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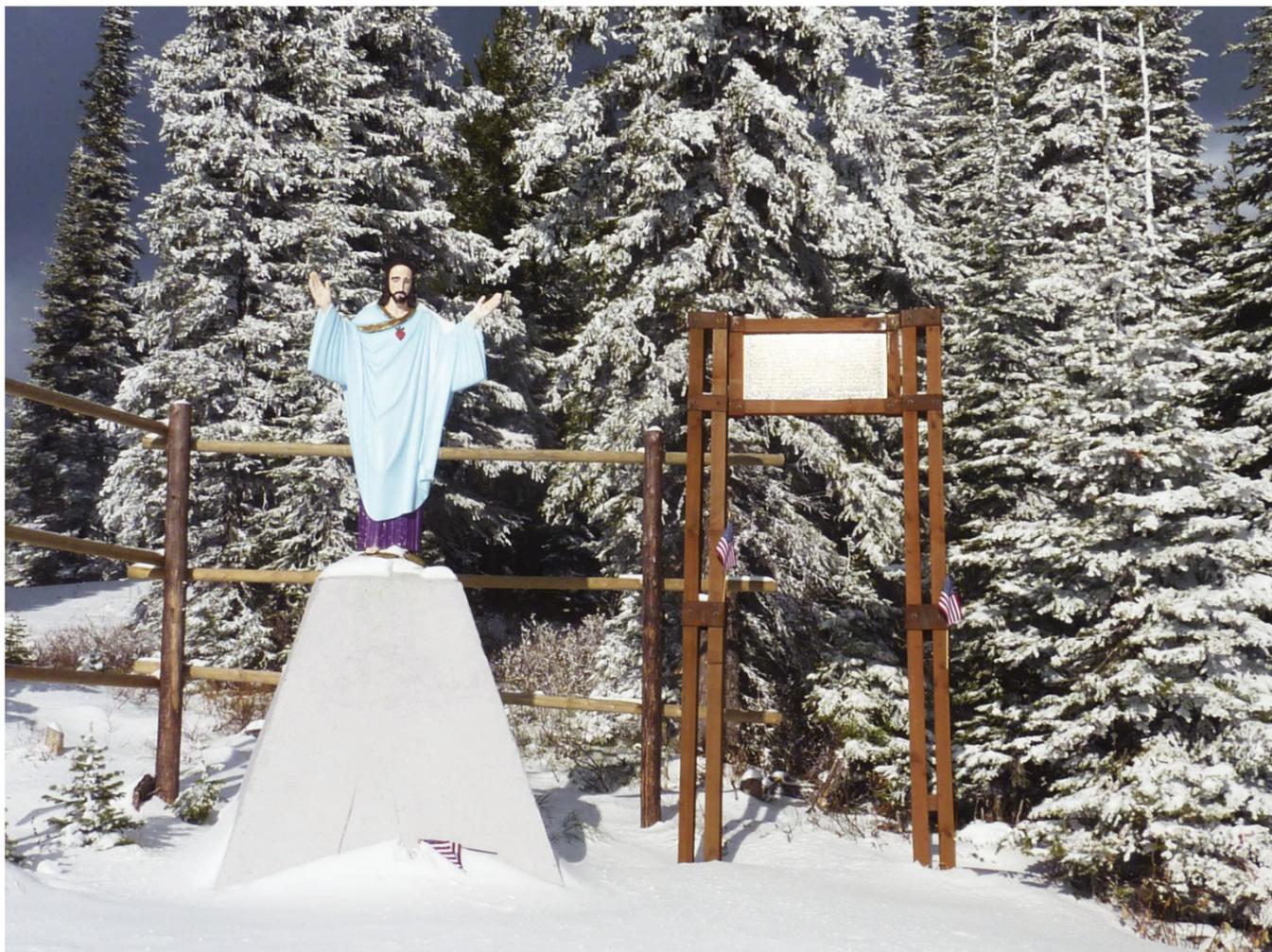


Ehrenreich speaks at FFRF gala

The Freedom From Religion Foundation, a major sponsor of the Washington, D.C., Reason Rally on the National Mall Sat., March 24, invites FFRF'ers to two D.C. dinner parties that weekend.

Well-known author, journalist and atheist Barbara Ehrenreich will speak and sign books at FFRF's Saturday dinner gala. A passionate secular advocate, scientist Ellery Schempp, whose complaint brought a famed 1963 Supreme Court decision against bible reading in schools, will address the pre-rally Friday dinner. Dan Barker will entertain.

Sign up now! Turn to back page.



Jesus chills on Big Mountain near Whitefish Resort's Chair Two in Montana's Flathead National Forest. (Photo by Flathead Area Secular Humanist Association)

Ski run statue on legal slippery slope

FFRF suit contests federalizing Jesus

Can nonfaith move a mountain religious symbol? The Freedom From Religion Foundation filed suit Feb. 7 in U.S. District Court in Montana, challenging the U.S. Forest Service's decision to renew a special permit to maintain a Jesus shrine on Big Mountain near Kalispell.

FFRF seeks a declaration that the "continued presence of a six-foot-tall statue of Jesus Christ in the Flathead National Forest, on a 25-by-25-foot plot owned and administered by the United States Forest Service, violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States."

The Knights of Columbus, an ultra-conservative Roman Catholic men's organization, applied for a permit for the express religious purpose of erecting "a Statue of our Lord Jesus Christ" in 1953. The shrine, erected in 1954, is similar to Jesus shrines the Knights of Columbus places "on its own extensive real estate holdings." The Knights have never paid any money for the privilege of appropriating a prominent parcel of federal land for their proselytizing symbol.

The Forest Service has continued to "sanction the looming presence" of the shrine overlooking Big Mountain ski run, until the most recent lease ran out in late 2010.

Chip Weber, Flathead National Forest Supervisor, determined last year, after a complaint by FFRF, that the statue's presence was inappropriate. On Aug. 24, 2011, Weber noted in a formal statement that a shrine on federal land conflicted with Supreme Court decisions and established case law, and that it would be removed no later than Oct. 31, 2012.

U.S. Rep. Denny Rehberg, who is campaigning for the Senate, publicly denounced the decision and started a website, vetsforjesus.com, which takes visitors to his Congressional website and a pitch to retain the shrine.

Weber capitulated in an Oct. 21 announcement, withdrawing the earlier decision, and calling for a public comment period. Weber's letter referred to "new information" that the Jesus statue is supposedly eligible for listing on the National Historic Register, a suggestion the Forest Service itself made to the Montana Historic Preservation Of-

fice. Religious monuments and properties are not eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

As part of the "public comment" period, FFRF shared samples of the vicious hate mail it has received from shrine supporters. FFRF's legal complaint notes that the shrine's presence on federal property amounts to governmental endorsement of Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular.

FFRF is asking the court to enjoin the defendant from continuing to approve the shrine for federal property and ordering Weber to direct the Knights of Columbus to remove it.

FFRF is bringing the lawsuit on behalf of its Montana membership including members who have had "direct and unwelcome exposure" to the Jesus shrine, some of whom have "altered their conduct to avoid Big Mountain because of the Jesus statue."

The case is filed on FFRF's behalf by attorney Richard L. Bolton and local counsel Martin S. King.

Read the full Complaint at: ffrf.org/news/releases/ffrf-challenges-catholic-shrine-on-big-mountain/

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Meet a Staffer

Name: Kathryn Rose Daniel.

Where and when I was born: Long Beach, Calif., March 9, 1987. I've lived all around the country because my dad was in the Navy.

Education: Notre Dame High School, Cape Girardeau, Mo.; the University of Wisconsin-Madison, B.A. in gender and women's studies and a certificate in LGBT studies.

What I want to do when I grow up: Rest on my laurels.

I spend a lot of time thinking about: FOOD!

My religious upbringing was: Too much! I spent K—12 years in Catholic schools. In grade school, I had to go to church six days a week. After I got my driver's license I started pretending to go to church and just driving around or going to a park (when I didn't have to attend with my family). One Ash Wednesday, I started the tip of a stick on fire so I could smudge the ash on my forehead to "prove" I had gone to Mass.

My doubts about religion started: When I was cognizant enough to realize how bored I was in church. Eventually my doubts solidified when I learned about the role of women in the eyes of the church and understood the misnomer "pro-life."

I've pretty much always hated going to church, religion class, mandatory singing and — well, everything about religion except the communion wine (and not because of the quality)! My mother made me go through confirmation and attend church, but once I turned 18 I never went back.

How I came to work at FFRF: I heard FFRF was looking for a clerical student

worker, so I came in to interview and quit my job as a receptionist at a hair salon shortly thereafter. After I graduated from college, I transitioned to the position of full-time bookkeeper and executive assistant.

What I do here: My main duties include keeping our books up to date and reconciled, paying the bills and processing donations. Otherwise, I dabble in social media, member relations, event organizing and a large amount of miscellany.

What I like best about it here: Morning and afternoon tea, staff birthday lunches, days when I bake cookies at the office for our lovely staff, Dan's jokes and the ridiculous crank mail/calls. It's very fun to end someone's hateful telephone rant about how we're all "fucking heathens," going to hell, etc., with "I love you!" or *non parlo inglese* and a hang-up.

What sucks about it: The quirks of QuickBooks, violent threats directed at us from those who "don't yet realize they too are atheists," and "posting" (recording membership data onto manual cards).

Things I like: Barbecue, sushi, rutabagas, charcuterie, corn on the cob, game meat, steamed buns, ramen, beer, baking, biking, roller derby, yoga, video games, animals, protests and rallies, Amy Poehler, Tina Fey, Green Bay Packers, Words With Friends (an online game).

Things I smite: Anise, fennel, okra, fresh tomatoes, mushy bananas, "pro-lifers," aka "anti-choicers," open-mouth chewers and persistent "trolls" on FFRF's Facebook page.

How did you "come out" as an athe-



"Godless Goddess" Katie poses with a platter of cookies. She proposed the t-shirt slogan.

ist: I never claimed to be a Christian, so I am just an atheist by default I guess. However, once a congregation of about 30 people from the Pentecostal church came to my mom's front door in Missouri. I answered, and they asked if we

were saved.

I said, "I'm an atheist but my mom's religious, so she should be good, you don't need to worry about her." They asked if they could pray for me, and I said, sure. My mother was mortified.

FFRF welcomes seven new Lifetime Members

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is delighted to welcome seven new Lifetime Members. They are:

DeWayne Buratti, John Clark, Becky Horton, Andy Ross, Stanley Stangren, Richard Uspel and a member who prefers to be identified only by first name, Robin.

States represented are California, Colorado, New Mexico, New York,

Ohio and Wisconsin.

Lifetime Memberships are \$1,000 per individual designated for membership or membership renewal, and ensure never another renewal notice! All dues and donations to FFRF are deductible for income-tax purposes.

Warmest thanks to Robin, Richard, Stanley, Andy, Becky, John and DeWayne!



Portland — Oct. 12-13, 2012
Dawkins headlines FFRF's 35th convention

Reserve the weekend of October 12-13, 2012, for FFRF's exciting 35th annual national convention in Portland, Ore., at the downtown Hilton Portland & Executive Tower.

Confirmed speakers include distinguished professor Richard Dawkins, a celebrated scientist, advocate and author of the blockbuster best-seller *The God Delusion*.

Joining the line-up is best-selling mystery author Sara Paretsky, origina-

tor of the acclaimed series featuring feminist and secular humanist female private eye, V I Warshawski. Paretsky also writes on progressive topics. Her other books include *Writing in an Age of Silence*, part-memoir, part political dissent. She will receive a Freethought Heroine Award.

Registration begins in April. Look for details at ffrf.org/convention and in next month's issue.

A Note to Members

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

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March 2012

The only freethought newspaper in the United States



Flex C. Curry/Associated Press

Mark calendar for Lake Hypatia July 4th gala!

The Alabama Freethought Society, FFRF's longest-running current chapter, is planning on holding its annual "Glorious Fourth" event at Lake Hypatia on the weekend of June 29 to July 1. The scenic, piney location is a recreation area owned by Pat Cleveland, AFA's director, abutting Talledega National Forest and a small lake.

Speeches and most events take place in FFRF's air-conditioned Freethought Hall and auditorium, on land generously deeded to FFRF by Pat. FFRF's Atheists in Foxholes marble memorial is next to the hall, and the landscaping includes many freethought tributes and monuments.

Primitive campers and RV campers may reserve spots through Pat. Bathrooms and showers are accessible at the hall. There are many motels and B&B's in the area. The event is family friendly and includes a mix of speeches, outdoor events and catered meals on the lakeside pavilion.

The April issue will contain updates and registration information. You may also check the FFRF website for details:

ffrf.org/outreach/lake-hypatia/
Y'all come!

