into something more than a mailing list, of spreading freethought to Filipinos in all corners of the world, both online and off. So I left one mailing list argument and found myself in another.

But unlike the family mailing list, this was the kind of discussion that I needed. Although I was a newbie, they focused on what I said rather than who I was. Arguments were met with counterarguments, and it was obvious that these people placed merit on reason. They took nothing on authority, tradition or faith. We were arguing, but as early as then (January 2009) I already knew: I was home.

We finally agreed to have more face-to-face activities and projects. The first Filipino Freethinkers meetup was held on Feb. 1, 2009, and it was attended by 26 people. (Happy second anniversary, FF!) Since that day two years ago, we haven’t looked back. For two years we’ve had regular meetups, now attended regularly by more than 30 people. The last one had around 40. We have regional chapters in Davao and Cebu, a recognized university chapter in UP Diliman and university chapters forming on four other campuses. We’ve hosted several forums, fun activities, a film fest and even an Excommunication Party. We’ve participated in rallies and outreach programs, were guests on a TV show and several radio shows and have supported causes in line with ours.

We’re still active online with our website (filipinofreethinkers.org), a forum and Facebook pages reaching thousands of freethinkers all over the world. The Internet has allowed us to collaborate with other freethinking communities in Southeast Asia — Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia. We now correspond with freethought leaders we once only looked up to, including Dan Barker, whose essay helped start



my own journey.

Looking back, I now think that I came out to my family not out of annoyance but loneliness. I was looking for people who thought the way I did. Thinking for yourself can be lonely. But it doesn’t have to be.

As a member of Filipino Freethinkers for two years, I’ve realized that it’s more fun and fulfilling to think for yourself with others. We don’t always agree. In fact, we argue quite often. But don’t all families?

Red Tani is the founding president of Filipino Freethinkers. A designer and communications consultant, he promotes freethought through his writing, university lectures, TV and radio appearances and public advocacy of secularism. He has been facilitating twice-a-month freethought meetups for more than two years and still loves every second of it.

In Memoriam

Jo Ann Boydston, 1924–2011

Jo Ann Boydston, 86, Naples, Fla., an FFRF Lifetime Member, died Jan. 25, 2011, in Naples.

She grew up in Poteau, Okla., and was a member of the Choctaw tribe. She graduated summa cum laude in 1944 from Oklahoma State University with a B.A. in foreign languages. She earned a master's from OSU in 1947, a Ph.D. from Columbia University in 1950 and an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Indiana University in 1994.

Before joining the Southern Illinois University faculty, Boydston taught Spanish and French at Poteau High School and Junior College, was a teaching fellow at OSU, a lecturer in Spanish at Columbia University, an assistant professor of Spanish and later associate professor and supervisor of student teachers at the University of Mississippi.

Boydston came to SIU in 1955 as assistant director of teacher training. In 1961, she became associate director of what was then known as the Cooperative Research on Dewey Publications and in 1966 became director of the Dewey Center.

The world's foremost expert on John Dewey's text, she served for nearly 30 years as director of the widely acclaimed Center for Dewey Studies and

edited and authored nearly 50 books and scores of articles on related topics. She earned the rank of Distinguished Professor, the first woman to be so honored at SIU. Boydston is probably best known as the general editor of the monumental 37-volume edition of *The Collected Works of John Dewey*, a work that now stands as a model for scholarly excellence in multivolume editing.

Boydston and her husband, Don, also an FFRF Lifetime Member, made significant contributions to the advancement of Southern Illinois University, including an endowed chair in the Philosophy Department and scholarships in Intercollegiate Athletics, culminating in the dedication of the Boydston Center on campus in 2010.

After moving to Naples, she continued her efforts to help improve the lives of those around her and to promote the advancement of women. She was active in the American Association of University Women, the Women's Network for Change, Planned Parenthood of Collier County board of directors and the Collier County Women's Political Caucus.

She was preceded in death by her husband of 62 years in March 2005. She kindly remembered FFRF in a bequest.

James W. Russell, 87

The Foundation sadly notes the death of Lifetime member James W. Russell, 87, Morris Plains, N.J., who died Oct. 23, 2010.

James was born in Detroit, Mich., to Arthur and Audna Russell. He was an officer in the U.S. Navy in World War II and a graduate of University of Southern California and Harvard Business School. He had a successful career in marketing and retired from AT&T. He was preceded in death by his wife, DeLores Drew Russell.

James is survived by a daughter, Deirdre Russell of Bedford, Mass.; two sons, James Russell of Ridgefield, Conn., and Edward Russell of Boxborough, Mass.; three grandchildren, Jacob, Nathan and Michele; a great-grandchild, Julia; and his dear friend, Judy Harris.

A memorial service was held at the Morristown Unitarian Fellowship, Morristown, N.J., on Nov. 6.

James joined FFRF in 1987, the year the Foundation went national. He worked closely with Jo and Charline Kotula, founding members and direc-

tors of the longstanding New Jersey chapter. (Jo and Charline were instrumental in founding the Morristown Unitarian Fellowship and purchase of its building, where James' memorial was held.)

"We enjoyed knowing Jim Russell so much," said Annie Laurie Gaylor, Foundation co-president, "and we'll remember his hospitality and the tour he gave Dan and me when we visited Morristown, including a 'pilgrimage' to the statue erected to honor Thomas Paine."

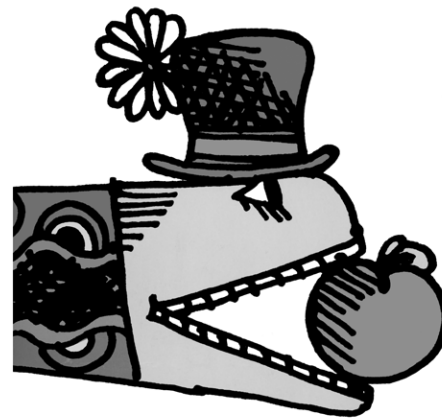
His namesake son, who recently notified FFRF of his father's death, wrote, "I know your organization was very important for him. I have the framed copy of The New York Times ad hanging in my office."

The elder Russell was one of the kind sponsors who donated \$1,000 to pay for FFRF's full-page ad on the 2010 National Day of Prayer applauding U.S. District Judge Barbara Crabb's ruling declaring the religious day unconstitutional.

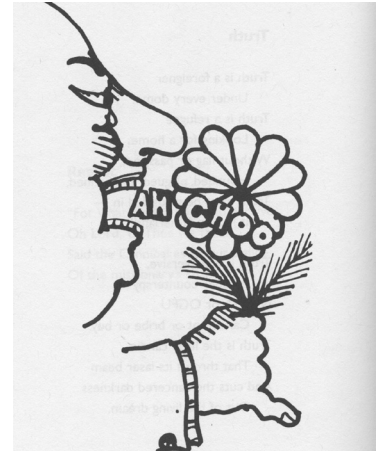
Survivors include his uncle, John (Julie Rutter) Schulz, Harshaw, Wis.; an aunt, Mary Lew, Tulsa, Okla.; and many nieces, nephews and cousins.

He'd been an FFRF member since 1990.

Yip Harburg Rhymes for the Irreverent



Illustrated by Seymour Chwast



Voucher push takes nation by storm

Voucher proposals, which mostly benefit religious schools, are taking the nation's legislatures by storm, especially in states with GOP control of executive and legislative branches. Besides the proposal in Wisconsin (see page 10), others are:

Pennsylvania: Senate Bill 1 would let parents use state-funded vouchers to send children to parochial, private or charter schools outside their public district. The scheme initially would limit vouchers to low-income students in 144 "persistently failing" schools (91 of them in Philadelphia). By the third year of the plan, eligibility would expand to any low-income child, including those already attending private schools.

Introduced as part of the \$27.3 billion budget proposed by Gov. Tom Corbett, the bill would eventually cost \$1 billion a year, slightly less than the amount Corbett wants to eliminate from the state's 2011-12 subsidy for public schools.

New Jersey: The Assembly Commerce Committee approved a bill to create a voucher plan for 40,000 students in 13 "failing" districts, offering \$8,000 per elementary student and \$11,000 per high school student. It would grant tax credits to businesses that donate to a scholarship fund for religious and other private schools. According to the Newark Star-Ledger, by the fifth year, the state's loss of tax revenue would be \$800 million.

Indiana: Gov. Mitch Daniels and prayerful House Speaker Brian Bosma are promoting HB 1003 to establish a radical statewide voucher scheme. Families with incomes as high as \$105,000 would be eligible. The bill passed the House 56-42, opposed by four Republicans and 38 Democrats, the last week in March. It's expected to pass the Senate.

"Why would you want to vote for a bill that siphons money away from public schools, that does not improve student achievement and entangles the government with religious and private schools?" asked Rep. Matt Pierce, D-Bloomington. After Democrats conducted a five-week walkout, Republicans agreed to limit the number of vouchers to 7,500 the first year and 15,000 the second. The cap would be removed the third year. As originally

written, the bill would give money to students from families of four making more than \$100,000.

Ohio: Gov. John Kasich wants to expand Ohio's private/religious voucher program, currently enrolling 14,000 students, to 60,000, while cutting public school education. The state runs two voucher programs, the 14,000 Ed-Choice program, and a smaller program only for students in Cleveland.

Colorado: The Douglas County School District in February passed a contentious proposal to begin vouchers, including to religious schools. Thirteen of 14 eligible private schools in the district are religious.

Muslims take revenge for Quran burning

Angry Muslims upset at a Quran burning in Florida stormed a United Nations compound April 1 in Mazar-I-Sharif, Afghanistan, and killed at least 12 people and wounded 20 others.

The dead included at least seven U.N. workers — four Nepalese guards and three Europeans from Romania, Sweden and Norway — and five Afghans, reported The New York Times. The mob also lit fires, toppled guard towers and heaved cement blocks. Victims were killed by weapons taken from U.N. guards.

Pastor Terry Jones burned a Quran with about 30 people watching after a mock trial March 20 at his church in Gainesville. He'd threatened to do so last Sept. 11 but didn't. At the time, Gen. David Petraeus warned that doing so could provoke Muslim violence.

The riots were set off after President Hamid Karzai publicized the book burning in a March 31 speech calling for Jones' arrest.

An estimated 20,000 people took to the streets after Friday prayers at which mullahs in Mazar-I-Sharif called for Jones' arrest.

On April 2 in Kandahar Province, government officials reported to CNN that at least nine additional civilians were killed and 73 injured in similar protests.

In a statement, Jones said, "Islam is not a religion of peace. It is time that we call these people to accountability."

The protests spread over the weekend to Jalalabad, Parwan, Laghman, Kabul, Takhar and Herat. At least 30 people have been killed and more than 100 wounded at press time.

William J. Schulz, 57

The Foundation has received word of the untimely death of William J. "Willy" Schulz, 57, Edgar, Wis., who died Dec. 29, 2010, at his home.

Willy was a mechanical engineer for BBK Engineering Co. for many years.

Black Collar Crime Blotter

Compiled by Bill Dunn

Arrested / Charged

Steven Fulton, 26, Philadelphia, **PA**: 11 counts of rape, sexual assault and indecent assault of a child younger than 13. Fulton, a teacher at the Baptist-affiliated Timothy Academy, allegedly assaulted a female victim over a 3-year period, starting when she was 11.

"The activity escalated over a period of time," said Capt. John Darby of the Special Victim's Unit. The alleged crimes took place at school and in Fulton's car, he said. *Source: Philadelphia Inquirer, 3-23-11*

Joe David Nelms, 47, Lindale, **TX**: 8 counts of lewd acts on a child under 14. Nelms, a volunteer bible study teacher at First Baptist Church and a counselor at Sky Ranch, a Christian camp and ministry, was arrested on an Orange County, CA, warrant. He's accused of molesting a 13-year-old girl over a period of 3 years starting in 1993 while he was youth pastor at Pacific Coast Church in San Clemente. Alleged assaults occurred at the church and in a car, police said. *Source: Orange County Register, 3-23-11*

Rev. John Naylor, 65, Miamisburg, **OH**: Soliciting a prostitute. Naylor, pastor for visitation and senior adults at First Church of God, is charged with paying a woman \$20 for oral sex. The woman told police she needed money to buy heroin. *Source: Dayton Daily News, 3-23-11*

Rev. Stephen D. Berry, 38, Jonesville, **SC**: 2nd-degree criminal sexual conduct with a minor. Berry was associate pastor at New Life Baptist Church. He's accused of having sexual intercourse with a 15-year-old girl several times at various locations in 2010.