Standing up to theocrats

FFRF member Jeanne Owens (left), Pat Hale, Kris Martin and Dawn Miefert protest Feb. 7 at the Susan G. Komen for the Cure headquarters in Dallas. They were part of a group presenting 832,000 signatures from people objecting to Komen's withdrawal of support, later reversed due to public outcry, for Planned Parenthood. Jeanne writes, "It's difficult being a Texan, with mindsets against atheists and women having control of their own bodies, mindsets that say everyone is a Christian and only Christian. The list goes on, but chalk this up as a victory for women. Of my 10 closest friends in my little corner of Texas, six are atheists. And I'm well on my way to 'converting' the other four!"

Congratulations, Jessica!

Rhode Island board votes against appeal

FFRF congratulates Jessica Ahlquist, 16, for prevailing in a lawsuit challenging a prayer banner at her high school in Rhode Island. On Feb. 16, the Cranston School Committee voted 5-2 not to appeal the Jan. 11 ruling by U.S. District Judge Ronald Lagueux, who ordered the removal of a prayer inscribed on a large banner in the auditorium of Cranston High School West, beginning with "Our Heavenly Father" and ending with "Amen."

FFRF wrote School Committee members and asked all FFRF members

to contact them before the vote.

"It is the duty of the school district to protect taxpayers' money from a costly losing battle. More than 70 years of absolutely incontrovertible and firm Supreme Court rulings have settled the law," said Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-president. "Religious devotions and instruction have no place in our public schools. The school cannot, will not and should not win this fight."

Lawyers representing Jessica have asked the court to order the city to pay \$173,000 for legal fees, the Associated

Press reported.

Banner opponents at the meeting wore T-shirts that said "Evil little thing," a reference to comments made by state Rep. Peter Palumbo, a Cranston Democrat, about the teen on talk radio.

FFRF has given Jessica \$12,000 in support and scholarships this year and is pursuing civil rights complaints against two florists who wouldn't deliver flowers from FFRF to Jessica, who will be a headline speaker at the March 24 Reason Rally on the National Mall



Photo: Jeff Yantis

in Washington, D.C.

Ellery Schempp, involved as a student in the landmark 1963 Supreme Court case *Abington School District v. Schempp* that said outlawed required school bible readings, spoke at the meeting in support of Jessica:

"The poster on the wall says it is a prayer. Prayer is a religious notion, and it has no secular purpose whatsoever. We might even think of it as blasphemous if you read Matthew 6:5-7, which warns against public displays of piety," Schempp said.

Schempp added, "I think if Roger Williams were here today, he would be asking, 'What purpose does this poster have?' He would be condemning the hate and fear that has arisen. He would ask, 'What if this prayer had never been posted? Would Cranston kids be less moral, less good, less tolerant?' I think they would be about the same. And when it goes away, they will be about the same. They still have to pay attention in class, study and do homework. So this is a lot of fuss about nothing."

The School Committee is looking for a place to permanently house the banner. Possible locations are the Cranston Historical Society and churches.

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

What is the Freedom From Religion Foundation?

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

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

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

Your Cute Mug goes Here

"Your God-less Quote goes here."

-Name, Title, Atheist... City, State

FFRF.ORG | FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION

Declare and share your nonbelief in FFRF's online "Out of the Closet" campaign!
ffrf.org/out

Heads Up

A Poetry Column by Philip Appleman

Snow on the Bosphorus

(Santa Sophia, Istanbul)

I stand across the future, looking back
on all the crooked past. Half blind with snow
I cannot see the shores of Asia, but
phantom ships call strangely through the whirl,
ferries float their hordes from somewhere east
and Hittites and Assyrians swarm ashore
to freeze dominion over all the earth —
and melt along the angry turns of time;
Darius comes, and Xerxes, chain the sea
and lash its insolence — and drown among
gray eddies of the past;
Alexander blunders into
convoluted space; devout
and murderous Crusaders, conquerors
in the name of Allah — all are swept away
in the rush of dim and icy stars.

I stand across the future, looking back
on all my crooked ways, half blind with love
of rectitude and order, chart and graph.
From continent to continent I had hoped
for one triumphant crossing in a line;
but living leaves a wake, and as I stare
at all that vagrant foam, I think again
of Constantine and Kemal, gods and men:
plotting our maps for other futures, we
already know their true-north is askew.
The children of our children will look up
and measure their own stars; for ours will serve
our own time only, dimmer every night
in the gray and swirling blur around our heads,
while Holy Wisdom crieth in the streets.

© 1996 Philip Appleman

Reprinted from *New & Selected Poems, 1956-1996*



Philip Appleman is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Indiana University. His published volumes of poetry include *Perfidious Proverbs and Other Poems: A Satirical Look at the Bible* (2012), *Darwin's Ark* (new 2009 edition) and *Karma, Dharma, Pudding & Pie* (2009). His nonfiction work includes the widely used *Norton Critical Edition, Darwin*, and the *Norton Critical Edition of Malthus' Essay on Population*. His poetry and fiction have won many awards, including a fellowship in poetry from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Castagnola Award from the Poetry Society of America, the Humanist Arts Award from the American Humanist Association and the Friend of Darwin Award from the National Center for Science Education. His work has appeared in *Harper's Magazine*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *The New York Times*, *The Paris Review*, *Partisan Review*, *Poetry*, and *The Yale Review*.

He and his playwright wife, Marjorie Appleman, are both "Afterlife" Members of the Freedom From Religion Foundation. They recorded an excerpt of "Noah," *New and Selected Poems*, which is available for sale from FFRF for \$23 ppd., *The Norton Critical Edition, Darwin*, is \$22 ppd., *Karma, Dharma, Pudding & Pie*, \$27 ppd., *Darwin's Ark*, \$23 ppd., and *Perfidious Proverbs*, \$20 ppd. (ffrf.org/shop/).

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Freedom depends upon freethinkers

(Please specify whether the individual is a freethinker.)



Overheard

It's almost like making a child get a shot even though they don't want to. It's for their own good. I feel like they might see it as a very negative thing right now, but I'm defending their Constitution, too.



Jessica Ahlquist, Cranston, R.I., on suing her school district over a Christian prayer banner in the auditorium

New York Times, 1-26-12

You might think it would be easy to stand up for religious freedom in the birthplace of religious freedom, but apparently it isn't. In Judge Lagueux' words, Jessica Ahlquist "is clearly an articulate and courageous young woman, who took a brave stand, particularly in light of the hostile response she has received from her community." Thanks to Jessica, the spirit of Roger Williams — America' first great dissenter — is alive and well in Rhode Island.

Charles Haynes, Director, Religious Freedom Education Project

First Amendment Center, 1-27-12

In a close election, the place where people vote — a school, a church, a government building — could affect the outcome. For example, a higher percentage of people voting in a church instead of a school might vote for a conservative candidate or proposition.

Baylor University study published in the International Journal for the Psychology of Religion

baylor.edu, 1-17-12

Atheists don't need temples. I think there are better things to spend this kind of money on. If you are going to spend money on atheism, you could improve secular education and build nonreligious



schools which teach rational, skeptical critical thinking.

Richard Dawkins, criticizing philosopher Alain de Botton's plan for a £1 million "temple for atheists" in London

The Guardian, 1-26-12

Making music and fighting the Vatican.

Sinead O'Connor, on the two things she wants to be known for

New York Times, 2-12-12



You know, the Constitution seems to me to be pretty clear. I've always thought that one of the great things about America is that we keep a separation [between church and state] and the more clear that separation is, the more those people who want to be able to practice their religion will have the opportunity to do so. **New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, defending his decision to ban churches from holding services in public schools and opposing a bill to overturn an appeals court decision upholding the city's ban**

New York Times, 2-14-12

Isn't it amazing the bishop of L.A. confessed to fathering two children? But, hey, he didn't use birth control, so at least he followed the church rules. Ya gotta give him credit for that.

Jay Leno monologue

"*The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*," 1-23-11

The most serious cases of the sexual abuse of minors currently taking place are among Orthodox Jewish rabbis in Brooklyn, yet Leno would never tell a joke at their expense.

Catholic League President Bill Donohue

catholicleague.org, 1-24-11

YOUR WEEKLY ANTIDOTE TO THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT

TUNE IN TO FREETHOUGHT RADIO

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Annie Laurie Gaylor

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**Slightly irreverent views,
news, music & interviews**

Exposing the Easter myth

Ghost-buster bags Zombie Jesus

By Dan Barker

It's that time of year again: Ghosts and zombies, graveyards, disguises and spooky stories. That's right. Easter is upon us, the season that celebrates the revivification of an executed corpse, a story so fantastical that it makes Halloween look like child's play.

Zombies? Look at this phantasmagorical tale in the Gospel of Matthew, at the time Jesus was crucified:

"The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many." (Matthew 27:51-53)

This little "Night of the Dead Living" story is lobbed so quickly into the Easter narrative that I want to say, "Wait a minute, back up! If this really happened, it's more interesting than Jesus' resurrection!"

It should be relatively easy for a god to revive (in the religious scheme of things), but all these regular people, crawling out of the graves that their rotted bodies had occupied for years, maybe centuries, well, that is news! Tell me more. What did they look like? Were their joints creaky? What did they smell like!? Did they stumble back to their shocked families and former spouses with arms outstretched? Did they get their jobs back? This would be the most amazing headline in history!

But I want to focus on that word "appeared" in the final sentence: "They . . . appeared to many people."

The story is a legend

Much has been written about how the Easter legend has origins in ancient spring mythologies. The very word is of pagan origin, from the fertility goddess Eostre (Ishtar, Astarte). The story has been critiqued on many other fronts. In *Godless*, I list many of the internal contradictions in the accounts related by Paul, Mark, Matthew, Luke and John. According to scholars, these episodes show signs of legendary growth, from the early simple stories of Paul and Mark to the more elaborate exaggerations of Luke and John, decades later.

But as I was reading through the passages again, something jumped out at me, something I never saw when I was a believer. The resurrection is a ghost story! I used to preach that Jesus rose bodily from the grave: The stone was physically moved (by angel or earthquake) in order for the material person of Jesus to walk out, with heart beating and lungs pumping air. Like a regular guy.

Easter makes Halloween look like child's play.

Most Christians think this is critical, showing that Jesus didn't simply "die and go to heaven" like Grandma or anybody else whose spirit (they believe) ascends while the corpse rots, but that a solid miracle occurred, conquering death in every way.

The empty tomb was an empty physical tomb — a real rock was rolled away to make way for a real body. But if we look at the actual words of the text, this is not at all what happened. The New Testament authors change the words they use to describe Jesus after the resurrection.

Vision or hallucination?

Before Easter morning, in all of the gospels, Jesus is described in normal narrative terms, meeting people, sitting, standing, coming and going. He was seen, watched, heard, touched and followed. But when the stone was rolled away from the tomb, suddenly Jesus is not just passively seen — he actively *appears*.

Like a ghost.

Before the resurrection, even when the disciples thought Jesus might have been a spook, the narrator assures us he was not, using normal vision to describe the scene, as in the famous story of walking on water:

"But when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought it was a ghost and cried out; for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.'" (Mark 6:49-50)

Notice: He didn't "appear" to them, no matter what they might have imagined. They "saw" him, the writer assures us. In the New Testament, if it is a vision or ghost, words like "appeared" or "showed himself" are used, otherwise it is a natural viewing. The narrator of Mark is obviously emphasizing this distinction because otherwise there would have been no miracle. Any old ghost can float above a lake.

The opposite happens before the resurrection, with the author of Matthew careful to state that what happened was not material. At the transfiguration of Jesus on a high mountain, Moses and Elijah "appear" to Peter, James and John. Boo! These guys had been dead for centuries, so it could hardly have been their physical bodies on that summit.

Jesus agrees: "Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead." (Matthew 17:9) Notice he did not say, "Tell no one what you saw." In Greek, the word

"vision" is from the same root as "appear."

But after the crucifixion, the writers strangely alter their vocabulary when referring to Jesus. Here is the earliest account we have of Easter, written by Paul about 25 years after the supposed event:

"Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and he was buried, and he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to someone untimely born, he appeared also to me." (I Corinthians 15:3-8)

That's the same word — appeared — that Matthew used to describe the zombies, and the angel who spoke to Joseph when Mary was pregnant, and the ghost of Moses on the mountain. Paul could have simply reported that "the disciples and apostles saw Jesus, and so did I."

Saying that he "appeared" is an unusual way to describe meeting a real person. This doesn't happen with Jesus until after he is dead.

Suppose you asked me if my neighbor was home, and I said, "Yes. I went up to the door, and he appeared to me. I know he was there because when I entered the dining room, he showed himself to me again!" You would think I was talking about a haunted house.

The plot thickens

The next Easter story is in Mark, written about 40 years after the supposed event:

"Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene. . . . After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. . . . Later he appeared to the eleven themselves as they were sitting at the table." (Mark 16:9-14)

Mark, the writer of the first gospel, also switches to "appeared." But "in another form?" What is that all about? When Luke later describes this scene



Photo: Brent Nicastro

on the road to Emmaus, he writes that the men's "eyes were kept from recognizing him." (Luke 24:13-31)

Jesus was obviously disguised in some way. Halloween costume! After they ate a meal, it gets spooky: "Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight." Whooo! Trick or treat!

Is this the way to describe a real person? Luke does present the next scene at the table in Jerusalem using relatively normal words (standing, eating, touching his body), and avoids the word "appeared" that Paul used to describe the same event, but it obviously didn't seem real to the 11 disciples.

Jesus magically "stood in the midst of them" (the opposite of the vanishing act) and "they were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost." He then went outside and "was carried up into heaven." I hate to eat and run.

John, about 60 years after the alleged event, who never used "appeared" in the narrative prior to describing the resurrection, tells his first resurrection tale using normal words, but then says: "After these things, Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberius. . . . This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead." (John 24:1,14)

He "appeared"? He "showed himself"? This is not the way to talk about a man meeting his friends. (And no, I will not try for a crude joke here.)

The Easter story may be meaningful to millions, but it was not a body that walked out of that tomb. It was probably a black cat.

*Dan Barker likes cats of all colors, but what really makes him purr is serving as FFRF co-president, debating, speaking and writing from a freethought perspective. He is the author of *Losing Faith in Faith, Godless* and *The Good Atheist*.*

Overheard: Evolution

[A]lthough he thinks it a "profound question" asking, "if we evolved from monkeys, why are there still monkeys?" it's actually quite cliché. To use language he might understand, it's like asking "if God created us from dust, why is there still dust?"

Joseph Roberts, Monroe, La., response to a "prayer warrior's" letter to the editor, "Atheist unswayed by God's wrath" *Monroe News Star*, 1-1-12

The drive to teach creationism is a political stunt to win points with the far right. States are struggling across America to raise standards for students and lift their performance. Loading up

precious classroom time with phony science does them a disservice. When colleges look at the biology grades of Indiana seniors, will they wonder precisely what an A means if it comes from a Hoosier high school where evolution is taught alongside religious variations on the creation story? Moreover, by dumping this pig in a poke on school boards, the bill would risk turning school board elections, which should turn on key curriculum and financing priorities, into demagogic one-issue campaigns on creationism.

Editorial headlined "Creationist nonsense"

Louisville Courier-Journal, 2-1-12

What Is a Freethinker?



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

Bible 'morality' (King James Version)

Compiled by Barbara G. Walker

KILLING (as in 'Thou shalt not')

The biblical god personally kills a total of 371,186 people, not counting his slaughter of every living thing in Genesis 7. The biblical god also orders the killing of a total of 1,862,265.

Gen. 22:2 – God accepts human sacrifices (including that of Jesus, later).

Ex. 12:29 – God kills all the firstborn in the land of Egypt.

Ex. 15:3 – God is a god of war.

Ex. 21:15-17 – Anyone who strikes or curses a parent must be killed.

Ex. 22:18 – Every witch must be killed.

Ex. 22:19-20 – You must kill anyone who "lieth with a beast," or who worships any god other than Yahweh.

Ex. 31:15 – Anyone who works on the Sabbath must be killed.

Lev. 20:10,13,27 – You must kill adulterers, homosexuals, wizards and spirit mediums.

Lev. 21:9 – Any priest's daughter who fornicates must be burned alive.

Lev. 24:16 – Blasphemers must be killed.

Num. 16:27-33 – God caused the whole tribe of Korah (men, women and children) to be buried alive.

Num. 21:3 – God caused the destruction of all the Canaanites.

Deut. 3:4 – God is pleased that his warriors destroyed 60 cities.

Deut. 7:16 – You must kill all the people God delivers into your hands and "thine eye shall have no pity upon them."

Deut. 13:5 – Any prophet or "dreamer of dreams" who serves another god must be killed.

Deut. 13:6-9 – If your brother, son, daughter, wife, or friend tempts you to worship other gods, "thou shalt surely kill him."

Deut. 13:15 – If the people of any city worship other gods, you must slaughter them all, including their cattle.

Deut. 17:5 – Any man or woman who worships other deities of sun, moon or stars must be stoned to death.

Deut. 18:20 – False prophets must be killed.

Deut. 20:16-17 – God commands complete destruction of all Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites and "thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth."

Deut. 22:21 – A bride found not to be a virgin must be stoned to death.

Deut. 22:22 – Adulterers must be killed.

Deut. 22:23-24 – A girl who is raped within city limits and fails to cry out must be killed.

Deut. 28:22-27 – If you don't obey God's commandments, he will punish you with consumption, fever, extreme burning, blasting, mildew, hemorrhoids, the scab, the itch, the botch of Egypt, etc., etc.

Josh. 6:21 – God's warriors destroyed Jericho and killed every man, woman, child and domestic animal.

Josh. 8:25 – God's warriors killed 12,000 people in the city of Ai.

Josh. 19:47 – The children of Dan wanted more room, so they destroyed the whole population of Leshen and took their territory.

Judges 1:17-18 – Judah and Simeon utterly destroyed the populations of Zephath, Gaza, Askelon and Ekron.

Judges 11:39 – In accord with God's

law, Jephthah was forced to burn his virgin daughter to death as a sacrifice.

Judges 15:15 – God enables Samson to kill 1,000 men with the jawbone of an ass.

Judges 20:46 – At Gibeah, Benjamin's men killed 25,000 people and burned every town.

1 Sam. 6:19 – God kills 50,070 people for trying to peek into the Ark.

1 Sam. 15:3 – God commands the destruction of Amalek: "Slay both men and women, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

2 Sam. 6:7 – God kills Uzzah for touching the Ark, even though he was trying to save it from falling off its oxcart.

1 Kings 18:40 – God commands the slaughter of "prophets of Baal."

1 Kings 20:35, 36 – Because a man didn't "obey the voice of the Lord," a lion was sent to kill him.

2 Kings 2:24 – God sent bears to tear apart 42 children for making fun of Elisha's bald head.

2 Kings 10:25 – God commands the killing of a multitude in the temple of Baal.

2 Kings 19:35 – God's angel killed 185,000 Assyrians in a single night.

1 Chron. 21:14 – God kills 70,000 Israelites with a pestilence.

2 Chron. 15:13 – Any man or woman who refuses to "seek the Lord God of Israel" must be killed.

Job 1 – God arranges the killing of Job's children, servants and animals.

Isa. 13:16 – God promises that all Babylonian children will be "dashed to pieces" before their parents' eyes and wives will be raped.

Isa. 45:7 – God says "I create evil."

Jer. 48:10 – Killing for God is mandatory; God curses anyone who "keepeth back his sword from blood."

Jer. 50:21 – God commands that the people of Merathaim and Pekod be "utterly destroyed."

Ezek. 9:5-7 – God calls for purging in Jerusalem: "let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children and women . . . fill the courts with the slain."

Ezek. 35:8 – God promises to fill the mountains, hills, valleys and rivers with slain men.

Hosea 13:16 – God promises to have Samaritan infants dashed to pieces, and pregnant women will have their bellies slashed open.

Nahum 1:2 – God is jealous, full of vengeance and wrath.

Zeph. 1:3 – God threatens to destroy everything, man and beast, birds and fishes.

Zeph. 1:18 – "The whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy."

Zeph. 3:6 – God brags that he has destroyed many nations.

Zech. 13:3 – A false prophet must be killed by his father and mother.

RAPE

Ex. 21:7-8 – A father may sell his daughter to be a "maidservant" (or sex slave) who must "please her master."

Num. 31:18 – God orders his warriors to kill every living thing in a captured city, except the virgin girls, who are to be raped and turned into sex slaves. (According to verse 35, there were 32,000 virgin girls thus taken.)

Deut. 21:11-12 – If a warrior likes the look of a female war captive, he can take her to be one of his "wives."



Deut. 22:28-29 – A man who rapes a virgin may take her for a wife if he pays her father 50 shekels of silver. (Yet a bride found not to be a virgin must be killed. – Deut. 22)

Judges 5:30 – The spoils of war include "a damsel or two" for every man.

Judges 21:12-23 – God's warriors killed all the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead except for 400 virgin girls, who were taken as slaves. If there are not enough girls to go around, God's warriors may raid neighboring towns for more to rape.

SLAVERY

Gen. 9:25 – God cursed Ham, son of Noah, with perpetual slavery for seeing his father naked. (Ham was formerly considered the ancestor of all Negroes.)

Ex. 21:4 – A male slave may marry and have children, and may go free after six years; but his family remains the property (or hostages?) of his master.

Ex. 21:7 – A man may sell his daughter as a sex slave.

Ex. 21:20-21 – A man may be punished for beating a male or female slave to death, but if the victim survives the beating for a few days, then there is no penalty.

Lev. 19:20 – When a man has sex with a female slave (or "bondmaid"), she must be scourged.

Eph. 6:5 – Paul says slaves must obey their masters "with fear and trembling."

Titus 2:9 – Paul says slaves must obey and please their masters.

1 Tim. 6:1 – Paul says slaves must "count their masters worthy of all honor."

WAS JESUS ETHICAL?

Matt. 5:28-32 – Jesus says marriage to a divorcee is adultery, that a man who ogles a woman has already committed adultery, and that you must cut off your hand or pluck out your eye if it offends.

Matt. 6:19,34 – Jesus says don't save any money and don't plan ahead.

Matt. 8:32 – Having no regard for private property, Jesus destroys a herd of someone else's pigs.

Matt. 10:34 – Jesus says he brings not peace on Earth but "a sword."

Matt. 19:12 – Jesus says the best way for a man to be sure of getting into heaven is to have himself castrated.

Mark 11:13 – Jesus destroys a fig tree for not bearing figs out of season.

Mark 14:4-7 – Jesus says it is more important to anoint him with precious ointment than to give to the poor.

Mark 16:18 – Jesus says anyone who believes in him can play with venomous snakes or drink poison without harm. (This has been often tried, with rather unsatisfactory results.)

Luke 12:47-48 – Jesus says it is permissible to whip slaves.

Luke 14:26 – Jesus says no man can be his disciple unless he hates his parents, siblings, wife, children and himself as well.

Luke 19:27 – Jesus says anyone who de-

nies his rulership must be killed.

John 15:6 – Jesus says anyone who doesn't believe in him must be burned.

Acts 5:5-10 – Ananias and his wife Sapphira were killed for withholding money from the church.

2 John 1:10-11 – A Christian is forbidden to offer hospitality to a non-Christian, not even to wish him "Godspeed" on parting.

NEW TESTAMENT WOMEN

1 Cor. 11:3-10 – Women are inferior "because man was not created for woman, but woman was created for man." Every woman "while praying or prophesying" must have her head covered "because of the angels," meaning the spirits (it used to be believed that women's hair attracts spirits).

1 Cor. 14:34-35 – Women must not speak in church. If they want to ask questions, they must learn from their husbands at home.

Eph. 5:22 – Wives must submit to their husbands as they would to God.

1 Tim. 2:11-14 – A woman must not teach, or hold authority over a man, but must "learn in silence with all subjection," because "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." (So, being gullible is the original sin.)

1 Tim. 5:9 – Paul says the only women acceptable by the council of elders are devout, monogamous women over the age of 60.

PLAIN SILLINESS

Gen. 1:11-12 – God made all green plants on the third day of creation, but neglected to supply the sun (on which both plants and "days" depend) until the fourth day.

Gen. 6:6-7 – Because a few people displeased him, God "repented" having made the world, and decided to destroy all life on Earth.

Lev. 11:5-6 – God thinks rabbits are cud-chewing animals.

Deut. 22:5 – All cross-dressers, or women who wear pants, are "abominations."

Deut. 25:11-12 – A woman who seizes a man's genitals, even to defend her husband from an attacker, must have her hand cut off.

Deut. 33:17 – God believes in unicorns.

Matt. 5:22 – Jesus says anyone who calls another "fool" will go to hell, but then does it himself. (Matt. 23:17)

1 Tim. 2:9 – Christian women are forbidden to braid their hair or wear jewelry.

James 5:14-15 – Prayer by the elders of the church is the only sure cure for sickness. (Christian Science, anyone?)

Which Ten Commandments do you prefer? Ex. 20, Ex. 34, Deut. 5 or Deut. 27?

Barbara G. Walker is author of the monumental feminist/freethought sourcebook *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets* (1983). Her 20 other books, published by Harper & Row, include *The Skeptical Feminist*. An atheist, she has also specialized in debunking New Age assertions.

Order Walker's newest book (many chapters of which were originally published in *Freethought Today*), *Man Made God* (Steller Press), \$24 ppd., from FFRF, Box 750, Madison, WI, 53701, or at ffrf.org/shop/.



Scholarship awards increase!

Announcing FFRF's three 2012 student scholarship contests

Topics, rules and deadlines have been announced for FFRF's 2012 high school, college and graduate/mature student essay scholarship competitions.