Union County Sheriff David Taylor said Berry was the subject of a prior criminal investigation involving sexual misconduct allegations from an adult female who decided not to press charges. Taylor said he's unsure if there are more victims.

Robert Williams, New Life's chairman of deacons, said in a statement that the church placed Berry on administrative leave Jan. 27 after learning of the allegations from the adult female. Berry resigned Feb. 3. "We will continue to unconditionally love Rev. Berry and his family through grace as we would any member of our church in difficult times such as these," Williams said. *Source: WSPA News, 3-22-11*

Jason L. Wolk, 25, Vancouver, **WA**: Sexual misconduct with a minor and 4 counts of child molestation. Wolk, former youth minister at Vancouver Wesleyan Church, is accused of assaulting 2 teen boys from his church youth group.

One boy met with Wolk almost every day last year to get help with his "Christian life walk," court documents said. Then, basically, the walk turned to talk and touching with the boy in bed wearing only boxer shorts. They also prayed in bed, the boy said. *Source: KPTV News, 3-21-11*

Rev. Lamont D. Brown, 45, Suffolk, **VA**: Embezzlement, identity theft, credit card fraud and 3 counts of writing insufficient funds checks. The charges stem from the time Brown was pastor at Mount Olive Baptist Church in Virginia Beach from June 2003 to July 2010.

He allegedly hiked his own salary by \$11,000 without church approval and defrauded the church of about \$9,000. *Source: WAVY News, 3-21-11*

William C. Wert, 54, Venice, **FL**: 7 counts of sexual battery of a minor and 4 counts of lewd behavior. Wert, a Carmelite friar living in a Catholic retirement home, has been removed from the active ministry. He was convicted in 2007 of simple assault for inappropriately touching a 14-year-old and served 15 days in jail.

The current alleged victim's father contacted police after finding mes-



sages on his son's cell phone. Affidavits said Wert was aware the boy was 14 and that they engaged in various sexual activities over 5 months in the boy's house, Wert's vehicle, a vacant house, a wooded area and a motel room. *Source: UPI, 3-18-11*

Brent Girouex, 33, Omaha, **NE**: 60 counts of sexual exploitation by a counselor or therapist. Girouex, former youth pastor at Victory Fellowship Church in Council Bluffs, IA, is accused by several males as young as 14 of engaging in sex acts with them in 2007-09.

Pottawattamie County Attorney Matt Wilber said his office is working with 8 people who allege they were victimized by Girouex. In court documents, the youths allege Girouex told them if they masturbated with him they could gain "sexual purity in the eyes of God." *Source: AP, 3-15-11*

Rev. Edward Fairley, 59, Paterson, **NJ**: Attempted murder, possession of weapon for unlawful purpose and violation of restraining order. Fairley, pastor at Koinonia and Christian Ministries, is accused of stabbing Rev. Simone Shields, 52, with a knife.

Police said they were lovers but Shields wanted to stop the relationship. Fairley, who is married, was convicted of stabbing his former wife in 1984 and served 6 years in prison. *Source: 3-11-11*

Sean Feltmann, 24, Albany, **OR**: Luring a minor. Feltmann was director of youth at Willamette Community Church but resigned after being charged. A 14-year-old girl's parents told police he sent sexually explicit text messages to their daughter, leading to a grand jury indictment. *Source: Albany Democrat-Herald, 3-10-11*

Rev. Clint Rogers, 37, Scottsdale, **AZ**: Mortgage fraud. Rogers, head of Clint Rogers Ministries International, and his wife, **Angela Faith Rogers**, 31, are accused of conspiring with 3 others in a \$5.5 million mortgage scheme.

The Arizona Republic found in a 2009 investigation that the Rogerses bought 26 homes in less than 2 years, and most of them went into foreclosure. Prosecutor Patrick Cunningham said, "They got \$2.5 million in alleged cash back."

A 13-count indictment alleged they used intermediaries to buy homes, then took possession of them through so-called "double escrow" at a higher price. The ministry allegedly laundered money from the real estate transactions, the indictment said. *Source: UPI, 3-10-11*

Rev. Tonto Sylvester Corbin, 42, Salisbury, **MD**: Sex abuse of a minor, sex offense and assault. Corbin, pastor of Jesus Saves House of Prayer and Refuge, is alleged to have had sex twice with a 15-year-old girl, once at his home and once in a bathroom at the church, which is inside the McIntire Building on East Main Street.

Corbin was convicted of 2nd-degree rape in 2003 and had a sexual relationship with a 13-year-old girl in 1990-91, police said. He was charged after a blood test showed he was the father of her child. He was convicted of involuntary manslaughter in 2005 in an unrelated incident. *Source: Del-MarVa News, 3-9-11*

Rev. Mwindi Lezoka, 47, Mon-

treah, **CAN**: Fraud and producing false documents. Lezoka, pastor of Bethel Christian Community, is accused of defrauding Parc Safari, a zoo, out of about \$1 million in an alleged scheme involving 2 of his followers.

Implicated in the alleged scheme are husband-and-wife congregation members **Ruth Eugene**, 38, former Parc Safari accountant, and her spouse, **Jasmin St-Louis**, 43.

Lezoka has also been sued by about 25 parishioners in a \$1.5 million alleged fraud case separate from the criminal case. *Source: Canadian Press, 3-9-11*

Rev. Ignatius Kury, 37, Akron, **OH**: Operating a vehicle while intoxicated. Kury, pastor at Holy Ghost Ukrainian Byzantine Catholic Church, had a blood-alcohol level of 0.203, nearly 3 times the legal level. He took a leave of absence to check into rehab after police released a 23-minute video showing him exposing himself in a holding cell and his profanity-laced tirade that included:

"Christ on the cross, you got these shackles on me," he said. "I'll give you the Sermon on the Mount. Your Sermon on the Mount is this: Get these [expletive] bars off me 'cuz I'm getting a rash." *Source: CNN, 3-5-11*

Rev. Grant Storms, 53, Metairie, **LA**: Public obscenity. Storms, a Christian fundamentalist preacher known for protesting gay Southern Decadence festivals in the French Quarter on Labor Day, was arrested for masturbating in a park near where children were playing. Two women saw him in his van and called police.

Storms told police he had his hands in his pants because he was urinating in a "pee bottle" he uses in his lawn care business. He said he was too tired to walk to the park bathroom. *Source: Times-Picayune, 3-1-11*

Rabbi Nechemya Weberman, 52, Brooklyn, **NY**: Rape, endangering the welfare of a child, sexual abuse, sexual misconduct against a child and engaging in a criminal sexual act. Weberman does not have a congregation but is a counselor affiliated with the United Talmudic Community, an Orthodox yeshiva.

The father of a 16-year-old girl had set up a hidden camera because he suspected she was "messing around" with her boyfriend. What showed up instead was Weberman assaulting her. The girl told a school counselor he first raped her when she was 12 and detailed at least 16 incidents that took place at his home office through 2010. *Source: CBS News, 2-25-11*

Rev. Greg Metcalf, 49, Asheville, **NC**: Misdemeanor assault on a child under 12 and contributing to the delinquency of a minor. Metcalf, pastor at Westwood Baptist Church, created a "substantial risk of physical injury" to his 11-year-old daughter by stuffing a wash rag in her mouth and spraying her in the face with water while she was taking a bath in October, the arrest warrant said. *Source: Citizen-Times, 2-24-11*

Rev. Christopher Wenthe, 46, St. Paul, **MN**: 3rd-degree criminal sexual conduct. Wenthe, who resigned as pastor at Delano Catholic Community, is accused of having a sexual relationship with a woman

‘Instead of praying for her — p-r-a-y — you preyed on her — p-r-e-y.’ — Judge Thomas Marcelain

while he was a priest at Nativity of Our Lord Church in 2003-05. Wenthe claims the sex was consensual.

The woman, now 29, told police in 2010 she sought counseling from Wenthe and confided to him she'd been sexually abused as a child and had an eating disorder. It's a felony in Minnesota for clergy to have sex with another adult seeking "religious or spiritual advice, aid, or comfort in private." Wenthe has gone through treatment ordered by his archdiocese. *Source: Minneapolis Star Tribune, 2-18-11*

Pleaded / Convicted

Rev. Antonio Cortes, 41, Salinas, **CA**: Pleaded no contest to 14 counts of sodomy, child molestation, possession of child pornography, furnishing liquor to a minor, child endangerment and immoral acts in the presence of a minor. Cortes was suspended in 2009 from pastor at St. Mary of the Nativity Church. He met the victim when he was 13. *Source: Salinas Californian, 3-16-11*

Rev. Ricardo Avalos Maffey, 44, San Clemente, **CA**: Convicted of 5 felony counts of lewd conduct with a child and 1 count of contacting a minor with intent to molest. Maffey, pastor at Apostolic Christian Church, was accused of kissing and sexually touching a minor girl in 2008 and of sending her salacious e-mails.

Prosecutors said he was a "quasi-father figure" to the girl, spent time with her and her siblings at his home and was progressing toward a sexual relationship with her when her mother found out. *Source: Orange County Register, 3-15-11*

Rev. H. Kelly McKnight Jr., 59, Augusta, **GA**: Pleaded guilty to wire fraud. McKnight, senior pastor at Bible Deliverance Temple, cried as he admitted his guilt to the judge. Evidence showed he submitted an application to Wachovia Mortgage that misrepresented his father's income, his father's intent to occupy the property and other information. *Source: Augusta Chronicle, 3-11-11*

Rev. Raymond C. Young, 38, Orange, **TX**: Pleaded guilty to fraudulent receipt of Social Security benefits. Young, pastor at Greater St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church, had drawn Social Security disability benefits since 2005 for himself and his 4 children while he was getting a salary, car and housing allowances and other cash payments from the church.

Young will have to make restitution of \$134,000. *Source: KYTX, 3-10-11*

Sister Marie E. Thornton, 63, New Rochelle, **NY**: Pleaded guilty to embezzlement. Thornton, a nun who was chief financial officer at Iona [Catholic] College, admitted to embezzling \$850,000.

"This is a classic case of the fox guarding the henhouse," said Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara. "Marie Thornton was entrusted with the financial well-being of Iona College, but instead, she abused her access to cook the books and line her own pockets."

[The N.Y. Post's piece on "Sister Susie" included memorable lines like "The vow of poverty just wasn't for her" and "A crooked nun marked the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday by pleading guilty to . . ."] *Source: CNN, 3-10-11*

Sentenced

Paul L. Berrell, 31, Asheville, **NC**:

28 years in prison, lifetime supervised release and \$2,442 in restitution on a conviction for production of child pornography. Berrell was music minister at St. Eugene Catholic Church.

In April 2009, Berrell coerced a minor female to engage in sexual activity and recorded it. Prosecutors said he also engaged in a pattern of sexual abuse against children dating back to 2002. St. Eugene **Pastor John Schneider** is charged with obstruction of justice for allegedly deleting porn from Berrell's computer. *Source: Asheville Citizen-Times, 3-15-11*

Prakashanand Saraswati, 82, Driftwood, **TX**: Saraswati, aka Shree Swamiji, founder of Barsana Dham ashram, was sentenced in absentia to 140 years in prison and ordered to pay \$200,000 to 2 girls after being convicted of 20 counts of indecency with a child. His whereabouts are unknown, but authorities believe he fled to Nuevo Laredo or Monterrey, MEX. His car was found at a San Marcos hotel, and he was last seen in Austin.

Peter Spiegel, a wealthy devotee who posted cash bonds, stands to lose \$11 million. *Source: San Antonio Express-News, 3-9-11*

Rev. Matthew Nichols, 58, Los Alamos, **NM**: 18 years in prison and lifetime probation after pleading guilty to distributing or attempting to distribute child pornography. Nichols, youth and family minister at Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church and science teacher and athletic director at McCurdy School, is expected to serve his time in a Massachusetts prison for convicts with chronic medical or psychiatric disorders.

His computers had 1,465 images and 186 videos showing child porn. He admitted liking porn that showed boys ages 10-14. A church IP address was used to transmit porn.

Nichols' sentence was increased due to 1980 convictions in Pennsylvania for corruption of minors and criminal solicitation to commit involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, for which he received probation. *Source: Santa Fe New Mexican, 3-4-11*

Rev. Don Armstrong, 61, Colorado Springs, **CO**: 4 years' probation, restitution of \$99,247 and 400 hours of community service after entering no contest pleas to felony theft and misdemeanor theft from a church scholarship trust fund while he was rector at Grace and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church.