FFRF, an educational state-church watchdog that has 17,500 members nationwide, has offered essay competitions to college students since 1979. In 1994, FFRF added a separate contest for college-bound high school seniors. FFRF debuted its first "graduate/mature students over age 25" competition in 2010.

This year the awards increase to \$3,000 for the first-place essay, a \$2,000 cash scholarship for second place, \$1,000 for third place, \$500 for fourth place and \$300 for a newly offered fifth place. Several \$200 "honorable mentions" are awarded at judges' discretion.

FFRF members are asked to publicize the essay competitions to their local high schools, colleges and universities. See ads in the back wrap or visit: ffrf.org/outreach/student-essay-contests/.

Herbert Bushong High School Senior Essay Competition

This competition is endowed by Texas FFRF member Herbert Bushong, a nonagenarian with an interest in rewarding freethinking students. High school seniors in North America who are college-bound in fall 2012 are eligible.



Describe a moment when you stood up for freethought and/or that made you proud to be a freethinker. A freethinker is "one who forms his or her opinion about religion based on reason, rather than faith, tradition or authority." Maybe you had a moment, experience or "epiphany" that led to or affirmed your rejection of religion. Perhaps you stood up for freethought or spoke out against the encroachment of religion at school events, in government, in the classroom or in your family. Use one such moment to illustrate why you are a freethinker.

Essays should be 500 to 700 words. (Other requirements are listed at the end of this article.)

Deadline: June 1, 2012. Winners will be announced in August.

Essays must be both mailed and emailed. Email your essay to be post-marked no later than June 1, 2012, to highschoolessay@ffrf.org. Use the word "Essay" and your name in the subject heading. Example: Essay (Your full name). Please include a copy of all information indicated in the requirements. Mail to: High School Essay Contest (address below).

Michael Hakeem Memorial College Essay Competition

The late Michael Hakeem, a sociology professor, was an FFRF officer and active atheist known by generations of University of Wisconsin-Madison students for fine-tuning their reasoning abilities. The competition is open to

students currently enrolled in North American colleges or universities at least through December 2012. Note: The scholarship is limited to those under age 25. If you are 25 or older or a graduate student, please enter FFRF's competition for grad/mature students (below). College-bound high school seniors enter FFRF's high school competition.



The topic of this year's college essay competition: "Why I Am an Out of the Closet Atheist (Freethinker, etc.)." In honor of FFRF's "Out of the Closet" campaign, write an essay on why you are "out" as a nonbeliever and think others should be, too. Use a personal (first-person) approach. Experiences with being a "heretic" in a religion-drenched society and describing your "coming out" may be included. You may wish to employ your best arguments for rejecting religious belief.

College students should submit an essay of 750 to 900 words. (Other requirements are listed at the end of the article.)

Deadline: June 15, 2012. Winners will be announced by September.

Essays must be both mailed and emailed. Email your essay to be post-marked no later than June 15 to collegeessay@ffrf.org with the word "Essay" and your name in the subject heading. Example: Essay (Your full name). Please include a copy of all information indicated in the requirements. Mail to: College Essay Contest (address below).

Brian Bolton Graduate/Mature Student Essay Competition

The competition is named for Brian

Bolton, an FFRF Lifetime Member who is a retired psychologist, humanist minister and university professor emeritus at the University of Arkansas. Graduate students, or currently enrolled college students age 25 or older, who are enrolled in a North American college or university through at least December 2012, are eligible.



The topic is: "Why God and Politics/Government Are a Dangerous Mix — Especially In an Election Year." Write a persuasive essay about the dangers of religion and politics/government mixing in this election year. Please analyze current examples of religious pandering, church politicking or political religious litmus tests that concern you and threaten the Establishment Clause. You may wish to use examples of the harm created by religion in politics and government from a personal, legal, topical and/or historical perspective.

The entrant should submit a 800 to 1,000 word essay. (See other requirements below.)

Deadline: July 15, 2012. Winners will be announced by September.

Essays must be both mailed and emailed. Email your essay to be post-marked no later than June 15 to graduateessay@ffrf.org and use the word "Essay" and your name in the subject heading. Example: Essay (Your full name). Please include a copy of all information indicated in requirements. Mail to: Graduate/Mature student Essay competition (address below).

Rules applying to all competitions

All essays must be typed, double-spaced, standard margins and stapled. Include word count. Put your name

and essay title on each page. Entrants choose their own title and include a one-paragraph biography. The bio should include name, age, birth date, hometown, university or college, year in school, major or intended major, degree being earned and interests. High school students should include high school's name, city, state and date of graduation as well as intended college.

Do not include a résumé. Provide both summer and fall 2012 addresses (campus and home), phone numbers and email addresses for notification.

Winners may be asked to send verification of student enrollment. Essay must be submitted both by mail and email by the specified deadlines. Students will be disqualified if they do not follow instructions. FFRF monitors for plagiarism.

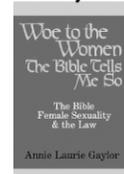
By entering, students agree to permit winning essays to be printed in full or in part in Freethought Today, FFRF's newspaper, and posted online at FFRF's website. Winners agree to provide a photograph suitable for reproduction with their essay. Winners will receive a school-year subscription to Freethought Today. All eligible entrants will be offered a subscription or a freethought book.

Send essays by required deadline to:

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Meet an Intern

Name: Brendan Moriarty.

Where and when I was born: In a Chicago hospital in 1993.

Family: My father, Aiden; my mother, Eileen; and my brother, Michael.

Education: Graduate of Prospect High School, Mount Prospect, Ill. I'm in my first year at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where I'm studying philosophy.

My religious upbringing was: I was raised Roman Catholic.

How I came to work as an FFRF legal intern: I saw a post on the Facebook page for AHA (Atheists, Humanists and Agnostics), a student group at UW-Madison, that said FFRF was looking for undergraduate interns.

What I do here: I help investigate claims for the staff attorneys, write follow-up letters and mail letters out.

What I like best about it: I get to read about the different legal concerns that people bring up, and the fact that I can help protect the rights of minorities.

Something funny that's happened: It's less something that happened than

what I read here — the ridiculous obviousness of some of the constitutional violations that officials believe they can get away with.

My legal interests are: Constitutional and criminal law, specifically the issues of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. The balance between protecting freedom of speech against the government's interest to maintain order often creates tricky situations that delve into legal and political philosophy and not just legal precedent.

My legal heroes are: Clarence Darrow and Jack McCoy (Sam Waterston's character on "Law and Order").

These three words sum me up: Intelligent, opinionated, persistent.

Things I like: Playing the cello, politics, economics, law, philosophy, history, video games and arguing.

Things I smite: Ignorance and doubt.

When did I realize that I was an atheist? When I was 16 or 17 in my junior year of high school.



Sob story

Brendan Moriarty plays the world's smallest violin for Christian victims of the atheist assault on the wall of separation between church and state.

FFRF Victories

Reason trumps religion in Wisconsin school

The Kiel Area School District Board of Education, Kiel, Wis., has “decided to make no changes to the curriculum,” said School Board President Cynthia Schmahl in a February email to Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott and Andrew Seidel, FFRF’s constitutional consultant.

After being alerted by a district parent about a board agenda item, Elliott sent a letter Dec. 8 warning of the illegality of a proposal by board member Randy Kubetz to allow teaching creationist theories in science classes. After making an open records request, FFRF received an email Kubetz had sent to the board that included an outdated “intelligent design” legal guidebook which was debunked in *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District* in 2005. Kubetz sits on the board’s Curriculum Committee. His wife, Patty, is a strong proponent of teaching creationism.

According to documents, District Administrator Louise Blankenheim had responded to the email from Randy Kubetz: “I’m sure we can work with the teachers to enhance units in evolution to include alternate theories.”

“Any plan to teach evolution with ‘alternative theories’ is unlawful,” said Elliott. In a follow-up letter Jan. 31, he noted a public comment by Randy Kubetz that “It has nothing to do with Madison. We don’t tell them how to run their schools or their towns, so they should leave other districts alone.”

Elliott responded that FFRF has almost 1,400 Wisconsin taxpaying members who are very interested in keeping religion out of schools.

The board voted down the creation “science” proposal at its Feb. 1 work session.

FFRF slams door on bible distribution

FFRF put the kibosh on illegal bible distribution to fifth-graders in the Oakfield-Alabama Central School District in Oakfield, N.Y., with a Dec. 8 letter of complaint after being alerted by parents.

Parents had gotten advance notice of the distribution from the elementary principal: “On Friday, Dec. 16, members of the Gideon’s International Organization will be offering New Testament Bibles to any fifth-grade student who wishes to take one. The participation of our students is strictly voluntary. The Bibles will be free of charge. If you would prefer that your child does not take a Bible, please complete and return the form below.”

In her letter to Superintendent Christopher Todd, FFRF Staff Attorney Stephanie Schmitt warned against “distribution of bibles on school grounds to a captive audience of students. Courts have held that the distribution of bibles to students at public schools is prohibited.”

Schmitt added that letting students “opt out” with a denial slip does not make the practice constitutional. “The Supreme Court has held that offending religious practices in schools were not ‘mitigated by the fact that individual students may absent themselves upon parental request, for that fact furnishes no defense to a claim of unconstitutionality under the Establishment Clause.’” (*Sch. Dist. of Abington*

Towshp. v. Schempp, 1963)

Responding to the violation, Todd promised bible distribution “will no longer be practiced in our school district.”

FFRF forces prayers to take a knee

An FFRF complaint put an end to prayer in the football locker room at Bowie High School in El Paso, Texas. Before FFRF intervened, a pregame tradition included group prayer, with a pastor calling on team members to bow their heads and kneel in prayer.

Coaches also participated. FFRF was told the prayers had most likely been taking place since at least 2010.

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote Jan. 5 to the interim superintendent of El Paso Independent Schools to note the illegality of the prayers.

Principal Jesus Chavez then met with school personnel, said James Anderson, school district attorney, who responded Feb. 2: “Dr. Chavez directed all personnel to refrain from facilitating any and all prayers which are led by clergy members and/or school officials.”

Principals were also directed to discuss relevant school policy at a Feb. 16 meeting.

FFRF outs Brother Dale of the pumpkin patch

Kindergartners will no longer be exposed to Christian evangelism on Bel Air Elementary School field trips in Athens, Texas.

During three trips to Brother Dale Perry’s evangelical pumpkin patch at Living for the Brand Cowboy Church in October, first-grade and kindergarten students had to listen to religious stories. One included this: “God made each pumpkin different, just like he made each child different.”

Students also received a Christian-themed pamphlet titled “Bag of Jokes.” The pamphlet told students they were all sinners and instructed them to pray to God to ask for forgiveness.

Staff Attorney Stephanie Schmitt wrote a letter Oct. 27 to the district superintendent to try to stop the third field trip and followed up with a letter Jan. 27.

On Feb. 3, attorney Blake Armstrong of Birdsong & Armstrong, representing the school, responded that the school didn’t intend to endorse religion, adding that Establishment/Free Exercise Clause concerns have been addressed. “To this end, it appears as if any such endorsement was done without knowledge or approval of the school district.”

FFRF closes Arkansas school’s bible stop

Bellview Elementary School in Rogers, Ark., will no longer allow Gideons International to distribute bibles in its hallways.

After receiving a complaint from concerned parents, Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott wrote to Rogers Public Schools Superintendent Janie Darr on Oct. 27.

After receiving the letter, the school said it was following a bible policy from



Sold out of the fish(y) special

Asuka Hibachi and Buffet, Smyrna, Tenn., ended its unlawful \$1 discount to customers who brought in a church bulletin on Sundays after getting Staff Attorney Stephanie Schmitt’s Jan. 18 letter contesting the “family special” offer. The discount violated federal and Tennessee civil rights laws entitling all persons “to the full and equal enjoyment of goods.”

Owner Ricky Chan wrote back Jan. 21 that an employee put up the sign without his knowledge: “I have addressed this issue with my staff and have taken the sign down. I do apologize for any issues this may have caused.”

2010 that was based on recommendations from its attorney. The policy let men from Gideons hand out bibles near fifth-grade classrooms from a table as school was letting out. FFRF responded that the policy conflicted with court precedent.

On Jan. 27, a school attorney wrote: “Based upon Dr. Darr’s recommendation, the Rogers School District has informed the Gideon organization that it will no longer allow the distribution of Bibles on school property.”

FFRF bounces back principal’s ‘G-mail’

“Count on God instead of yourself,” was the statement Assistant Principal Rene Milanizadeh included in an email to staff in November at Klein Forest High School in Houston, Texas. The sentiment was part of a poem entitled “How to Observe Thanksgiving.”

Staff Attorney Stephanie Schmitt wrote to Milanizadeh on Dec. 20, pointing out the constitutional flaws with the overtly Christian email.

School attorney Ellen Spalding responded Jan. 18 that Milanizadeh “inadvertently included a poem with a religious line,” and that on discovering it later, “immediately recalled the email.” Spalding didn’t explain how one recalls an email, but added, “Ms. Milanizadeh has expressed understanding of her duties and obligations with regard to this issue.”

FFRF letter: ‘O Go, O Go, Emmanuel’

Southside High School in Elmira, N.Y., will no longer play religious holiday music nonstop over the P.A. in the halls after getting a Dec. 19 FFRF complaint letter from Rebecca Markert, senior staff attorney.

The principal said the carols “lift morale, especially for those underprivileged kids who don’t get much of a celebration at home.” Songs included “Oh Holy Night,” “Silent Night” and “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel.” The music penetrated closed classroom doors, FFRF’s complainant said.

Superintendent Joseph Hochreiter responded Feb. 13 that legal counsel was consulted and that religious songs would no longer be broadcast over the loudspeaker in December.

Addiction to religion was not covered

Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott wrote a letter of complaint Feb. 8 about a religious assembly held the day before at Geenbriar High School, Greenbriar, Ark., after being contacted by student complaints.

Featured were five speakers from Renewal Ranch, a group dedicated, according to a statement at the top of its website, to “restoring broken lives through Christ where men with addictions can develop a personal love relationship with Jesus and God will be glorified!” Speakers discussed how Jesus is the only road to salvation from behavior like underage drinking and drug use.

Superintendent Scott Spainhour responded Feb. 18 that the district had no clue that Renewal Ranch would advocate “any religious belief or practice.” (Perhaps they didn’t see the Latin crosses or the statements on the website.)

Spainhour said the health education teacher and the high school counselor recommended Renewal Ranch to Principal Susan Jackson, who approved the assembly “with the understanding that its sole focus would be on drug awareness and prevention.”

Spainhour said Jackson attended the assembly and “acknowledges that there were religious statements made by the speakers, to the surprise of the Greenbriar faculty, which were inappropriate in a public school setting.”

To ensure such an incident isn’t repeated, all future speakers will be “directed to the school’s policy regarding religion and instructed to follow same,” Spainhour said.

“Further, Ms. Jackson will forthwith, during the regular morning announcements, make a specific statement reaffirming the policy of Greenbriar School District that it will neither ad-

Continued on next page

FFRF Complaints

City Hall cross draws secular scrutiny

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote a Feb. 6 complaint letter to Mayor Greg Goodnight about an illegal Latin cross on the lawn at City Hall in Kokomo, Ind. The cross purportedly was to observe the attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

"It is unlawful for the city of Kokomo to display a patently religious symbol such as a Christian cross on public property," Markert said. "The cross unabashedly creates the perception of government endorsement of Christianity. It conveys the message to the 26% of the U.S. population who are not Christians that they are not 'favored members of the political community.'"

Air Force unit's new motto slight improvement



FFRF took issue in an Action Alert to members over the U.S. Air Force Rapid Capabilities Office's (USAF-RCO) decision to change its Latin motto from "Doing God's Work, With Other People's Money" to "Doing Miracles With Other People's Money." While FFRF applauded the gesture, it felt the change didn't go far enough.

In a Feb. 10 letter to Secretary Michael Donley and Gen. Norton Schwartz, FFRF noted that either of the mottos "would be appropriate for a faith healer or a slick televangelist, but neither is appropriate for the U.S. military."

USAF-RCO made a wise choice when it removed "God" from the motto, but to replace it with "miracles" does nothing to relieve the religious entanglement. "A miracle, by its very definition, recognizes a god that intervenes in human affairs. It is an entirely religious idea that is rejected by rationalists and nonbelievers," wrote FFRF Co-Presidents Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor.

FFRF maintains that a group motto should be "something that all members can rally around."

FFRF lauds airline's 'prayer drop' decision

In late January, Alaska Airlines announced it would, after more than 30 years, stop distributing prayer cards to passengers. Chairman Bill Ayer said eliminating the cards is "the right thing to do in order to respect the diverse religious beliefs and cultural attitudes of all our customers and employees."

(Practicalities also intervened — Alaska Airlines stopped providing the cards to coach six years ago when meal

tray service ended.)

FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor commented, "May I say 'Hallelujah?' It took 30 years, but Alaska Airlines finally listened!"

As long as Alaska Airlines has been providing the cards, FFRF has been receiving complaints about them and acting on those complaints.

"Back in the mid-1980s, I used to head our 'Target List,'" noted Gaylor, "whereby we would send out monthly or periodic lists of people, columnists or corporations who needed to be educated. A loyal group of highly articulate members participated, and it was always a joy to read copies of their replies. Honestly, I feel our cumulative letters (sent, in those slow-paced days by mail, sometimes arriving weeks after the fact) can take credit for turning at least one Religious-Right columnist into an agnostic, helping to wean an editorial cartoonist (who shall not be named) away from religion, and affecting some major state/church turn-arounds."

Freethought Today's "Letterbox" also published many articulate complaints from our members. Clara Carlson, one of FFRF's best-beloved and long-time Washington state members, who died recently at age 102, shared her "open letter to Alaska Airlines" in a 1991 letter. Clara, who due to her location often had to rely on Alaska Airlines, wrote acidly: "The notion that it is necessary to pray, while flying with your line, is disquieting. It seems to indicate that one cannot have confidence in your pilots and mechanics."

FFRF protests Jesus prayers in Green Bay

FFRF has formally urged the Brown County Board in Green Bay, Wis., to stop "unnecessary" and "inappropriate" prayer before government meetings. Meetings currently open with an overtly Christian prayer that often includes specific references to "Jesus."

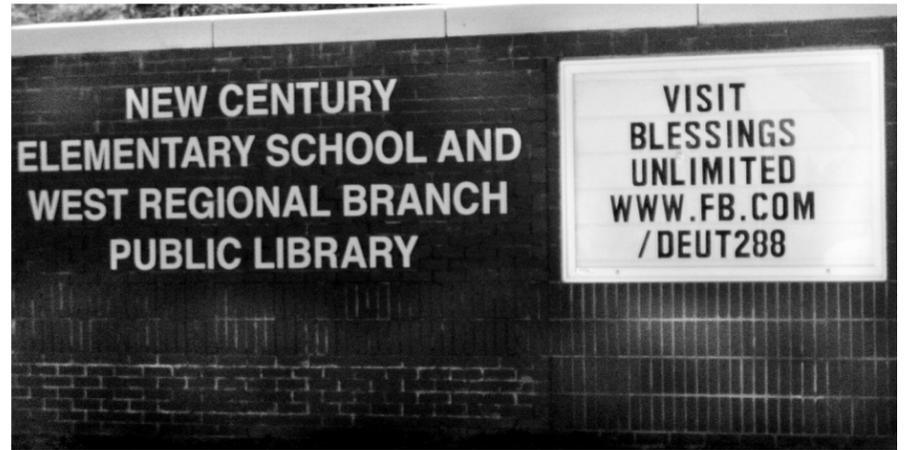
Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert called attention to the constitutional violation in a Feb. 6 letter to the board. Soon after receiving the letter, the board met, with the Press-Gazette reporting that Chairwoman Mary Scray opened the meeting with "dear Lord" and ended with "in the Lord, our savior's name." She also took it upon herself to bless the reporters and warn them against stirring up any "controversy."

This is not the first time FFRF has taken action over state/church violations in the Green Bay area. In 2009, FFRF successfully settled a two-year-old legal battle, with the city agreeing not to put back up a nativity scene above the entrance to City Hall every December.

FFRF has also been victorious in ending prayer in neighboring governments. The County Board in Eau Claire, Wis., voted 23-4 to stop invocations before meetings on May 3, 2011. The City Council of Ashland, Wis., followed suit Jan. 10.

Plaque removal not just dentist's task

Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott's Feb. 7 complaint to Town Manager Brenda Pittman, Newland, N.C., cited constitu-



It paid to complain

FFRF member Ray Bradley reported a state-church violation in Fayetteville at this public school. He and members of Central North Carolina Atheists and Humanists called and emailed the school about the religious message on the sign. A school official claimed the ad was for a PTA fundraiser and was removed [after complaints] because that wasn't clear. "I drove by this afternoon and, indeed, the ad was removed," Ray said. "I'll be watching to see what goes up in its place, though."

tional violations in having a Ten Commandments plaque in the Town Hall.

"Anyone entering the building for necessary government business will be confronted by it," noted Elliott.

"Given the appearance and context of the Town Hall display, any reasonable observer would view it as an endorsement of religion by the town of Newland," he said. "This display is unmistakably stamped with the town government's approval, as it is prominently placed directly inside of the town's central governmental office."

School needs firewall against 'Fireproof'

Staff Attorney Stephanie wrote a Feb. 7 complaint to Superintendent Gene Buinger of the Hurst-Eules-Bedford Independent School District in Bedford, Texas, about a Christian movie shown in January at Trinity High School. A local complainant reported that the interpersonal studies class watched the film "Fireproof" over several class periods despite objections by at least one student.

The movie depicts a man who is challenged by his Christian father to save his marriage by showing his wife the love that "Christ shows to us." The protagonist makes a "life-changing commitment to love God, [a]nd with God's help he begins to understand what it means to truly love his wife."

"Fireproof" was produced by Sherwood Pictures, the "moviemaking ministry" of Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Ga. "This movie is undeniably meant to be Christian propaganda,"

Schmitt wrote.

They Said What?

Three, give the go-ahead for U.S.-based Mossad agents to take out a president deemed unfriendly to Israel in order for the current vice president to take his place, and forcefully dictate that the United States' policy includes its helping the Jewish state obliterate its enemies. Yes, you read "three" correctly. Order a hit on a president in order to preserve Israel's existence. Think about it. If I have thought of this Tom Clancy-type scenario, don't you think that this almost unfathomable idea has been discussed in Israel's most inner circles? Another way of putting "three" in perspective goes something like this: How far would you go to save a nation comprised of seven million lives — Jews, Christians and Arabs alike? You have got to believe, like I do, that all options are on the table.

Column by Andrew Adler, owner/publisher of the Atlanta Jewish Times, on steps to take to protect Israel
Atlanta Jewish Times, 1-13-12

On my way to church with the girls! I want to start a bible study group with my friends!

Tweet by celebute Kim Kardashian, who filed for divorce in October after 72 days of marriage
contactmusic.com, 1-30-12

It's a book. That's a start.
Atheist entertainer Ricky Gervais, on Kim Kardashian's new studios bent
celebs.gather.com, 1-31-12

FFRF Victories

Continued from previous page

vocate nor disparage any religion, and that to the extent the Renewal Ranch representative created an implied endorsement of any particular religious belief, the district apologizes for any offense that may have been taken."

Texas school frees Internet freethought

The San Antonio Independent School District's Internet firewall provider stopped students from accessing atheist and freethought websites while allowing access to religious ones. A student at Brackenridge High School contacted FFRF after attempting to view blocked atheist sites.

In a Dec. 9 letter, Staff Attorney Patrick Elliott wrote that the practice amounted to "viewpoint discrimination under the First Amendment because the filter treats information differently precisely because it relates to agnostic and atheistic viewpoints. The Supreme Court ruled school districts may not ban information based on 'dislike of the ideas.'"

Marcos Zorola, chief information officer said Feb. 16 that "Our firewall provider, Fortinet®, has taken steps to remove atheist websites from the classification of 'occult' to 'other' religious or belief classifications. I have verified this by checking several sites from behind our firewall and all were accessible."

Open letter to 'liberal' and 'nominal' Catholics

'It's time to quit the Catholic Church'



Statement by Annie Laurie Gaylor

Dear "liberal" Catholic: It's time to quit the Roman Catholic Church. It's your moment of truth. Will it be reproductive freedom or back to the Dark Ages? Do you choose women and their rights, or bishops and their wrongs? Whose side are you on, anyway?

It's time to make known your dissent from the Catholic Church, in light of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' ruthless campaign endangering the right to contraception. If you're part of the Catholic Church, you're part of the problem.

Why are you propping up the pillars of a tyrannical and autocratic, woman-hating, sex-perverting, antediluvian Old Boys Club? Why are you aiding and abetting a church that has repeatedly and publicly announced a crusade to ban contraception, abortion and sterilization and to deny the right of all women everywhere, Catholic or not, to decide whether and when to become mothers?

When it comes to reproductive freedom, the church is Public Enemy No. 1. Think of the acute misery, poverty,

needless suffering, unwanted pregnancies, social evils and deaths that can be laid directly at the door of the antiquated doctrine that birth control is a sin and must be outlawed.

A backer of the Catholic presidential candidate, Rick Santorum, says that if women want to avoid pregnancy, we should put an aspirin between our knees. Catholic politicians are urging that the right to contraception should be left up to states. Nearly 50 years after the Supreme Court upheld contraception as a private right, we're going to have to defend this basic freedom all over again?

For that matter, why have you put up with an institution that won't allow women priests, which excludes half of humanity?