The 20-count 2009 indictment focused on \$291,000 from the trust that allegedly went to pay for college over 7 years for Armstrong's children. Church lay leaders estimated in a victim impact statement that the actual amount missing or mishandled was at least \$1.2 million. *Source: Colorado Independent, 2-24-11*

Rev. Felix Owino, 45, Weirton, **WV**: 9 months in prison after pleading guilty to aggravated sexual battery. Owino was associate pastor at St. Paul's Catholic Church and taught at Wheeling Jesuit University. He was accused of sexually touching an 11-year-old girl while watching a movie at her home. *Source: Washington Post, 2-19-11*

Rabbi Milton Balkany, 64, Brooklyn, **NY**: 4 years in prison after being convicted of extortion. Balkany, who operated a Jewish day school for girls, was accused of extorting \$4 million from the SAC Capital hedge fund. *Source: N.Y. Daily News, 2-19-11*

Rev. Daniel Monk, 47, Hebron, **OH**: 6 years in prison after being convicted on 2 counts of 3rd-degree sexual battery. The ex-pastor at Souls Harbor Pentecostal Church had sex at least twice with a 16-year old female parishioner, whom he was counseling during her parents' divorce.

Licking County Common Pleas Judge Thomas Marcelain admonished Monk at sentencing. "Instead of praying for her — p-r-a-y — you preyed on her — p-r-e-y." *Source: Lancaster Eagle Gazette, 2-17-11*

Civil Lawsuits Filed

The **Boston Archdiocese** and

Cardinal Sean O’Malley are headed to court for a case that doesn’t involve sex abuse. The Daughters of St. Paul, an order of nuns with about 135 members in the U.S. and 60 in Boston, have tried unsuccessfully for years to withdraw from the church-run pension plan.

The Daughters, who also operate Pauline Books and Media, have asked the Supreme Judicial Court to consider ordering the archdiocese to reimburse the nuns’ contributions. The funds at stake are for the retirement of lay employees of their publishing house. The nuns believe they’re owed \$1.37 million, based on their estimate of the value of the assets in 2007. *Source: Boston Globe, 3-21-11*

With his family, Frank Finnegan, 49, Collingdale, **PA**, stood outside the **Archdiocese of Philadelphia** offices March 16 and said, “Father Kline — **Father John Leo Kline** — assaulted me, and 9 years earlier, assaulted my brother.”

Finnegan has filed a lawsuit for sexual abuse he alleges happened when he was ages 7 to 9. Kline, a close friend of Finnegan’s parents who ate dinner with them every Thursday and vacationed with the family, died in 1996 while he was pastor at St. Thomas More Parish in Chester County.

The suit names **Archbishop Cardinal Justin Rigali**, former **Archbishop Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua**, **Msgr. William Lynn**, who was Bevilacqua’s secretary of clergy, and **Karen Becker**, director of the archdiocesan Office of Child and Youth Protection.

“I don’t want somebody who is 7 today to be me in 40 years,” Finnegan said. “My brother was an altar boy. I was a choir boy. . . . He identified me in the cradle. He targeted me.” *Source: Delaware County Daily Times, 3-17-11*

Rev. Mark Honhart, Carbondale, **PA**: Honhart, who serves Catholic parishes in the Diocese of Scranton, is accused of sexual abuse during the 1980s in a lawsuit filed in Jackson County, MO. The diocese has removed him from active duty.

The plaintiff, now 37, alleges Honhart forced him to perform and receive oral sex on several occasions at a Catholic school. Another priest, **Hugh Monahan**, defrocked in 1989, is named in the suit, as is the **Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph**. *Source: citizensvoice.com, 3-10-11*

Televangelist **Toufik Benedictus “Benny” Hinn**, Irving, **TX**, who denied having an affair last year with Pastor Paula White of Without Walls International Church in Florida, is being sued for \$250,000 by his book publisher for violating a contract’s morality clause.

The Strang Communications Co. alleges Hinn had an “inappropriate relationship” with White and that he admitted it last August to Strang. The National Enquirer published photos showing the pair holding hands outside a hotel in Rome. *Source: Christian Post, 3-4-11*

Two years after the **Oregon Province of the Society of Jesus** filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, 37 lawsuits by alleged victims of clergy sexual abuse have been filed that seek \$3.1 million. Plaintiffs contend the Jesuit order paid money to various entities before the 2009 filing, and that the money should be included in its assets.

The province, which includes Oregon, Washington, Alaska and Montana, has paid about \$25 million to settle suits in 2001-09. At the time of bankruptcy filing, more than 150 suits were pending. Assets in 2009 were listed at \$4.8 million and liabilities at \$61.8 million. *Source: The Oregonian, 3-1-11*

Four Texas sisters have sued the Catholic **Archdiocese of San Antonio**, accusing a now-deceased priest, **Fr. Theo Clerx**, of sexual molestation. He died in 2003 at age 72.

Rosio Castro, now 29, served Mass for Clerx. At age 9, the abuse began, she said, with suggestive hugging. He would visit the girls’ home when their parents were gone. She alleges Clerx first raped her when she was 10 in her mother’s bedroom.

The archdiocese declined comment, citing the suit and the fact that Clerx was not a diocesan priest but

belonged to a religious order, the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. *Source: San Antonio Express-News, 3-1-11*

Civil Lawsuits Settled

The Catholic **Diocese of Bridgeport, CT**, will pay \$200,000 to settle a sexual abuse lawsuit filed by Michael Powel, who died of cancer in 2008. A spokesman for the diocese said the church admits no wrongdoing but settled to avoid the expense of fighting the “frivolous” suit.

Powel alleged **Carlo Fabbozzi**, a janitor and landscaper at St. Theresa’s Parish in Trumbull, started molesting him in the late 1960s. He also accused **Rev. Joseph Gorecki** of abusing him in 1971. Gorecki died in 1988 and was accused of abuse by at least 7 boys. *Source: Connecticut Post, 3-22-21*

Finances

Richard Emerson, Las Vegas, **NV**: Emerson, a defrocked Catholic priest, filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy in Georgia. He’s accused in a civil suit set for trial in 2012 of repeatedly molesting a teen boy in 2003 as pastor at St. Thomas More Church in Munster, IN.

In the 1980s he was liaison to the Gary Boy Scouts and an administrator at Hoosier Boy’s Town. He served in Florida from 1987-91 but left after allegations he paid “inappropriate attention to two teen sons of a particular family.” He then returned to the Gary area. *Source: Northwest Indiana Times, 3-13-11*

Legal Developments

Rev. Michael Clare, 38, Bronx, **NY**: Clare, pastor at Harvest Worship Center and principal at Harvest Prep, turned down a plea deal that would have him serve 3 years in prison on a 1st-degree rape charge. He allegedly preyed on a church member for 3 years starting when she was 12, eventually impregnating her.

Clare refused the plea deal despite “almost irrefutable proof” of his guilt, said Bronx Supreme Court Justice Megan Tallmer. Clare’s lawyer asked Tallmer to consider probation instead of prison.

“I would never do that,” she said, citing a DNA match between Clare and the victim’s aborted fetus. *Source: N.Y. Daily News, 3-21-11*

Allegations

Stephen Street, Louisiana inspector general, issued a report accusing **Rev. Ricky Sinclair**, Baker, **LA**, of defrauding taxpayers of about \$750,000.

“This was deliberate and calculated fraud,” Street said. “Mr. Sinclair enriched himself by repeatedly using his church as a front to cheat public agencies out of hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayer money. The fact that much of this was done against the backdrop of two natural disasters [hurricanes Katrina and Gustav] is particularly reprehensible.”

Street said Sinclair, acting on behalf of Miracle Place Church and All The Way House, submitted false information to several government agencies. “In many cases, invoices were manufactured on businesses that didn’t even exist and services never received or rendered,” Street said. Charges haven’t been filed yet. *Source: Vermillion Today, 3-23-11*

Removed / Resigned

Rev. Daniel Keohane, 58, San Francisco, **CA**: Keohane, pastor at St. Cecilia Catholic Church, has been put on paid leave while sexual abuse allegations are investigated by a review board. The alleged victim was a 17-year-old girl who attended the Church of the Epiphany in 1978 or 1979, the Archdiocese of San Francisco said. The church was the first parish Keohane served after his 1978 ordination.

Church staffers found the allegation in a file and contacted the woman, said Maurice Healy, a spokesman for the archdiocese. Keohane says he’s innocent, but the archdiocese deemed the charge “credible,” meaning that it merited investigation. *Source: San Francisco Chronicle, 3-22-11*

Rev. Daniel Dahlberg, 68, Hudson, **WI**: St. Patrick Catholic Church trustees removed Dahlberg as pastor, a letter to parishioners said. “After a preliminary investigation, we believe he has taken \$10,800 from the parish

charity account for his own use.”

The Diocese of Superior said Dahlberg is on administrative leave and will receive treatment for gambling addiction. *Source: Minneapolis Star Tribune, 3-22-11*

The **Archdiocese of Philadelphia** has been sued by a former altar boy, now 32 and living in Arizona, who alleges he was molested by **Msgr. John Gillespie** in 1988-91. The man came forward after reading news stories about a suit filed earlier by Philip Gaughan, 31, of Delaware, who alleges Gillespie, who died in 2008, also molested him as a boy. *Source: Philadelphia Inquirer, 3-22-11*

Rev. John A. Corapi, 63, Kalspell, **MT**: Corapi, a Catholic televangelist who broadcasts from Montana but is ordained as a priest in the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity, Robstown, TX, was placed on administrative leave by his order.

On his website, Corapi said, “On Ash Wednesday I learned that a former employee sent a three-page letter to several bishops accusing me of everything from drug addiction to multiple sexual exploits with her and several other adult women.”

Rev. Gerald Sheehan of the Society of Our Lady said in a statement that the order is “duty bound to conduct an investigation in this accusation.” *Source: San Antonio Express-News, 3-21-11*

Rev. Perry Robinson, 69, Ralston, **NE**: Robinson, a Jesuit and pastor at St. Gerald Catholic Church, was barred from ministry by the Archdiocese of Omaha due to sexual abuse allegations from the early 1990s when he taught at Marquette University High School in Milwaukee.

Robinson was found to have nude photos of at least 1 young man from the late 1980s. The Omaha archdiocese got a letter in February from a former Marquette student about the incidents and challenged Robinson’s fitness to serve as a priest. *Source: World-Herald, 3-18-11*

Rev. Sydney Keys, Richmond, **CA**: Resisting arrest. Keys, pastor at Bible Way Apostolic Church, was arrested with his wife, mother and 2 other people for failure to vacate the church, which the lender had foreclosed on for past-due monthly mortgage payments of \$6,800.

In a statement, Torrey Pines Bank said staff worked with Keys for over a year and extended its collections protocol to find a solution. *Source: Contra Costa Times, 3-17-11*

Rev. Barry Minkow, Reseda, **CA**: Minkow resigned as pastor at Community Bible Church in Mira Mesa. A letter from the church to parishioners said: “Today, Barry resigned as our senior pastor as he is no longer qualified to be a pastor. Pastor Barry no longer considers himself above reproach as he has agreed to plead guilty to a criminal count [of insider trading] related to the Lennar lawsuit.”

In the 1980s, Minkow took his cleaning firm ZZZZ Best public and wound up on “Oprah” before it was revealed he’d swindled investors out of \$156 million. He was sentenced to 30 years in prison and served 7. *Source: L.A. Times, 3-16-11*

Rev. Edward Receconi, 62, Lacey, **WA**: Receconi, a Benedictine priest, was removed from the ministry during investigation of an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor when he was pastor at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in 1984-86.

Olympia lawyer Avelin Tacon said the alleged victim is a South Sound-area resident in his late 30s to early 40s. “His memory of what occurred was triggered by a recent event,” Tacon said. “Being at a particular location triggered it.”

Receconi also was put on administrative leave by his superior at Saint Martin’s Abbey. *Source: Tacoma News Tribune, 3-16-11*

When the **Archdiocese of Philadelphia** announced in March it had suspended 21 of the priests named in a grand jury report listing 37 individuals accused of sexual abuse or of covering it up, it didn’t “name names.” Now it has. Names are followed by year of ordination:

Philip R. Barr, 1948; **John F. Bowe**, 1973; **George B. Cadwalader**, 1992; **Paul A. Castellani**, 1996; **Michael A. Chapman**, 1982; **John A. Close**, 1969; **Francis Ferret**, 1962; **Mark E. Fernandes**, 2004;

‘I don’t want somebody who is 7 today to be me in 40 years.’
— **Frank Finnegan, clergy abuse survivor**

Michael Flood, 1968; **Mark S. Gaspar**, 1998; **Joseph M. Glatts**, 1966; **Steven Harris**, 1980; **Daniel J. Hoy**, 1948; **Joseph Logrip**, 1972; **Andrew McCormick**, 1982; **Zachary Navit**, 1994; **Leonard Peterson**, 1976; **Robert Povish**, 1990; **John Rardon**, 1973; **Thomas Rooney**, 1991; **Peter Talocci**, 1986.

Four men [named in March’s Black Collar] have been indicted. One of them, **Msgr. William Lynn**, faces charges of endangering the welfare of children. *It’s the first time in the U.S. that a senior church official has been criminally charged for covering up abuse.* *Source: philly.com, 3-10-11*

Rev. Peter Hofer has been removed from the ministry by the Archdiocese of Salzburg, **AUS**, while the church investigates a 47-year-old woman’s charge Hofer repeatedly raped her in the 1980s when she was an altar girl.

Hofer denied the accusations to the Austria Press Agency, while claiming he and the woman had a consensual sexual relationship after she was of legal age. *Source: AP, 3-10-11*

Rev. John McManus, Ballygalget, **N.IRE**: The Diocese of Down and Connor has suspended McManus from priestly duties during the investigation of unspecified abuse allegations.

McManus is a former press spokesperson for the diocese and a member of its committee which oversees the safeguarding of children. McManus denied the allegations. *Source: BBC News, 3-10-11*

The **Archdiocese of Milwaukee** has removed 2 priests from active ministry due to allegations of sexual abuse. **Fr. Laurin Wenig**, pastor of St. Mary’s Church in Elm Grove, and an **unidentified retired priest** are under investigation by a review board.

Accusations of child abuse against Wenig, who denied guilt, stem from the 1970s. The criminal statute of limitations has expired. *Source: TMJ4 News, 2-28-11*

Rev. Franklin E. Huntress Jr., 77, Marblehead, **MA**: Huntress, an Episcopal priest who served St. Michael’s in Marblehead and Church of the Holy Name in Swampscott, was removed from the priesthood by the Diocese of Massachusetts after allegations of child sexual abuse. He resigned rather than face a church trial and was then removed.

The diocese got a complaint last October from a person who accused Huntress of child molestation in 1974. It was later determined he was arrested for child sexual abuse in England in 1994, but charges weren’t filed because parents didn’t want to the child to testify. *Source: Salem News, 2-26-11*

Rev. Fernando Karadima, 80, Santiago, **CHI**: The Vatican found Karadima guilty of sexually abusing minors and ordered him to retire to a “life of prayer and penitence,” Archbishop Ricardo Ezzati of Santiago said.


Karadima had trained 5 bishops and dozens of priests and was seen as a father figure for young men who later accused him of molesting them.

Antonio Delfau, a Jesuit priest in Santiago, said, “From now on, every case of sexual abuse must be treated with meticulous care and not be based on the gut feeling of a given church official.” *Source: N.Y. Times, 2-19-11*

Other

Bishop Terence Brain of the Catholic **Diocese of Salford, UK**, apologized over allegations of sexual abuse by **Msgr. Thomas Duggan** at a Manchester grammar school during the 1950s and 60s. Fifty-seven

Creeps of the Month



The pastor and 7 members of Aleitheia Bible Church in Black Earth, **WI**, are charged with child abuse for use of corporal punishment, also called “biblical chastisement.” **Rev. Philip Caminiti**, 53, and his brother, **John Caminiti**, 45, both of Black Earth, face 12 counts of intentional child abuse and mental harm to a child.

The 12 victims range in age from 2 months to 6 years. “If you spank early and it is done right, then kids will be happy and obedient,” Philip Caminiti told investigators.

The abuse involved hitting children on their bare buttocks with wooden dowels and spoons. Dowels were 12-18 inches long and the diameter of a quarter. Crankiness and crying were behaviors that warranted punishment.

Subpoenaed to appear on charges of being a party to intentional child abuse were **Andrea Wick**, 26, **Timothy Wick**, 27, **Alina Caminiti**, 24, **Matthew Caminiti**, 27, **Maria Stephenson**, 29, and **Timothy Stephenson**, 28. The Sheriff’s Office began investigating after former church members expressed concern.

John Caminiti said he doesn’t let his wife or children talk to people outside the church and confines them to their rooms if they do. *Source: Wisconsin State Journal, 3-21-11*

former St. Bede’s pupils accused Duggan, who died in 1968, of ordering them to strip before he caned and touched them sexually.

Brain said he’s “shocked and saddened” by the complaints, “which have been brought to the attention of our Safeguarding Commission.” *Source: BBC News, 3-15-11*

A letter from Archbishop Robert Carlson of St. Louis was read at Masses at St. Joseph Parish in Josephville, **MO**, “to bring awareness to several reports of abuse by **Fr. John Wieberg**, pastor there from 1950-61.” Wieberg died in 1963.

The reports were deemed credible by church investigators who met with several persons alleging Wieberg sexually abused them. “The Review Board has reason to believe that there may be other victims who might come forward now if they knew that others had been abused by this priest,” Carlson wrote. A similar letter went to several parishes in the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau. *Source: St. Louis Review, 3-16-11*

Plaintiffs’ attorneys are fighting the **Archdiocese of Los Angeles** over release of files with information on **223 clergy** accused of abuse in civil lawsuits. The attorneys say information in the files could be a matter of public safety because, according to a list of addresses compiled by the AP, about 65 former priests are living unmonitored in the U.S., with about 80 others in unknown locations. Four are believed to have fled the country, and about 80 are dead. *Source: Ventura County Star, 3-7-11*

Rev. Thomas L. Cavender, 60, Bessemer City, **NC**: A Superior Court judge denied Cavender’s request to be removed from the National Sex Offender Registry after being on it 10 years. The evangelical pastor was convicted of sexual battery in 2000 in a case involving 2 girls who are sisters. The younger was in 3rd grade. Both testified against his registry removal, as did their parents.

Cavender said the label hinders his work as a pastor. “It hurts my ministry when you’re in the pulpit and someone goes to the computer and there you are.”

Judge Jesse Caldwell advised him to be truthful. “Are you trying to keep all this quiet to your congregation and the people you preach to? You’re going into the pulpit under false pretenses, are you not?” *Source: Gaston Gazette, 3-7-11*

blackcollar@ffrf.org

In the News

It’s official: Jesuits also morally bankrupt

In the third-largest settlement ever to clergy abuse victims, the Oregon Province of the Society of Jesus and its insurer Safeco agreed March 25 to pay \$166 million to more than 500 victims, mostly Native Americans and Alaskan Natives abused at Jesuit schools in Oregon, Washington state, Idaho, Montana and Alaska. About \$6 million of the settlement is being set aside for future claims.

Plaintiffs accused the Jesuits of using schools in remote villages and on reservations as dumping grounds for problem priests.

“It’s a day of reckoning and justice,” Clarita Vargas, 51, told The Associated Press. She alleged that she and her two sisters were abused at St. Mary’s Mission and School on the Colville Indian Reservation near Omak, Wash., starting when they were 6 or 7. “My spirit was wounded, and this makes it feel better.”

“It wasn’t an accident,” said plaintiffs’ attorney John Manly. “The evidence showed they did it on purpose and it was rape.”

The Oregon Province, which filed for bankruptcy in 2009, previously settled 200 other claims for \$50 million.

Fr. John Morse, who allegedly molested Vargas and about 100 other children and lives in Spokane, was never charged criminally due to the statute of limitations. A current bill in the Washington Legislature would remove that statute.

Archdioceses in Los Angeles and San Antonio, Texas, top the settlement list with respective payouts of \$660 million and \$198 million.

In the air, nothing fails like prayer

Alaska Airlines Flight 241 was greeted by law enforcement on landing March 13 at Los Angeles International Airport. Passengers and crew reported seeing men onboard holding suspicious wires, and “three passengers were praying out loud in a language other than Spanish,” said an airline spokeswoman.

It turned out the men, all Mexican nationals, were praying in Hebrew. Orthodox Jewish men wear *tefillin*, or phylacteries, black leather straps wrapped around the left arm and around the forehead. The straps are connected to small boxes with tiny scrolls of scriptures. The spokeswoman said she didn’t know if the men were using those items.

Study: Religion in 9 nations doomed

There’s good news for religious skeptics in a study that used census data going back a century to show that religion in nine nations is due for eventual extinction. The study, titled “A mathematical model of social group competition with application to the growth of religious non-affiliation” also found a steady rise in “nones.”

It was presented March 22 to the American Physical Society meeting in Dallas.

Religion will all but die out in Australia, Austria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Switzerland,

noted co-author Daniel Abrams of Northwestern University.

Co-author Richard Wiener of the Research Corporation for Science Advancement and the University of Arizona, told the BBC: “In a large number of modern secular democracies, there’s been a trend that folks are identifying themselves as non-affiliated with religion. In the Netherlands the number was 40%, and the highest we saw was in the Czech Republic, where the number was 60%.”

The team then applied a “nonlinear dynamics model, adjusting parameters for the relative social and utilitarian merits of membership of the ‘non-religious’ category. In all the countries, indications were that religion is headed toward extinction.” They posit religion has lost its utility and prestige in these nations.

Man had to kill friend in order to save him

“I stoned Murray with a rock in a sock,” John Thomas, 28, told police before he was charged with first-degree murder, the Philadelphia Daily News reported March 19. Murray Seidman’s body was found Jan. 12 inside his Landsdowne, Pa., apartment.

Police said Thomas, a close friend of Seidman’s, killed the developmentally challenged man because he said Seidman made “homosexual advances.”

Thomas said he’d read in the bible that gays should be stoned to death “in certain situations” and that the “answer” he “received from his prayers was to put an end to the victim’s life,” said the criminal complaint. Seidman was struck about 10 times in the head.

No Adam or Steve in cathedral choir

“I understand that Crystal Cathedral Ministries teaches that sexual intimacy is intended by God to only be within the bonds of marriage, between one man and one woman.” That was part of a covenant that the Garden Grove, Calif., megachurch asked choir members to sign.

The covenant from Crystal Cathedral, which has filed for bankruptcy and is being criticized for big payouts to church insiders and relatives of founder Rev. Robert Schuller, has angered current and former choir members who see it as homophobic.

Sisters peeved at priest’s funeral rush

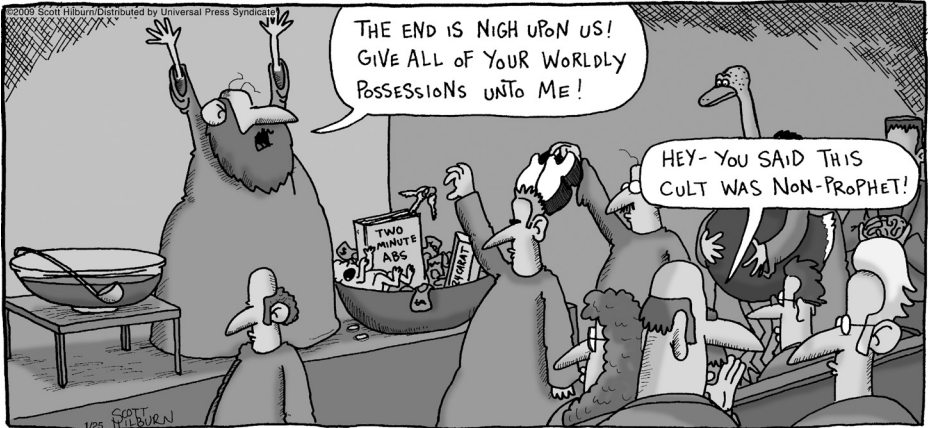
Fr. Bartley P. Baker of St. Leo’s Catholic Church in Elmwood Park, N.J., is accused by sisters Laurie Treene and Robyn Nini of ruining their 96-year-old grandmother’s funeral service. “I got about halfway through [my eulogy] and he ran up to the podium and said, ‘Wrap it up! Wrap it up!’ I was just flabbergasted,” Treene told The Gothamist on March 17.