You're better than your church, so why stay? No self-respecting feminist, civil libertarian or progressive should cling to the Catholic faith. As a cafeteria Catholic, you chuck the stale doctrine and moldy decrees of your religion, but keep patronizing the establishment that menaces public health by serving rotten offerings.

Your continuing Catholic membership as a "liberal" casts a veneer of respectability on an irrational sect determined to blow out the Enlightenment. You are an enabler, and it's got to stop.

If you imagine you can change the church from within — get it to lighten up on birth control, gay rights, marriage equality, embryonic stem cell research — you're deluding yourself. If you remain a "good" Catholic, you're doing "bad" to women's rights. You're kidding yourself if you think the church is ever going to add a doctrine of Immaculate ContraCepcion.

It's disgraceful that U.S. health care reform is being held hostage to the church's bizarre opposition to medically prescribed contraception. No politician should have to jeopardize electability for failure to genuflect before the Catholic bishops. (Question to ask your Bishop: Does he hold up

'You are an enabler. And it's got to stop.'

an umbrella against the rain? Isn't that just as "unnatural" as using a condom or diaphragm?)

Your church hysterically claims that secular medical policy is "an assault against religious liberty." You're savvy enough to realize that the real assault is by the church against women's rights and health care. The louder the church cries "offense against religious liberty" the harder it works to take away women's liberty.

President Barack Obama has compromised, but the church never budges, instead launching a vengeful modern-day Inquisition in your name. A body that hasn't persuaded you to oppose contraception now wants to use the force of secular law to deny contraceptive rights to non-Catholics.

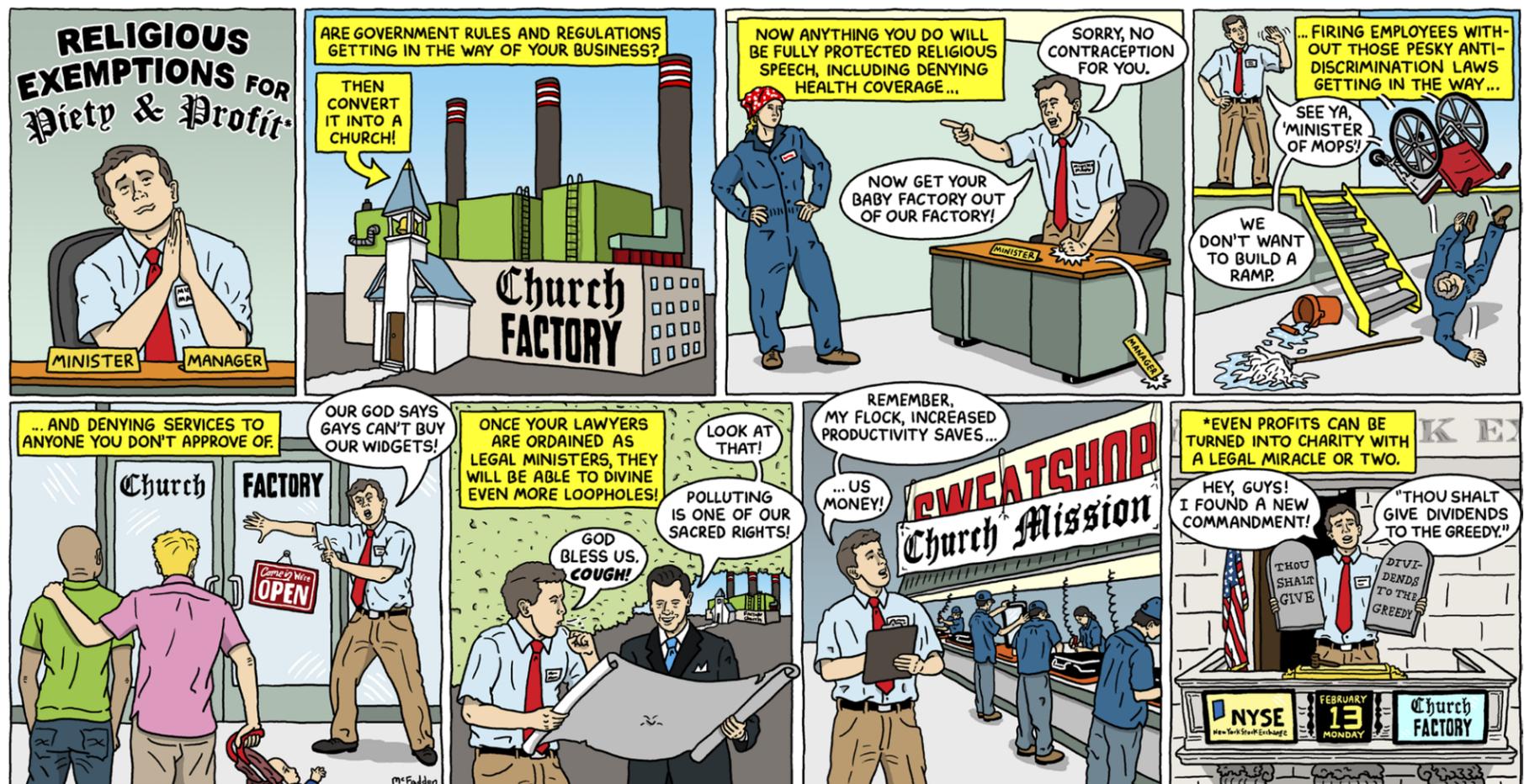
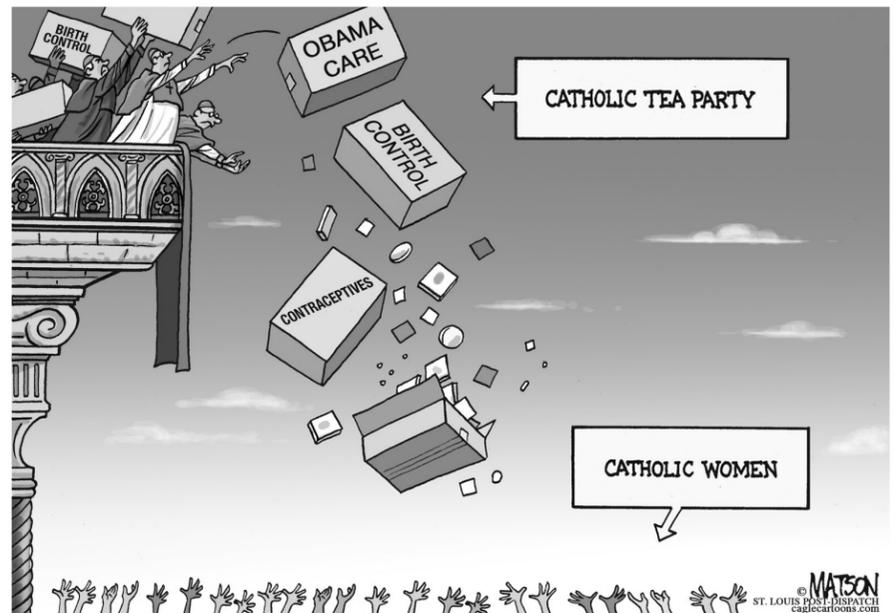
Is there any point in going on? Af-

ter all, your misplaced loyalty has lasted through two decades of public sex scandals involving preying priests, children you may have known as victims, and church complicity, collusion and cover-up going all the way to the top. Are you like the battered woman who, after being beaten down every Sunday, feels she has no place else to go?

We have a more welcoming home to offer — free of incense-fogged ritual, unhampered by what freethinker Bertrand Russell called "ideas uttered long ago by ignorant men," free of blind obedience to an illusory religious authority. Join those of us who put humanity above dogma.

As a member of the "flock" of an avowedly antidemocratic club, isn't it time you voted with your feet? Please, exit "en Mass."

FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor is an original co-founder and is author of Woe to the Women: The Bible Tells Me So and editor of the anthology Women Without Superstition. Her full Feb. 20 statement: ffrf.org/news/releases/it-time-for-you-to-quit-the-catholic-church/



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FFRF Complaints

Some fictions kosher, others not in Tenn.



Guess which fictional character Jeff Shott was portraying at school?

Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert wrote Superintendent Mike Looney on Feb. 3 about violations at Summit High School in Franklin, Tenn. A student contacted FFRF after school officials strongly encouraged him to remove a costume he sported Jan. 30 for Fictional Character Day. Jeff Shott, 17, went to school in a Jesus of Nazareth outfit. Other students wore costumes depicting characters such as Darth Vader, SpongeBob SquarePants and the Mad Hatter. Before first period, the principal and at least two other staff approached Jeff about fictional Jesus. Zeus would have been a better choice, Jeff says the principal told him, and added that it was “controversial and likely to disrupt the learning environment. After that, he felt he no choice but to take off the costume.”

A concerned citizen also reported that a 10th-grade science teacher at Summit told students that evolution was just a theory and one she didn't believe. She allegedly told students that she thinks “we actually come from Adam and Eve.”

A middle school teacher also allegedly made derogatory comments about evolution, Markert said. “We are concerned other teachers in your district are touting creationism over evolution. . . . We question whether a creationist can be qualified to teach a physical science course.”

Regarding the Jesus costume, Markert told the school that “It seems the only ‘disruption’ created was the overreaction by school officials.”

Bible resolution ‘Holy inappropriate!’

“RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives declare 2012 as the “Year of the Bible” in Pennsylvania in recognition of both the formative influence of the Bible on our Commonwealth and nation and our national need to study and apply the teachings of the holy scriptures.”

FFRF and its members protested the above resolution naming 2012 the “Year of the Bible,” unanimously passed (193-0) Jan. 24 in the Pennsylvania House.

The resolution arrogantly exhorts citizens to “study and apply the teachings of the holy scriptures.” What a discredit to the legacy of William Penn, one of the earliest champions of free-

dom of conscience, FFRF charged in a joint letter to Speaker of the House Samuel Smith and House Minority Leader Frank Dermody.

The Pennsylvania Assembly is strictly prohibited by the Pennsylvania Constitution from controlling or interfering with “the limits of conscience,” or showing any preference “by law to any religious establishments or modes of worship.”

“It is no more permissible for members of the Assembly to ‘bless’ the bible than it would be for them to endorse the Quran,” wrote FFRF Co-Presidents Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor. “Our constitution grants sovereignty not to a deity or a ‘holy book,’ but to ‘We, the People.’”

“Holy Inappropriate!” said the headline on a Philadelphia Inquirer column by John Baer, who knocked the resolution and others like it for wasting legislative time.

Several legislators later backtracked and asked for a revote. Rep. Babette Josephs apologized. Rep. Mark Cohen said the resolution was “buried with a whole bunch of other resolutions at a time when legislators were focused on getting on the ballot and running for re-election. Had there been a debate there would have been some ‘no’ votes, including mine. But I have no doubt whatsoever that it would have passed overwhelmingly on its own with a debate.”

Suit suits removal of Ten Commandments

Since 2007, FFRF has been contesting a divisive Ten Commandments monument on the City Hall lawn in Bloomfield, N.M.

The dispute started when the City Council adopted a policy to allow the monument to be placed by the city. In June 2007, FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor wrote to the city about the disingenuous claims that the monument was “historic,” adding, “It is farcical to pretend that the desire to erect one religion’s particular teaching has anything to do with history. It clearly has to do with placing the imprimatur of government behind one religion, conferring state blessings on some believers, while turning other citizens into outsiders.”

Not until June 2011 did the council vote (without public notice) to place the monument, which was dedicated on July 4. Private funds were used.

FFRF, numerous citizens and the ACLU of New Mexico again objected. FFRF’s letter noted that under less egregious circumstances than here, the 10th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals (which has jurisdiction over New Mexico) found that an Oklahoma county’s Ten Commandments monument endorsed religion in violation of the First Amendment. The county’s legal expenses in that case cost taxpayers \$200,000.

On Feb. 8, two Bloomfield residents and the ACLU of New Mexico filed a lawsuit challenging the monument. The legal complaint describes how the city gave preferential treatment to the monument’s sponsors and violated its own ordinances and the U.S. and state constitutions in placing it.



Photo: ACLU of New Mexico

City Hall(elujah)!

The Ten Commandments monument at City Hall in Bloomfield, N.M., was dedicated July 4.

FFRF contests Alabama ‘Bible Man’ programs

Monthly “Bible Man” assemblies at North Sand Mountain Elementary School in Higdon, Ala., and other violations drew strong complaints from FFRF Staff Attorney Stephanie Schmitt in a Dec. 29 letter of complaint. FFRF’s complainant reported an assembly included a display with baby Jesus with Horace Turner Jr., aka Bible Man, speaking about Jesus’ birthday and “Jesus dying on the cross for our sins.” Turner allegedly hands out coins with bible verses on them to children with birthdays in a particular month.

“Our complainant also reports that her child believes attendance is required, and that if the student did opt out, the student’s absence would be obvious and the student would be ostracized,” Schmitt said.