The sisters said Baker also rushed an elderly relative while giving her Communion: “She slowly opened her mouth and she bit on it so that she would not choke. He yelled, ‘Lady, put it in your mouth. Lady, put it in your mouth,’” Treene said.

Treene alleged that Baker directed pallbearers taking the casket out “like an air traffic controller. ‘Come on!

THE ARGYLE SWEATER

BY SCOTT HILBURN



Argyle Sweater (c) 2009 Scott Hillburn. Used by permission of Universal Uclick. All rights reserved.

Come on! Come on!’ Like, where was he going?”

A spokesman said the Archdiocese of Newark is looking into the matter.

Dutch woman honored for secular efforts

Britain’s National Secular Society awarded the 2011 Irwin Prize for Secularist of the Year to Sophia in ’t Veld, a Dutch member of the European Parliament. Ms. in ’t Veld, 37, was recognized for chairing the Parliamentary Platform for Secularism in Politics.



Philosopher and author AC Grayling made the presentation March 19 in London. Ms. in ’t Veld declined the £5,000 cash element of the prize, which will go to fund another presentation next year.

“I feel very honored to receive this prize. I consider it as encouragement to continue the battle for the complete separation between church and state in Europe,” she said.

The Vatican hasn’t been so generous, NSS announced March 18. “[T]he Catholic Church has not yet paid the £6.3 million it owes the British taxpayer for debts incurred during the visit of the pope last September.”

Not the pole usually linked with Jesus

FOX News Houston asked the question March 22: “How on Earth can you mix pole dancing with Jesus?”

The answer from Crystal Deans, who on the second Sunday of every month invites women into her studio for “Pole Fitness for Jesus,” answers: “I don’t teach women to be strippers. . . . I teach women to feel good about themselves, to feel empowered and we get in really good shape. God is the only person that judges, so anybody who wants to judge me, feel free to, but I’m good with God.”

Participant Tiffany Booth adds: “My parents were very religious, and it’s a great way you get the stigma off. It’s not just dancing on a pole. You have music, and you have girls together working out, and it’s a different kind of workout.”

Anti-abortion zealots savor new laws

South Dakota’s Republican Gov. Dennis Daugaard signed a law March 22 that mandates a 72-hour waiting period before a woman can get an abortion, the longest period in the U.S. It also requires women to consult with a counselor at a pregnancy “help center.”

Planned Parenthood of Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota and

the ACLU of South Dakota said they will file a lawsuit immediately. Kathi Di Nicola of Planned Parenthood called the law, which takes effect July 1, “an egregious violation of the Constitution.”

- Kansas Republican Gov. Sam Brownback, a Roman Catholic, said he will sign a bill passed March 30 that strictly limit abortions after 22 weeks based on disputed research that fetuses can feel pain. A separate bill requiring consent of both parents to minors to get an abortion and to require doctors to provide the state with more detailed records for abortions also is headed to the governor.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists said no legitimate evidence exists to show a fetus experiences pain at 22 weeks.

An existing mental health exception in Kansas, even for women expressing suicidal thoughts, is dropped. Nebraska passed a similar law in 2010.

- On March 29, Arizona Republican Gov. Jan Brewer signed a bill into law that makes the state the first in the U.S. to outlaw abortions performed on the basis of the race or gender of the fetus.

Under the law, medical professionals would face felony charges if they could be shown to have performed abortions for the purposes of helping parents select their offspring on the basis of gender or race. Women would not be penalized.

Backers of the law said it was needed to end sex- and race-related discrimination.

- In Virginia, Republican Gov. Bob McConnell signed a bill March 28 placing the same restrictions on abortion clinics as hospitals, which could result in closing 17 of the state’s 21 clinics. Choice advocates fear requirements such as widening hallways, hiring new staff and equipment purchases will be impossible to meet financially in the limited time available.

Texas dig reveals earlier settlement

The discovery of thousands of artifacts and stone tools as old as 15,500 years at the Buttermilk Creek archeological site near Austin, Texas, pushes back the known presence of humans in North America by as much as 2,500 years, the journal Science reported in March. The find was 5 feet below materials used by the Clovis culture, thought to have been the first settlers.

The team used luminescence dating, which measures light energy trapped in minerals. Carbon-14 dating couldn’t be used due to the lack of organic material.

In a separate paper in the journal, paleontologists report that stone tools from Africa moved to India as long as 1.5 million years ago, twice as long as previously thought. The discovery at an Indian site called Attirampakkam helps anthropologists understand the spread of hominids from Africa to Asia.

Sharing the Crank Mail

Below is some recent input from FFRF's second tier of supporters, printed as received.

Suing Arizona

Are you suing Arizona for declaring a day of prayer? You've got to be kidding! Shame on you!! I believe we all need to get down on our knees and pray that God will deliver us from the sewer in which we've placed ourselves. Amen!
— Terrence Madden

Suing Gov. Brewer

Sue away heathens. Just another chance to stomp the infidels into the cesspool they wallow in. Sue, sue and sue. In the meantime, we will pray to God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost for the final judgment you so richly deserve.
— Chance

Religion

Stay the hell out of Arizona politics. What we need in this country is to bring God back into our life not leave it out. That includes into government which is what this country was founded on. You people are a bunch of idiots trying to destroy everything we have and will pay for it in the end. Repent now and you just might be spared.
— Dennis Bisner

Jan Brewer

I am a conservative Pagan, and upon hearing of your ridiculous lawsuit against our Governor Brewer, could not sit by and let your small mindedness prevail. I for one do not give a damn what you choose to believe or not to believe in. Let me give you a bit of undeniable history; America was founded "under God", you can not change that, our founding fathers were not Pagans or athiests, but Christians. SO WHAT IF JAN WANTS TO ALLOW A DAY OF PRAYER! Why don't you keep your ignorance and intolerance back east and out of Arizona. I sincerely hope that Jan stomps all over your petty BS. Kindly go screw yourselves, Goddess Bless!!!
— Heidi Richter

Lawsuit against Arizona prayer day

Since you and your organization have your national day, April Fools Day, why do you want to keep me from recognizing my own day of prayer in Arizona???
— Phil Ertl

Governor Jan Brewer

I support Gov. Brewer's Day of Prayer. Why do you find that so offensive? I am a Catholic and I want to have a Day of Prayer. I find YOU offensive.
— Angela Puffer, Arizona

Arizona

Your lawsuit is not welcome is AZ. Nobody here has a big problem with Brewer making a public prayer for the state budget. Your meaningless lawsuit and selfish lawyer need to backoff the issue or else you will have a large group of citizens after your non profit organization. Take this as a warning.
— Merrill Rose

We have freedom of religion also

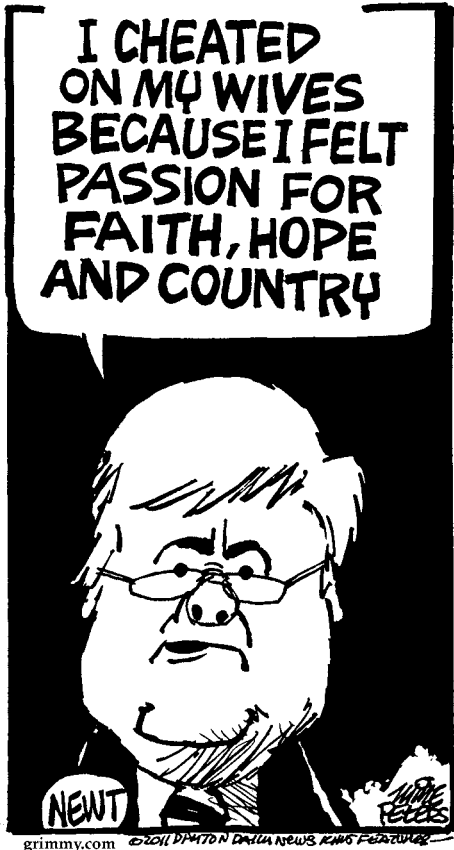
I just want to let you know that I don't appreciate you trying to ruin my freedom of religion. You have no right to travel the country, file lawsuits and stop Nation Day of Prayer days. Stay away from my state and our people. Don't have your small group of people write letters trying to tell others what they can and can't do.
— Marcus Norris

Awesome goal!

Wow! this is so great to see that you have a foundation full of atheists that zoom to battle at the first Jesus sighting. As you fight, scratch, and claw to remove Jesus and God from all things American through our legal system, which has been manipulated by atheists, communists, and progressives for many years, you are ignoring the religious creep of islam into your lives and just fyi, islam is not as tolerant as American Christians. So as you wage your war against us, be confident that once you stand at the point of islams sword of conversion you may not have the chance to seek legal counsel. But hey, islam surely respects the seperation between church and state (who knows what the hell that even means), so I'm sure you'll be fine.
— william Narvaez, Florida

Local Interaction

Mind your own business in Cheboygan, Michigan. You don't want people pushing their religion on others, so stop pushing your beliefs in this town you tree hugging fucking hypocrites!!! Have a nice day you fucking assholes.



— James M

The Glory of Go

With many infallible proofs God has proved Himself!!! With many infallible proofs Jesus has proven Himself to be the only begotten Son of God, who paid the penalty for our sins!!! The Bible says "ALL have sinned and fallen short of the glory of Go." Jesus stood in the gap for us!!!
— barbara hockley

You guys are nuts

You guys are trying to stop a prayer before dinner at a senior citizens center in Cheboygan, Michigan? Give me a break. Are you that freaking stupid? weird? bored? You people are fucking nuts. This country was founded on freedom of religion by religious people who fought and died so morons like you could exist. Too bad. You don't deserve to exist let alone speak. You make me sick - you aren't Americans - why don't you go join the muslims in their rat-ridden



countries because that's where you belong.
— Chester Fieldstone

fruit

Don't like the peaches? Get off the tree. Now does this mean your thugs coming out after me? THE BEST solution to your agenda is to blow up the world then you won't hsve such a heavy hang-up in you busy little minds. WHAT A JOKE.
— DAVID RIVERO, Arizona

How stupids are you

Living without God is like living as animals. I feel pety for you. GOD is alive and fine, you're doom, don't be stupids, Learn and convert!
— Lva Lva

FREEDOM

You will have freedom from God when you are separated from him in Hell. I'm praying for your members to regain their sanity.
— Dennis May

'Nine Commandments' judge in legal hot water

Investigators for a three-judge panel of the Tennessee Court of the Judiciary in Nashville filed charges March 29 against Hawkins County Juvenile Court Judge James "Jay" Taylor of Rogersville.

Two of the charges relate to Taylor's involvement in supporting a "Foundations of American Law and Government" display in the county's Justice Center.

FFRF sent a letter of complaint to the Hawkins County Commission about the proposed display (which is still only proposed) on July 23, 2010, stating that the display was historically inaccurate and unconstitutional. Among other inaccuracies, Taylor's version of the Ten Commandments listed only nine commandments, leaving off the prohibition of adultery.

FFRF Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott's letter said, "Given the context, the selection of documents, and Judge Taylor's promotion of the display, it cannot withstand scrutiny under the Lemon and endorsement tests."

The Court of the Judiciary charges focus on Taylor's appearance before the County Commission in support of the display and his fundraising efforts for its construction. The panel alleges he violated the Code of Judicial Conduct, which prohibits judges from using their office to advance private interests and from soliciting money. Taylor is also charged with failure to file a response with investigators that was required by law.

Separate charges relate to Taylor's part-time position as a private attorney. On Sept. 8, 2010, the state Court of Criminal Appeals found him in contempt of court for "willfully failing to take steps to protect his client's interests."

Taylor was found in contempt on a

similar matter in 2006. He also allegedly failed to provide a response to investigators as required by law.

Taylor's legal troubles do not end there. He is the subject of a \$3 million lawsuit by a former employee alleging that he violated her civil rights and that he made "unwelcome and unwanted"

sexual advances and unlawfully fired her last year.

According to the Rogersville Review, Taylor filed an answer Feb. 15 to the complaint. He primarily denied all allegations but admitted that he and the woman "dated briefly" before he was elected judge.

They Said What?

I have two grandchildren. Maggie is 11, Robert is 9. I am convinced that if we do not decisively win the struggle over the nature of America, by the time they're my age they will be in a secular atheist country, potentially one dominated by radical Islamists and with no understanding of what it once meant to be an American.

Former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich, speaking at Rev. John Hagee's Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, Texas, about running for president politico.com, 3-28-11

God has put his stamp of approval that this is the day. I don't doubt it, and I don't look at the possibility of May 22 happening.

Philadelphia Pastor Chris McCann,

agreeing with Rev. Harold Camping that "The Rapture" will occur May 21, followed by five months of fire, brimstone, plagues and corpses filling the streets

USA Today, 3-22-11

Even for nonreligious people, the cross is a symbol of hope, it's a symbol of the enduring human spirit,

Rev. Alan McBride, Orange Beach United Methodist Church, objecting to an Alabama state park superintendent removing the church's 10-foot-tall driftwood cross from a public beach

Mobile Press-Register, 3-19-11

I pray you won't laugh this off, but that you'll face your need for God's forgiveness and cleansing power. Begin a new

life — the life God wants you to have — by asking Christ to come into your heart and mind. Then ask him to help you submit every part of your life to him, including your tongue.

Rev. Billy Graham, answering "What's wrong with salting your speech with what people used to call bad language?"

Kansas City Star, 3-21-10

I believe the Founding Fathers were moved around like men on a chessboard put in place at that time so the world could have America.

U.S. Rep. Steve King, R-Iowa, supporting Rep. Randy Forbes' bill urging the display of "In God We Trust" in all public schools

The Virginian-Pilot, 3-18-21

FFRF statement

We really can't 'Winn' with this Supreme Court

In a 5-4 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled April 4 that taxpayers do not have standing to challenge an Arizona law that provides for taxpayer-subsidized religious instruction. Arizona offers a dollar-for-dollar tax credit (up to \$500) to citizens who contribute to groups that offer scholarships to children attending private schools. This tax credit overwhelmingly is used to support private religious instruction, which FFRF contends violates the Establishment Clause. The tax credits are estimated to divert over \$50 million per year from the state to scholarship organizations.

FFRF is very disappointed in the Court's continuing efforts to nullify the Establishment Clause by closing the courthouse doors to challenges by citizens. The Establishment Clause was very much intended to prohibit financial support for religion — including government support for religious schooling. The Supreme Court now tries to distinguish between government appropriations to religion and government tax credits for religion. This is an attempted distinction without a meaningful difference. The notion that economic benefits given to religion are beyond the purview of constitutional accountability ignores history and logic. Government financial support for religion is, and has been, integral to the establishment of religion.

Justice Kennedy, writing for the majority, said:

"[T]ax credits and governmental expenditures do not both implicate individual taxpayers in sectarian activities. A dissenter whose tax dollars are 'extracted and spent' knows that he has in some small measure been made to contribute to an establishment in violation of conscience. . . . When the government declines to impose a tax, by contrast, there is no such connection between dissenting taxpayer and alleged establishment."

Justice Kagan, writing for the dissent, criticizes the closing of the courthouse door:

"For almost half a century, litigants like the Plaintiffs have obtained judicial review of claims that the government has used its taxing and spending

power in violation of the Establishment Clause. . . . Not every suit has succeeded on the merits, or should have. But every taxpayer-plaintiff has had her day in court to contest the government's financing of religious activity."

Kagan characterized Kennedy's opinion as creating a "novel distinction" between appropriations and tax expenditures. She said "this distinction finds no support in case law, and just as little in reason." Kagan notes:

"Taxpayers who oppose state aid of religion have equal reason to protest whether the aid flows from the one form of subsidy or the other. Either way, the government has financed the religious activity. And so either way, taxpayers should be able to challenge the subsidy."

Kagan points out problematic applications of the Court's holding:

"Suppose a State desires to reward Jews — by, say, \$500 per year — for their religious devotion. Should the nature of taxpayers' concern vary if the State allows Jews to claim the aid on their tax returns, in lieu of receiving an annual stipend?"

The dissent highlights Kennedy's misunderstanding of James Madison's famous "Memorial and Remonstrance," wherein Madison, "the leading architect of the religion clauses," opposed a Virginia tax levy supporting religious instruction. Kagan said:

"The Virginia tax in fact would not have extracted any monies (not even 'three pence') from unwilling citizens, as the Court now requires. The plan allowed conscientious objectors to opt out of subsidizing religion by contributing their assessment to an alternative fund for the construction and maintenance of county schools."

Nor does the Arizona tax credit force any particular taxpayer to pay the subsidy directly, but it is still a government subsidy. Kagan remarks, "By relying on the self-same aspect of the Arizona scheme to deny the Plaintiffs' claim of injury, the majority betrays Madison's vision."

"We see this as further eroding the Establishment Clause, and even just the right to bring lawsuits to remedy extreme violations," said Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president.



FFRF: Cuba policy benefits religion

FFRF Co-Presidents Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor wrote a vigorous rebuke March 9 to President Obama to protest his unprecedented recent decision to single out "religious proselytizing organizations for preferential treatment and travel privileges to Cuba."

The new federal administrative rules discriminate on the basis of religious belief, "penalizing atheist or other freethought groups in the United States because we are not accorded the same privilege or benefit as religious groups."

The stated purposes of the announced changes include to "increase people-to-people contact; support civil society in Cuba, enhance the free flow of information to, from and among the Cuban people; and help promote their independence from Cuban authorities." (Italics added.)

FFRF charged the order creates the "free flow of religion rather than information" to Cuba.

In their letter, Barker and Gaylor wrote: "The order seemingly confers the U.S. government's imprimatur upon religion and religious organizations and individuals. It conveys the belief that there is a compelling foreign affairs interest by the United States federal government to convert Cubans to religion."

Never since the Cuban embargo was adopted have religious organizations been granted an unrestricted general license to travel to Cuba, even under such "faith-based presidents" as George W. Bush. In fact, Bush curtailed most travel, requiring specific licenses for both religious and secular nonprofits. The National Conference of Churches complained to Obama last year, asking him to "end the restrictions on religious travel to Cuba."

The order means church groups may travel without a permit or approval by the U.S. government and may transfer "unlimited" monies to proselytize in Cuba. Groups which still must seek more onerous specific licenses include other nonprofit, charitable, human rights, humanitarian, educational groups and organizations advocating democracy or civil society.

Obama claimed his announced changes would "increase humanitarian flows to Cuba," yet explicitly humanitarian charities (as opposed to explic-

itly proselytizing groups) are barred from seeking unrestricted licenses.

FFRF's letter cites Office of Foreign Assets Control guidelines that show preference for U.S. religious activities in Cuba that engage in "religious indoctrination and religious indoctrination alone." Implicitly considered not "consistent with U.S. foreign policy" are religious activities that include medical and health services and even those whose purpose is "inter-faith."

Barker asserted, "No religious activities are 'consistent with U.S. foreign policy.'"

"Mr. President, we are concerned at the appearance that your order is establishing a crusading army of religious missionaries to descend upon the island of Cuba to religiously indoctrinate and religiously colonize the Cuban people."

Barker and Gaylor wrote Obama that the United States has maintained its democracy "because secularism reigns supreme."

"It is neither the business nor the concern of the United States federal government to proselytize and evangelize the people of Cuba, or any other sovereign nation-state."

"The President of the United States of America, who takes an oath to uphold and defend the U.S. Constitution, cannot perpetrate constitutional violations in the international legal milieu, which he is prevented from exercising inside the territory of the United States," FFRF pointed out to the White House. The President may not "implement federal administrative regulations that make it exceedingly more difficult for the nonreligious than the religious to obtain federal government benefits."

FFRF's letter asks Obama to "reconsider and rescind your order establishing a discriminatory preference for religion in the federal government's administrative rules. The mass coercion and conversion of Cubans to religion is entirely inconsistent with U.S. foreign policy."

FFRF thanks Sarah Braasch for her research and analysis of this First Amendment violation.

Read the entire letter:
ffrf.org/uploads/legal/Obama%20Cuba%20Letter.pdf

Marquee Madness

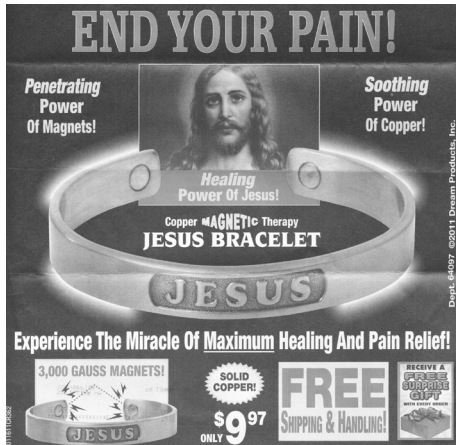


Easter funny

Baptists really know how to hammer home a message of undying love. Floridian Philip Keller did a double take at this in his hometown of Gainesville.

Letterbox

FFRF way more magnetic than Jesus



I've been a member for a few years and found out about FFRF through a news story on one of your lawsuits. Observing your accomplishments the last few years, and with such great efficiency of funds, I thought about becoming a Lifetime Member at some point. When the great financial crunch fell upon us, I thought to postpone that idea until better times arrived. But two recent events have caused me to act sooner rather than later.

A resident of my community informed me that the Great Rapture will occur on May 21, 2011, followed by the final and total destruction of the world this October. (No need to be concerned about the Mayan calendar anymore!) I first thought this was an isolated case of overindulgence in faith causing some sort of mental fatigue, but it turns out there are ads, billboards, T-shirts and radio and TV programs carrying this message of the end of days. (This is all gospel, according to Rev. Harold Camping of Family Radio Worldwide.)

Being a freethinker — a person who acquires knowledge based on reason, logic, science, demonstrated repeatable proofs, etc., and not on tradition, opinion, dogma, faith, superstition or supernatural ideas — I suspect that closer examination of Camping's work will turn out to be faith on steroids, an overabundance of brass along with a good measure of wishful thinking, as will become obvious May 21.

The second event was receipt of an ad in a local paper. It touts a cure to end pain with a Jesus Bracelet, made of 100% copper embedded with 3,000-gauss magnets and "Jesus" inscribed in large letters. You will "Experience The Miracle Of Maximum Healing And Pain Relief." It never ceases to

amaze me no matter how often I see it.

Time is of the essence, and I am moved with all due haste to now join as a Life Member. Not because the end is near of course, but rather in the hope that your continued work will provide more reason in the world and cause folks to think a bit before they buy into the various scams of foolish desperation.

My deepest appreciation for all the difficult work you do every day for so many that have yet to realize the benefit.

Ron Brennian
Pennsylvania

• • •

I'm enclosing a \$1,000 check to renew my Lifetime Membership. I'm glad to support FFRF to this extent.

Dan Barker recently spoke at our West Suburban Chicago Chapter of Americans United, and he was excellent. It was the largest turnout we've had in recent years. Very encouraging.

Fred Smith
Illinois

More on bloody Abrahamic religions

John Compere's "Blood Religion" [March11] raises a few more questions about Abraham. Let us begin with establishing that Ishmael was the firstborn from the "loins of Abraham" and not Isaac. However, Ishmael is not counted as the firstborn because Hagar, his birth mother, was not officially married to Abraham, unlike Sarah, who was married in the local church (or was it a synagogue?).

Secondly, Hagar was considered a house slave, and any such offspring usually did not inherit the title of the Massah (we know this from our own history of slavery). Finally, how cruel Abraham was, beside what was mentioned in Mr. Compere's article. Without giving notice to his slave/employee, he threw Hagar and her son, Ishmael, out on the streets. Alimony and child support were not discussed. One heck of a beginning for the father of three religions!

G.M. Chandu
New York

Watching televangelists is eye-opening

Although I'm an atheist, I channel-surf and sometimes stop at religious stations. It's interesting, amusing and

saddening to watch thousands and even tens of thousands of people getting excited over scripture thrown at them in a revival tent atmosphere.

I see in those crowds so many minorities and women going almost crazy over words interpreted and twisted by bible-thumping, money-grubbing, self-righteous charlatans selling their CDs, DVDs, books and trinkets while begging for donations. If those women and minorities only knew what the bible says about them, maybe they wouldn't part with their money so easily.

I encourage more nonbelievers to watch these shows, if they can stomach them for long. It's a great sociology lesson in mob manipulation, hypocrisy, human weakness and blind faith.

Gene Plombon
Minnesota

P.S. One time I called a number on the screen for a CD that was supposed to help people get back on their feet again, with the help of a god, of course. I told them that if they would just send me the CD now, I would pay them after I "got back on my feet again." They said, "We don't do that," then hung up on me!

Obama contradictory on U.S. Constitution

In his Jan. 14 proclamation of Religious Freedom Day, President Obama encouraged us to preserve and apply the writ of the Founding Fathers and to uphold the right of every American to worship and practice religion as they choose, including the right to not believe in any religion at all.