The complaint also detailed singing of religious songs in school and praying over the loudspeaker at every 2011 home game in the school district. A football banquet at the end of the season was held in a Baptist church and featured a pastor preaching to students for half an hour.

According to the Huntsville Times, about 100 people attended a Jackson County School Board meeting Jan. 30 in Scottsboro to support the religious programming. After an hour’s discussion, the board voted not to ban Turner.

State Sen. Shadrack McGill supported Turner. “I don’t believe you keep God out of state. Church represents the body of Christ, Christ being the head of that body. No, I don’t believe

in that separation.” While the board met in closed session, people sang, prayed and shared life testimonies, WAAY reported.

FFRF won’t stand for forced pledge rule

Staff Attorney Stephanie Schmitt wrote a Feb. 7 complaint to Baker School District Superintendent Ulysses Joseph in Baker, La., about students being forced to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

FFRF’s complainant reported faculty require students to stand during the pledge. The district has a written policy, which states: “[i]f a student, due to a conscientiously and sincerely held religious belief, feels entitled to an exemption to the requirement to recite the pledge, such student shall still be required to stand.” The policy cites a state law as authority: “Discipline of pupils; suspension; expulsion,” inferring that student may be disciplined for not abiding by the policy.

“This is a clear violation of students’ First Amendment rights,” Schmitt said.

“A student should not be singled out, rebuked, told they must stand, or otherwise be penalized for following their freedom of conscience. Nor should students who participate in the pledge, or who volunteer to lead the class in the pledge or to recite it over the intercom, be rewarded or favored over students who do not participate. Furthermore, freedom of conscience does not include only ‘religious belief[s],’ as your policy implies.”



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Freethinker of the Year

Mitch Kahle not big on turning the other cheek

Mitch Kahle, founder of Hawaii Citizens for the Separation of State and Church, received FFRF's Freethinker of the Year award at the 34th national convention Oct. 8, 2011, in Hartford, Conn., for his work in convincing the Hawaii Senate to drop prayers to open legislative sessions. A long-time FFRF supporter, he was assaulted by Senate security for civilly protesting prayers.

By Mitch Kahle

I'm so honored to be here. Thank you so much for this award, and I am very proud of all of you. Before I begin, I would like to show you a brief video that has some clips from Hawaii news media about things we've done in the past.

[VIDEO]: This is KITV-4 news at 5. A familiar sight at the Kolekole Pass in Wahiawa is no more. The Army today tore down the Schofield cross today, saying it would cost too much to repair. But a citizen group said the landmark came down because of their lawsuit.

[MITCH KAHLE]: The Army has \$285 billion dollars a year. The cross was a minor expense but a major exposure. We think it violates the First Amendment, and we are glad that they're taking it down and we don't have to continue with the lawsuit.

[VIDEO]: So, your kid joins a youth club, right? A place to meet other kids, to learn and grow and have some fun, and each kid gets a membership card, a card the child has to sign. And on that card it says, "I believe in God. Have a problem with that?"

[KAHLE]: If you don't believe in God, then signing a card that says, "I believe in God" is patently offensive.

[VIDEO]: The Boys and Girls Club of Navy, Hawaii (at Pearl Harbor), is removing the phrase, "I believe in God" from its membership cards.

[VIDEO]: Talk over whether multiple theories of origin should be taught in classrooms is stirring controversy at tonight's Board of Education meeting.

[KAHLE]: Creationism will not be allowed to be taught in Hawaii's public schools' science curriculum. (Kahle, after a four-hour meeting): I am very pleased. This puts an end to the controversy, and we're not going to have to have the educational system dragged into what is in essence, going to be a legal battle.

[VIDEO]: The demonstrators say they won't go away until the Scouts stop discriminating against homosexuals. "We are protesting the Boy Scouts because they discriminate. They discriminate against gay youth, and they discriminate against youth who do not believe in God."

[KAHLE]: If you're morally straight, don't discriminate.

[VIDEO]: A group which says lawmakers have no right to post religious symbols on their State Capitol office doors struck back today. The group says the religious symbols violate the separation of church and state, and so they posted their own symbols on the doors as a protest.

[VIDEO]: Some folks are questioning tomorrow's Good Friday holiday. A handful of protesters making their way through the Capitol today, are up-



Mitch Kahle, holding his 2011 Freethinker of the Year plaque, presented by FFRF Co-President Dan Barker.

set that it's a state and county holiday. Activist Mitch Kahle, dressed as Jesus, was accompanied by members of the Hawaii Citizens for Separation of State and Church.

[KAHLE]: It is an exclusively Christian holiday. There are no secular precepts to Good Friday whatsoever. And so we would like to see the state take action to create an Aloha Day holiday in its place.

[VIDEO]: An advocacy group is protesting prayer tonight at the Honolulu City Council. The group believes that the invocation at the start of council meetings is unconstitutional. Mitch Kahle spent hours going over city records. In his mind, they all show one thing.

[KAHLE]: In the last year, all of the prayers except one have been of a Christian nature. They are showing favoritism to the Christian religion over the wide diversity of religions that there are in Hawaii.

[VIDEO]: A group that advocates the separation of church and state wants the city to remove four words taken from the oath taken by new Honolulu police officers. Until tonight, the police officers' oath ended with the phrase, "so help me God," but it was removed after a local citizens group complained the phrase violated our state constitution.

[KAHLE]: The actual wording of the oath does not include, "so help me God."

[VIDEO]: Our top story tonight, a code of honor controversy at McKinley High School. It has to do with the words "love for God" in the school's honor code, which dates to 1927.

[KAHLE]: This is posted in the classrooms, it's part of the student handbook and it probably appears elsewhere, although those are the two

areas that we're concerned about most now.

[VIDEO]: In the unresolved problems segment tonight, we continue our investigation into the holy war that the American Civil Liberties Union has launched against God and America. Are we going to play this game, Mr. Kahle? Or are we going to be honest?

[KAHLE]: It's your program, Bill. We can play whatever game you want. It's inappropriate for a public school to be telling students what to believe and how to feel. And I'm really surprised that you would actually support the government telling students what to think and believe.

[BILL O'REILLY]: I'm not supporting anything like that.

[VIDEO]: When lawmakers got to work, the day began with a scuffle and an arrest. Just as the invocation was being delivered in the Senate chamber,

To be honest with you, I am a public troublemaker.

protesters from the Hawaii Citizens for the Separation of State and Church interrupted.

[KAHLE]: This is a violation of the Constitution! This is a violation of the Constitution!

[VIDEO]: Seven months after he was hauled off in handcuffs and charged with disorderly conduct, a judge has found Kahle not guilty. Kahle's protest lasted about seven seconds, then sat down. But the sergeant-at-arms was determined to remove Kahle.

SPEECH RESUMES:

I'm what's known as a public troublemaker, and I would encourage all of you to join me in doing the same. It's about participating in your community. When you do participate in your community, whether you go to a city council meeting or go to a board of education meeting, or go to your legislature, this is where you see the most egregious violations of separation of state and church.

I want to clarify that I always use the term "state and church," not "church and state," and that's because the state is superior to church always. We need to remember that.

I have been protesting government prayer for over 15 years. I am personally, deeply offended when I am forced to participate in some sort of a prayer. It causes a disconnect in my brain, and I have to say I actually get angry.

The question I have when people ask, "Well, why do you get so angry?" is "Why aren't you?" I think everyone should be angry at this sort of thing.

You can write letters, and that's a great way to start. It's very important that when you identify a violation that you remain calm, initially, and that you start out by writing a letter of complaint. Make your voice heard. Make it known that what the government is doing is improper and that you would like them to stop.

Sometimes you have to write more



All photography by Jeff Yardis



Holly Huber and Mitch Kahle found shirts expressing their personalities at FFRF's 34th national convention in October.

than one letter, and don't be discouraged if you're ignored. I had been ignored on the issue of legislative prayer long enough that I decided I had a right that when the gavel was pounded to bring the session to a start, and when the president of the Senate invited audience members to please rise, I knew I had every right to stand up and object to a violation of my civil rights.

I wrote letters of complaint and letters of warning that we would be coming to the Capitol and standing up to object to the prayer, if it violated the Constitution. We had examined videotapes of previous sessions and had seen that the prayers had been, over 90%, overtly Christian. Pretty much always ending in Jesus' name.

And so we made good on our threat, and on the day of the incident — April 29, 2010 — we wrote letters to the president of the Senate, with copies to the attorney general, that we were going to come and object to the prayer.

They had members of the Sheriff's Department there. Before going into the Senate chamber, we sat down with the head of security and explained to him our rights and explained what we were going to do. He said his officers would be neutral. I didn't know that that meant beating us up.

We went up to the gallery and waited for the prayer to begin. And, as you saw just a little bit in the video, what happened was as I made my objection, I was summarily singled out and dragged out of the chambers. My wife, Holly, who is also very active in all sorts of causes, stood up a little bit later, and made the exact same objection that I did, but they were really intent on singling me out.

When the prayer ended and they were dragging me out, all the people in the gallery were yelling, "Amen, amen." So what the government had decided was that voicing approval to the prayer was OK, but voicing disapproval to the prayer got you dragged out and thrown to the ground, my arm badly bent behind my back.

Then they noticed that my friend, Kevin, was filming the whole thing, so they attacked him. The Senate sergeant-at-arms, Bienvenido Villafior, a former WBA world champion boxer, came over and gave the camera a direct left. From a professional boxer, it's quite a sight to see, and then told his underlings to "get that camera."

They knocked Kevin to the ground and smashed the camera. All the while, five deputy sheriffs stood by and did

Sometimes you have to write more than one letter, and don't be discouraged if you're ignored.

nothing. Then I was thrown to the ground, handcuffed and taken away. I was charged with disrupting government operations, resisting arrest and disorderly conduct.

To be honest with you, like I said, I am a public troublemaker, and this put a big smile on my face the minute it started to happen. I knew it was going to be a great opportunity. I was taken to the Hawaii state prison and locked up. Though two of the three cells were empty, I was put in a cell with a very nice gentleman named Castro, who'd been in prison for 17 years, but it was fine. After almost three hours, Holly came and bailed me out.

Thankfully, there are progressive-minded lawyers in Hawaii, just like there are almost everywhere. My six-

month defense, which included four hearings and a trial, was done completely pro bono. I was not charged a dime. I want to thank my attorney, Bill Harrison, for that.

Immediately after my acquittal, which was really a wonderful thing, because the judge looked at the video and her mind was instantly made up that I was innocent. From the bench she said it was wrong what was done to me and said I had every right under those circumstances to stand up and object to that prayer because it was a violation of my constitutional rights.

Truth on our side

It's very important that you understand that in these cases we are on the right side of the law. We are the ones with truth on our side, so we can do these things with extreme confidence. Believe in the constitutional idea of separation.

We have filed a 14-count lawsuit in federal court against the state of Hawaii, the sergeant-at-arms and his staff and the Sheriff's Department, and that lawsuit is currently proceeding in federal court.

From my perspective, everything in this case has been positive. I want to

carry this forward not as an example that you should get arrested and what-not, but that when our rights are violated so flagrantly, right in our face, we need to object. We need to say, "What you're doing is wrong and you need to stop it."

These young people are so inspiring, I mean, I'm a 230-pound man, 6 foot 2, and little Jessica [Ahlquist, a student activist awardee], she's going to have a little bit of a problem. What I really would encourage everybody to do is to identify the violations that are going on in your community, because they are. FFRF sent 475 letters of complaint this year, and that's just the tip of the iceberg. I would be willing to wager that there is not a government body in this country that doesn't at some time at least violate the First Amendment in this way.

We were at a function recently, and just out of the blue, it was not even on the agenda, someone from the audience said, "Well, we should have a prayer." She proceeded to go up in front of all the people to say a blatantly Jesus prayer. As soon as she sat down, my wife went over to her and said, "That was highly inappropriate. That was very offensive of you to do. You shouldn't say a prayer, and if you're ever going to say a prayer, you should keep Jesus out of it."

The woman replied, "Well, I can't say a prayer if I can't say Jesus." So we said, "Well, then don't say one."

We don't tolerate overt statements of racism, at a party, for example. You just don't tolerate it. We have to sort of adopt that tactic when it comes to religion. This might be controversial to say, but religion is a form of discrimination. We have to say something against it.

Mitch Kahle cofounded Hawaii Citizens for the Separation of State and Church (HCSSC) in 1996. Kahle has been a long-time civil rights activist since the mid-1980s while attending Boston University. After moving to Hawaii with Holly Huber in 1992, he became active in local efforts to legalize marriage for same-sex couples. Kahle and HCSSC have been involved in dozens of high-profile state-church controversies in the Islands. Professionally, Kahle is a documentary filmmaker and entrepreneur. In his free time Kahle enjoys sailing, hiking, and is a jazz bass player and composer.

Overheard: Theocracy Alert

Any action in which a man ejaculates or otherwise deposits semen anywhere but in a woman's vagina shall be interpreted and construed as an action against an unborn child.