Ironically, he added, "However, these liberties are not self-sustaining, and require a stalwart commitment by each generation to preserve and apply them."

How contradictory! Our president is responsible for protecting our secular Constitution. Yet, he takes center stage at National Prayer Breakfasts and uses his office to help organized religion.

David Quintero
California

• • •

I was very disappointed to read the comments President Obama made at the Feb. 3 prayer breakfast and wrote him a letter to say so. Mr. Obama was the one who actually led me to FFRF in the first place.

The day of his inauguration, I was excited to hear his inclusive comments about those of us with no belief in god. That same day, FFRF sponsored an ad in the Washington Post, to which I happily responded. (Doubtless if I'd had "faith," I'd have perceived that as a message from "god" rather than a happy coincidence.)

Linda Hollingsworth
Lifetime Member
Virginia

Defective designer should be fired

I would appreciate the believer's explanations for what we have just witnessed in Japan.

First, the issue of "intelligent design" versus "defective design." God has seen fit to utilize tectonic plates in his design of Earth. These plates shift against each other in what we call subduction zones, resulting in earthquakes and further resulting in a disturbance of water resulting in tsunamis. This just does not seem to me to be very intel-

ligent design. Does it not appear to be terribly defective design?

Second, as God recognized his defective design, why does he passively sit by and refuse to step in and rectify his mistakes, creating a more intelligent design for Earth so we will not have to endure the disaster that has just occurred? Why does he keep us instead in a state of ignorance?

Third, if God insists on sticking with his defective design, can you explain why he would not step in as a tragedy starts to occur and act to protect us from death and destruction that his design has caused us to suffer?

Fourth, I hope you will back away from the "original sin" tale and not tell me that God corrupted Earth to punish us forever for Adam and Eve's sin. The problem is that he had already defectively designed Earth with tectonic plates before Adam and Eve were born, before the sin was committed!

Fifth, if we can accept as the answer to all things that God simply acts in mystical ways that we are never to be privy to, then we can readily exonerate God from responsibility for all things, including the horrific disaster in Japan. But how can we respect, honor and worship such a nonacting, standby, observing-only God? If indeed he is "omniweak," then he does not deserve my prayers.

Sixth, how much more rational it would be to simply admit that God does not exist and is simply a fairy tale.

If a foreman in a factory notices that a defect has started to occur as a product is being manufactured, he quickly shuts down the assembly line, has the fault corrected and then starts the assembly line up again. But God, in contrast, simply does nothing to stop the natural disaster, and thus does not perform anywhere near as well as the mere human factory foreman. Hey, God should be fired, and the factory foreman should get a raise, yes!

Theodore M. Utchen
Illinois

• • •

We are waiting for your explanation, Pat Robertson. Why did this horrible earthquake happen? Was it because God was mad at Japan for being friendly to the U.S. after repealing "don't ask, don't tell"?

Or could it be that he triggered a tsunami as a warning to those who may have been enjoying the beaches in a sinful manner? We need your revered insight, Reverend Robertson.

Jorg Aadahl
California

You just can't win with original sin

**SEXISM...
THE ORIGINAL SIN**

Surprisingly, I was pleased to learn that 77% of our citizens believe that prayer will help Arizona Rep. Gabrielle Giffords recover from her brain injury.

Because, while ignoring the issue of whether or not God will assist in the process, or even whether or not he/she even exists, this finding suggests that (an admittedly controversial idea in the case of severe physical injury) the human being is basically a caring creature. This finding is supported by a great deal of research coming to the virtually unanimous conclusion that we are, at our core and on the day of our

Continued on next page



Rapture-ready for Saturday night fervor?

"As a paramedic, I get to enjoy the sights, sounds and evils of inner-city living. Sometimes, a comedic vision is witnessed," writes FFRF member Ruben Ortiz about this scene in a Walmart lot in Kearny, N.J. "This guy will have some serious explaining to do on the 22nd!"

Continued from previous page
birth, fundamentally social, cooperative and altruistic beings who will, unless terribly traumatized in childhood, almost inevitably become decent human beings.

Since we’re basically altruistic and caring, we can rid ourselves of all those theories on innate proclivities toward evil, aggression or “original sin.”

We know, of course that a great deal of fear involving death, dissolution and separation lies behind the religious impulse, which promotes not only supportive togetherness in this life but the “promise” of eternal life in the hereafter.

Dr. Robert E. Kay
Pennsylvania

‘Like mail’ arrives to counter the hate

I like your organization and saw one of your billboards. It raised my mother’s hackles a fair bit, but I was secretly rooting for you, both on principle and because it was a darn nice-looking billboard.

You do an excellent job of watching out for things that need to be watched out for. I am transitioning, you might say, and still weighing humanism, atheism and agnosticism. I go to a church which is supportive of this (Unitarian Universalist).

I’m a former evangelical, Southern Baptist and Roman Catholic. I worked for the Baptists and couldn’t stand them anymore, and came to have a difference of opinion with the Catholic Church about abortion and contraception. I enjoy the social, ethical and shared values of being a UU.

I saw all that dreadful hate mail and figured you could use a bit of “like” mail. You folks do a great job!
Mary Ellen Mayo
Florida

Correction needed on Russian poll results

I just read my favorite piece of mail, Freethought Today. Another great issue, but I’m not sure I understand the page 7 article about the Russian poll, which reports that 32% of respondents don’t believe the Sun is the center of the universe.

Is this finding “disquieting” [as the headline says] because the percentage is so low? Since the sun is not the center of the universe, one would hope the percentage would be close to 100.

Did you mean to say “only” 32%? Or did you mean to say “solar system” instead of “universe”?

Scott Pedersen
Wisconsin

Editor’s note: Several readers spotted this. We meant to say “solar system” and regret the error.

• • •

Are we to conclude that 32% of the Russians polled are ill-informed as to the place of the Sun in the universe? If so, this conclusion would be based upon the false premise that the Sun is, in fact, “the center of the universe.” The Sun is, in fact, not the center of the universe, but (roughly speaking), the center of our solar system.

I say “roughly speaking” because, since many of the bodies in the solar system have elliptical rather than circular orbits, the Sun is not truly “central” to them. I suspect that no one, Russian or otherwise, can tell us with any authority where “the center of the universe” is actually located, or what we might find if we should be able to take a look there. I doubt that Americans in



GR8 plate!

The Land of Enchantment turns 100 as a U.S. state on Jan. 6, 1912. FFRF member Joy Elysium Goldbaum treated herself to a centennial commemorative plate to celebrate.

general would do much better in such a poll, but I’m sure that freethinkers, Russian or American, would.

Norman Pfeiffer
New York

Member bridges divide between fact, fantasy

Each year a few weeks before Easter, local churches send out postcards addressed to “Resident” with an invitation to church. In the past, I have consigned them to the recycle bin. I decided last year to respond by returning the postcard with the FFRF non-tract “Dear Christian” to two churches.

A few weeks later, I received a letter from one pastor inviting me to coffee. I wore my “Imagine No Religion” FFRF T-shirt to meet with him and the youth pastor. The pastor was what I would consider a typical hardcore thumper, while the youth pastor was a little less rigid. He said he had read Dan Barker’s book *Godless* and thought it was well-written.

I have since been meeting with my Christian friend weekly to discuss a multiplicity of topics, some religious, some political, some social. We have exchanged books. I loaned him Ayaan Hirsi Ali’s *Infidel*. He has loaned me *The Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel.

I’ve found that reaching out to people in a somewhat unconventional way has resulted in an interesting dialogue with “the other side.” I don’t think either of us has changed our mind, but nevertheless, the meetings have been enjoyable and lively.

Norman Chab
Texas

Inefficient god moves in mysterious way

Serendipity or any unexpected fortunate event is usually labeled a miracle by Christians. The following story was told by a man in my Sabbath school class, back when I was a church-going Christian.

The man had gone to bed to take a nap because he had a bad headache. He was awakened by children throwing things against the wall of his apartment building. He opened his window and yelled at them to stop, but they persisted. So he angrily went outside and told them to go away. When he went back in and opened the door to his apartment, he smelled stove gas and realized that his apartment was full of gas, which was why he had a headache and wasn’t feeling well. He probably would have died if he hadn’t been awakened. Of course he decided that his god had performed a miracle by inspiring the children to throw things at the building.

A smarter, benevolent, omnipotent

god would have simply turned off the gas instead of inspiring children to do mischief.

Heidi Johnson
Maryland

Barker’s *Good Atheist* is a very good read

It was a privilege to review Dan Barker’s new book, *The Good Atheist: Living a Purpose-Filled Life Without God*. (I’m a huge fan of his first book, *Losing Faith in Faith*.)

He briefly describes his religious background and gradual loss of faith. He then does a good job of discrediting Pastor Rick Warren and his *Purpose Driven Life*.

The rest of the book presents brief biographies and/or famous quotes of freethinkers from almost every walk of life. These were all or mostly taken from FFRF’s Freethought of the Day e-mails, which I’ve been reading daily for at least five years. Most of these “Profiles in Nonbelief” were, therefore, already familiar to me. Nevertheless, I enjoyed reading them again and found many of them inspirational. It would, in my opinion, be difficult to read the thoughts of these famous individuals and not embrace their indifference to, rejection of and in some cases, contempt for religion.

I especially recommend this book to those of us who are new freethinkers and wish to learn about the thoughts of famous scientists, philosophers, politicians, actors, authors, composers, etc., on the subject of religion. It’s a great introduction to stimulate some serious reading.

Harold L. Saferstein, M.D.
Arizona

• • •

It’s fortunate and timely that Dan Barker’s *The Good Atheist* comes out at this point in history. The theists are stepping up their attacks on atheists, since they have miserably failed to prove god’s existence. Their new mantra is that ethics depends on religion. According to Christian politicians like Newt Gingrich and many others, society will fall into moral chaos without the foundations of religion, i.e., Christianity.

Yet theists fail to remember, since they have selective memories, that Christianity’s ethics are based on Aristotle and Roman stoicism. There is little in the bible that supports and promotes ethics. The so-called Christian councils have based their pronouncements on ethics from the blatant borrowing, confiscation and adoption of pagan beliefs.

These politicians and their ethical beliefs are only a distant copy of an opaque shadow borrowed from a more civilized, thoughtful epoch. Let’s stick with the original sources!

Robert Damato
Florida

Creationist teacher programmed at birth

Sadly, those like John Freshwater [Ohio science teacher fired for classroom Christianity, Jan/Feb11] are so programmed by their religious beliefs that they fail to realize there’s no more proof their single god is real than the Hindus have any proof their many gods are real. Yet Mr. Freshwater is so positive his beliefs are the only true ones, he’s willing to break laws and torture others by burning crosses in their arms. Which means he is the same type who would kill those like me, Edison, Disney and Einstein, as well as more than a billion others who believe in no gods.

It’s no wonder that in the last 20 or so years, millions more Americans have rejected religion for atheism. Former Christians realize the only reason they were religious in the first place is because they were programmed as very young children, long before they had any ability to figure out they were being taught to believe things for which there is no proof and which break the laws of nature, physics and common sense.

Thus, we have those like John Freshwater who are so convinced they are right and others are wrong that they blow up themselves and others, bomb the Olympics, beat up homosexuals and kill health care workers.

Neil Reinhardt
California

Editor’s note: Freshwater has appealed his January firing to U.S. District Court in Columbus, Ohio.

Cherokee slaves forced on ‘Trail of Tears’

Mike Konopacki’s “One Nation Under God” [Jan/Feb11] told of 16,000 Cherokees forced to walk the “Trail of Tears” to Oklahoma, with 4,000 dying. It didn’t mention that a high number of black slaves owned by Cherokees also died on the trail.

From time to time, Christian missionaries such as the United Brethren’s Missionary Society were invited to talk to the slaves, At Takatukah, the Cherokees established the Cherokee Negro Seminary. In 1866, Chief John Ross signed a treaty that extended Cherokee citizenship to freed Cherokee slaves.

In 1852, the federal government paid the Cherokees \$5 million for their lands. It’s interesting to note that the last Confederate general to surrender in the Civil War was a Cherokee, Gen. Stand Watie, on June 23, 1865.

I’m a district constable in Baxter County, Ark., where there’s a large courthouse plaque commemorating the Trail of Tears. There are some outstanding Cherokee historians here.

Chester D. Kass
Arkansas

Losing Faith In Faith:
From Preacher To Atheist
by Dan Barker

*“An arsenal for skeptics.
A challenge to believers.”*

Hardback, 342pp., photos.
Member price: \$20
Nonmember price: \$25

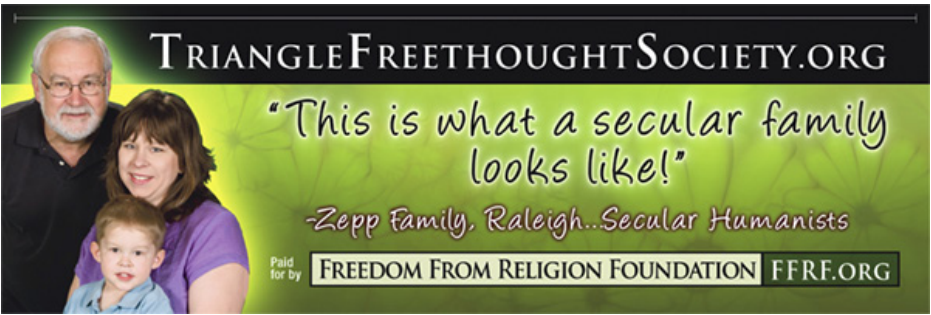
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Triangle chapter members gather at the newsmaking billboards in the Raleigh area. (Photos by Joey Carabetta)



Raleigh nontheists come ‘Out of the Closet’



Continued from front page

nonbelief. We are so proud of our North Carolina members and participants,” added Barker.

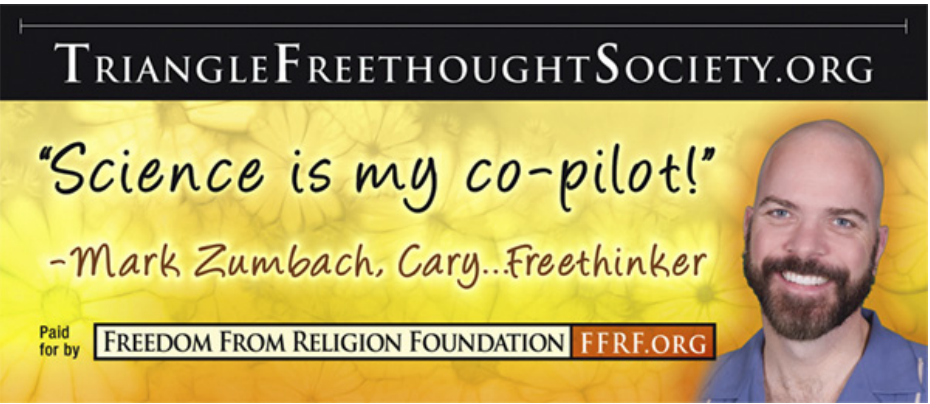
Kim, a smiling young woman who identifies herself as a “stay-at-home mom and nontheist,” proclaims, “I don’t need a higher power to have a higher purpose!”

Triangle Freethought Society President Mark Zumbach, of Cary, says: “Science is my co-pilot.” Zumbach notes, “Our target audience is made up of freethinkers in the Triangle, and

we want to let them know they are not alone.” Some billboards reach into smaller towns where freethinkers “feel particularly isolated.”

The chapter was founded in 2009 and serves religious skeptics in the Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill areas.

Robin, identified as “Parent . . . Nontheist” from Raleigh, smilingly declares: “Freethinking moves America forward!” On the intellectual side, an engineer named Rodrigo of Raleigh notes: “The path to truth: Science and Reason.” Dale, a writer and agnostic



from Raleigh, jokes: “I write fiction. I don’t believe it.”

The secular message of Eric Thomas, a retiree from Durham, is: “We’ve got the whole world in our hands.” A Raleigh artist named Chris identifies as an atheist and says reassuringly: “Your faith feel wrong? It’s OK to leave!”

“We are grateful to the Triangle Freethought Society and our Raleigh-area members for coming ‘out of the closet’ and making this campaign so fun and successful, and particularly wish to single out Amy Glenn, who coordinated this amazing project so adroitly,” said Gaylor.

FFRF is working on two other campaigns now in the Midwest and Southwest.

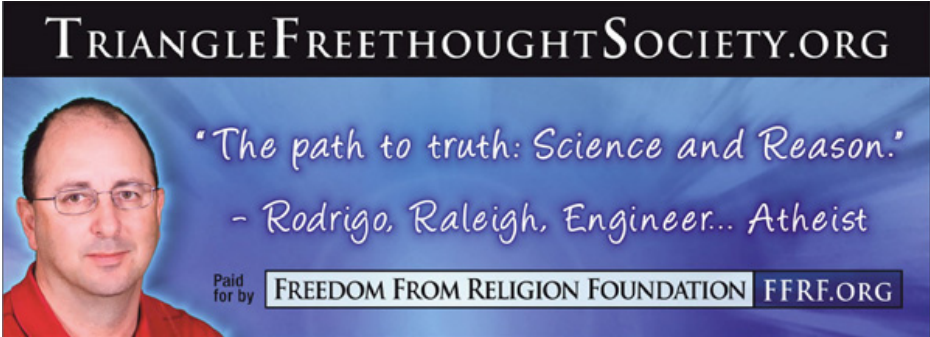
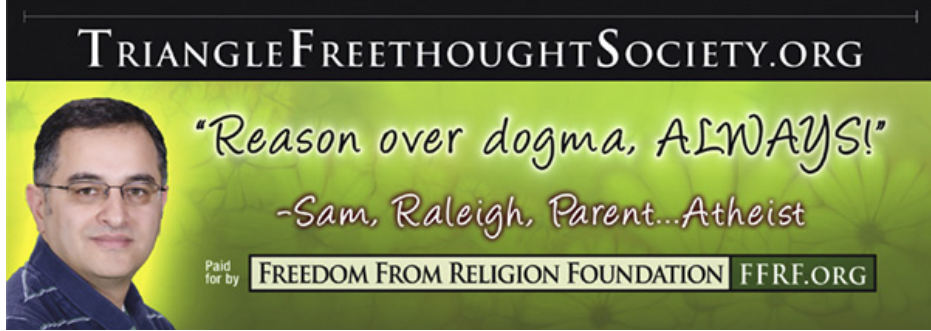
“Our members are FFRF’s greatest asset and we want to introduce them to their communities,” Gaylor said. “Freethought is an intellectually respectable position. Yet atheists and agnostics are often treated like lepers. and put on the defensive. It’s time to re-

ward people for using reason in forming our opinion about religion, and it’s time to welcome atheists and agnostics into the American mainstream.”

FFRF warmly thanks Lifetime Member Steven Uhl for his generous \$25,000 “Out of the Closet” gift, of which he specified \$5,000 to help the Raleigh campaign. The other \$6,000 spent on the campaign was taken from the pool of many smaller donations received from members nationwide.

What does it take to bring this campaign to your area? FFRF is looking for an organized local volunteer to coordinate finding a photographer and a billboard company to work with. FFRF is grateful for continuing support for this campaign, particularly donors who may wish to sponsor a campaign in their area.

Donations small or large may be earmarked for the “Out of the Closet” Campaign. Donate online at ffrf.org/donate/out, or by mail: FFRF, Box 750, Madison WI 53701.





Rebecca Newberger Goldstein



Jerry Coyne



Mitch Kahle



Steve Trunk

Photo: Brent Nicastro

34th FFRF convention — Hartford, Conn., Oct. 7-9, 2011

Newberger Goldstein joins awardee roster

The Freedom From Religion Foundation’s 34th annual convention takes place the weekend of Oct. 7-9, 2011, at the Marriott Hartford in downtown Hartford, Conn.

Rebecca Newberger Goldstein, author of *36 Arguments for the Existence of God: A Work of Fiction*, will be named Freethought Heroine 2011. Her speech is titled “36 Arguments Against the Existence of God.”

Named “Best Novel of 2010” by the Christian Science Monitor and among NPR’s “Five Favorite Books of 2010,” *36 Arguments* ends with a chapter in which Rebecca’s atheist protagonist offers 36 arguments against the existence of God.

Goldstein is a 1996 MacArthur Fel-

low (the “genius” award) and has written five novels and a book of short stories and nonfiction, including *Betraying Spinoza: The Renegade Jew Who Gave Us Modernity*. She has taught at Barnard and in the Columbia MFA writing program and the Rutgers philosophy department. She’s been a visiting scholar at Brandeis and at Trinity College in Hartford. She is a research associate in Harvard’s psychology department and is married to Harvard scientist Steven Pinker, a previous FFRF honoree and Honorary Board member.

Other honorees include:

- **Professor Jerry Coyne**, receiving FFRF’s Emperor Has No Clothes Award. Coyne, a professor in the department of ecology and evolution at the University of Chicago, is author of

the recent book, *Why Evolution is True*. His outspoken column, “Science and religion aren’t friends,” appeared in USA Today in October 2010.

- **Steve Trunk**, a veteran, FFRF Board and Lifetime Member receiving FFRF’s Atheist in Foxhole award as plaintiff in a victorious lawsuit declaring the Mt. Sordedad cross in San Diego unconstitutional. The checkered challenge has been in the courts since the 1980s, with Steve assuming lead plaintiff status after the death of the original plaintiff.
- **Mitch Kahle**, founder of Hawaii Citizens for the Separation of State and Church, to be named Freethinker of the Year for persuading his state Senate to drop prayers.

FFRF will arrange for a shuttle and reserve the historic Mark Twain Home

and Museum for a staggered group tour on the afternoon of Friday, Oct. 7, before the convention opens *if enough convention-goers express interest*. (The Twain home is not accessible via Hartford’s free shuttle.)

Registration opens late Friday afternoon. The formal program begins at 7 p.m., followed by a dessert reception. Events continue through Saturday night and conclude by noon Sunday after membership and board of director meetings. If you want to tour the Twain house, plan your itinerary to make time on Friday afternoon.

FFRF convention rates at the Marriott Hartford, 200 Columbus Blvd., are \$159 plus tax, single, double, triple or quadruple. Reserve your rooms directly by requesting “Freedom From

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

Freedom From Religion Foundation’s

34th Annual Convention

October 7–9, 2011

Make checks payable to “FFRF”

Marriott Hartford Downtown Hartford, Conn.

No. registering

FFRF Member registration(s) @ \$50 per person

Non-member spouse or companion accompanying member @ \$55

Non-member registration(s) @ \$95 (or join for \$40, save \$5!)

Student registration(s) @ \$25 (Ask about student group rate)

Saturday Non-Prayer Breakfast @ \$25* per person

☐ Vegetarian option

no. of vegetarian

☐ Vegan option

no. of vegan

Saturday Night Dinner @ \$45* per person

☐ Vegetarian option

no. of vegetarian

☐ Vegan option

no. of vegan

☐ Gluten-free dinners required on above selections

Total:

* Meal prices include 21% gratuity and 6% sales tax

☐ Reserve ticket(s) to tour Mark Twain home, afternoon of Fri., Oct. 7.

(FFRF will bill you later. Tour will take place if enough members respond.)

Name(s)

Please include names of all registrants for nametags

Address

City/State/Zip

Please include phone/e-mail (in case we have a question about your registration)

Religion Foundation” Group Block by calling toll-free 1-866-373-9806. You may make reservations online at marriott.com

Rooms are held until Sept. 6 unless filled before. Plan ahead and to share a one-way taxi (\$36-\$44) from the airport. Hotel parking is \$19 daily/\$23 valet. Union Station is less than a mile from the hotel. The hotel has a Starbucks Café, an Italian restaurant open for breakfast, lunch or dinner, a fitness center and the usual amenities.

Register with FFRF (only \$50 per member, \$55 per spouse or companion accompanying member, \$95 for nonmember) using the handy registration form on this page or go online at ffrf.org/outreach/convention/.

The optional Saturday Non-Prayer Breakfast is \$25, including 21% gratuity and 6% tax, and includes scrambled eggs, applewood bacon, roasted potatoes, parmesan-crusted tomato and coffee or tea. A vegetarian option substitutes fruit for bacon.

Dinner, \$45 including service charge and tax, is Andora chicken (herb white wine marinated chicken) or vegetarian strudel (grilled seasonal vegetables layered with chevre in a puff pastry served with red pepper coulis), served with a salad of greens and mozzarella cheese with white balsamic vinegar, rolls, coffee or tea, chef’s choice starch, and chocolate truffle cake with raspberry coulis. Chef’s choice vegan and gluten-free options are available for breakfast and dinner.