Amendment proposed by state Sen. Constance Johnson to protest Oklahoma's "fetal personhood" bill
The Guardian, 2-9-12

WWJF: Where Would Jesus Frack? Hand-sewn patch worn by Leah Schade, United in Christ Church pastor, opposing a Pennsylvania drilling bill
Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, 1-18-12

Are Quakers, Jehovah's Witnesses and other pacifists exempt from taxes that pay for war and weapons? Can Scientologists, who abhor psychiatry, deduct the costs of the National Institute of Mental Health? As an atheist, a feminist, a progressive, I ante up for so much stuff that violates my conscience, the government should probably pay me damages. Why should the bishops be exempt from the costs of living in a

pluralistic society?

Forced to choose between God and man, choose women. This time round, let women's health be about women's health.

Columnist Katha Pollitt, "Obama Stands Up to Bishops, Finally"
The Nation, 1-31-12

What if organizations affiliated with Jehovah's Witnesses insisted on health insurance that did not cover blood transfusions? What if ultraconservative Muslim or Jewish organizations objected to health care except at sex-segregated clinics? . . . If we have to choose between bishops' sensibilities and women's health, our national priority must be the female half of our population.

Columnist Nicholas Kristof, "Beyond Pelvic Politics"
New York Times, 2-12-12

The Catholic church wants its women silent and subservient, and they most likely believe that if they double down

on that insistence, God will reward them for their faithfulness by making their demographic problems go away. (The church's absolute refusal to give up its archaic prejudices, even while the rest of the world advances morally, is one of the most potent weapons atheists have.)

Columnist Adam Lee, "The Catholic Crackdown on Feminism"
bigthink.com, 1-27-12

These institutions, as well as Catholic universities — not seminaries, but colleges and universities whose doors are open to all — are full participants in the public square, receiving a steady stream of federal dollars. They assert — indeed, have earned — the right to the same benefits that flow to their secular peers. What they now claim is a right to special treatment: to conscience that trumps law.

Legal commentator Linda Greenhouse, on Catholic opposition to insurance coverage for birth control
New York Times, 2-9-12

For atheist comic, religion's a laughing matter

By Richard Silverwood

California comedian Keith Lowell Jensen is not only the heterosexual host of the Gay and Lesbian Comedy Show and the non-disabled founder of the Comedians with Disabilities Act, he's also the only atheist stand-up comic in the multi-faith Coexist? Comedy Tour.

In a profession where having a niche can make the difference between superstardom and complete obscurity, Jensen has skillfully crafted a role for himself as the token non-minority. But he's more than just a gimmick. His strength lies in his ability to be hilarious while causing people to question their faith in non-existent gods. I caught up with him in January to see how comedy can be used to gently nudge the brainwashed masses in the direction of the truth.

What inspired you to incorporate jokes about atheism into your act?

I think more comics are atheist than not. Atheism became a central theme after I started producing and performing with the Coexist? Comedy Tour. It's an important part of the act because it's the truth and it's being honest about who I am. I also think about how isolating it was when I became an atheist as a teenager. I think atheists need to be out, loud and proud so that people are more willing to question religion and to see that doing so is a healthy, normal thing.

Do you think that there is an unhealthy amount of stigma attached to being an atheist in America?

Definitely. Where I live in Sacramento, things are fairly liberal and progressive, but I still face stupid comments and prejudice regularly. I talk to people who live in more conservative states who face bullying and harassment constantly. When I tour, there is the risk that I will meet a Christian who will not be happy to be made fun of.

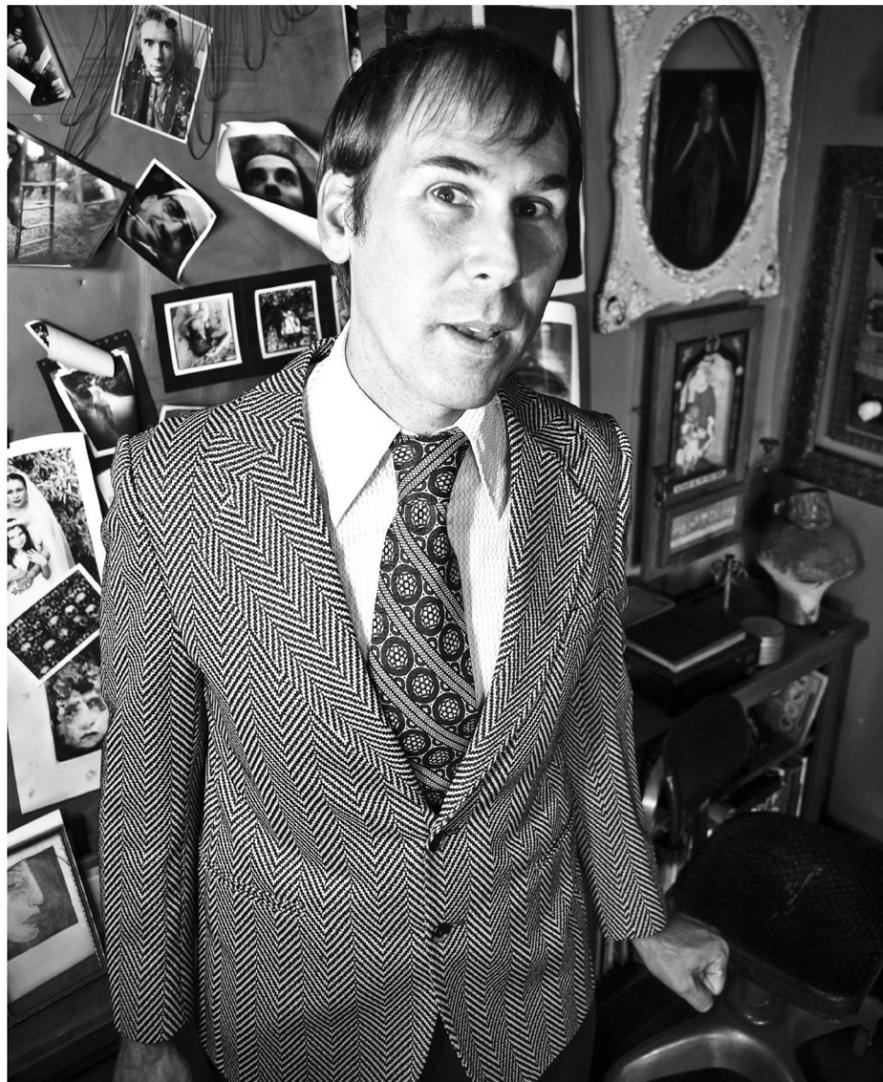
I have a joke where I tell the audience, "I get away with making fun of Christians because I promise them that I'll make fun of the other religions afterward. Turns out Christians will put up with no end of shit so long as they're promised a reward at the end of it."

The Coexist? Tour has an atheist, a Muslim, a Hindu, a Jew, a Buddhist and a Christian team up to deliver religion-based comedy. Did being surrounded by different religious people cause you to hold back any material?

I actually had to hold back less. The great thing about that show is that it's obvious from the fact that we're all there together, that we're friendly toward each other and that we're not haters. We walk out on stage, say hello, clown around with each other a bit and then take turns at savaging each other. We just did a show at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo and have a documentary getting ready to hit the festival circuit.

Has there been anybody who has been particularly outraged by your shows?

There is very little outrage. I've been told I have an Everyman kind of delivery. While I think that's very odd, having always identified with punk and queer culture, I think it's a very good thing. I let the audience get to know me. We joke about kids and things we might have in common, then when the



Go to keithlowelljensen.blogspot.com/ to see Keith Lowell Jensen's website.

atheist stuff comes in, it's harder to demonize me or to get crazy because we've all just had a laugh together.

It's another story on the Internet. My atheist videos get me all kinds of flak, including threats of violence.

I read about one death threat that said you would go the same way as murdered atheist activist Madalyn Murray O'Hair.

I think that threats are very easily

issued by cowards online. I do think there is some danger, but the more of us there are, the safer we are. We dilute their anger when they have to spread it out. I am cautious though and watch my back.

I know that Muslims have complained. Are you worried about getting a fatwa issued against you?

I think that they have bigger fish to fry. The day someone issues a fatwa

against me is the day I know I've made it.

You've also gotten flak from Christian extremist groups. Do you think people underestimate Christian fundamentalists, choosing to focus on Islamic terrorists instead?

Absolutely. Most Christians are secure in the fact that they're still the dominant culture in the West, but as that changes, and I believe it will, I'm afraid they'll get more violent. I joke about being afraid to fly domestically because I don't like to think of having to make an emergency landing in the Jesus Land that's the middle of the U.S.

Other folks worry more about Muslim terrorists, but when it comes to dangerous extremists to fear, I prefer to buy locally. USA! USA! USA!

Do you think it's more important for people to laugh at your stand-up or to take in the message?

I want them to laugh. I'm more interested in atheist acceptance than conversion. I think conversion is just a given. Religion is losing followers at an amazing rate. And of course I'm a comic; I like people to laugh.

What can your fans expect from you in the future?

I hope to put out an hour of original video and audio a year. We're talking about doing an atheist Christmas special this year as well. I've always loved Christmas specials. I'm very excited about The Coexist? Comedy Tour documentary. It was strange for me to do a project that I'm not in charge of. I just performed, put on the show and let them capture our story how they saw fit. I'm very happy with the result.

Richard Silverwood is a committed atheist from Manchester, England. He has contributed to a diverse range of magazines, including Coin News, The Big Issue and No Title. He earns a modest living as a ghostwriter.

Overheard: Black Collar Crime

The cases include a priest who allegedly pinned loincloths on naked boys playing Jesus in a Passion play and whipped them, in keeping with the drama; a priest who held what prosecutors called "masturbation camps" at the rectory, having boys strip naked and teaching them to masturbate; and a pastor written up for disobedience for complaining . . . about an accused priest being transferred to his parish. **Description of a pretrial hearing for Msgr. William Lynn, accused of failing to remove alleged predators from the Archdiocese of Philadelphia** *Associated Press, 1-25-12*

St. John Chrysostom, once said, "The road to hell is paved with the skulls of bishops." Here's proof that he was right. In an interview this week with Connecticut Magazine, Cardinal Edward Egan withdrew his 2002 apology for the church's handling of the sex-abuse scandal, which was once read in all New York parishes.

Columnist Michael Brendan Dougherty, a Catholic and former associate editor of The American Conservative Business Insider, 2-8-12

He forced me to masturbate while he took pictures of me. When we talk about sexual abuse we're talking about sodomy. There's pubic hair, there's

sweat, there're smells, there're grunts. **Manuel Vega, retired Oxnard, Calif., police officer, about his abuse by a priest as a teen** *NBC Los Angeles, 2-12-12*

[The priest] would rape me and then say this is what God's love feels like. **Dan Smith, who is a plaintiff with Manuel Vega and others to require disclosure of addresses of priests who were never criminally convicted but lost civil suits**

NBC Los Angeles, 2-12-12

Just because he's passed away, doesn't change his past. There are other people out there who suffered at his hands because of his failure to deal with pedophile priests.

Mike Knellinger, New Mexico Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, on the Jan. 20 death of Archbishop Robert Sanchez *KRQE, 1-22-12*

Overheard: Mormon baptisms

A new rule: Until someone claims to see Christopher Hitchens' face in a tree stump, idiots must stop claiming that atheism is a religion. There's one little difference. Religion is defined as belief in and worship of a super-human controlling power. And atheism is precisely — not that! Got it? Atheism is a religion like abstinence is a sex position. When it comes to religion, we're not two sides of the same coin. You don't get to put your unreason up on the shelf with my reason. . . . If you still insist atheism is a religion, then it's only fair that we get to do all the looney stuff you do, and I'm going to start tonight by unbaptizing Mitt Romney's dead father-in-law. . . . It was discov-

ered last week that Edward Davies, Ann Romney's father, an enthusiastically anti-religious scientist who called organized faith hogwash, was posthumously baptized in the Mormon tradition 14 months after he died. They tried to do it sooner but he wouldn't stop spinning in his grave.

Bill Maher, who donned a magician's hat to perform "history's first unbaptism ceremony" in the name of "math, gravity, evolution and electricity," to rescue Davies from planet Kolub and return him to "the kind of freethinkers he chose to hang out with here on Earth."

"Real Time with Bill Maher," 2-2-12

Shock and Awe

After the attack on 9/11, President George Bush warned that “this crusade, this war on terrorism, is going to take awhile.” His rhetoric recalled the wars against the Muslim world by Christian knights, who launched repeated attempts to capture Jerusalem over the course of several hundred years.

In March of 2003 Bush attacked Iraq, falsely claiming that it had weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). At the same time, Vice-President Cheney perpetuated a lie that Saddam Hussein was involved in the 9/11 attack. As a result, hundreds of thousands of innocent Iraqis were executed for a crime they didn’t commit.

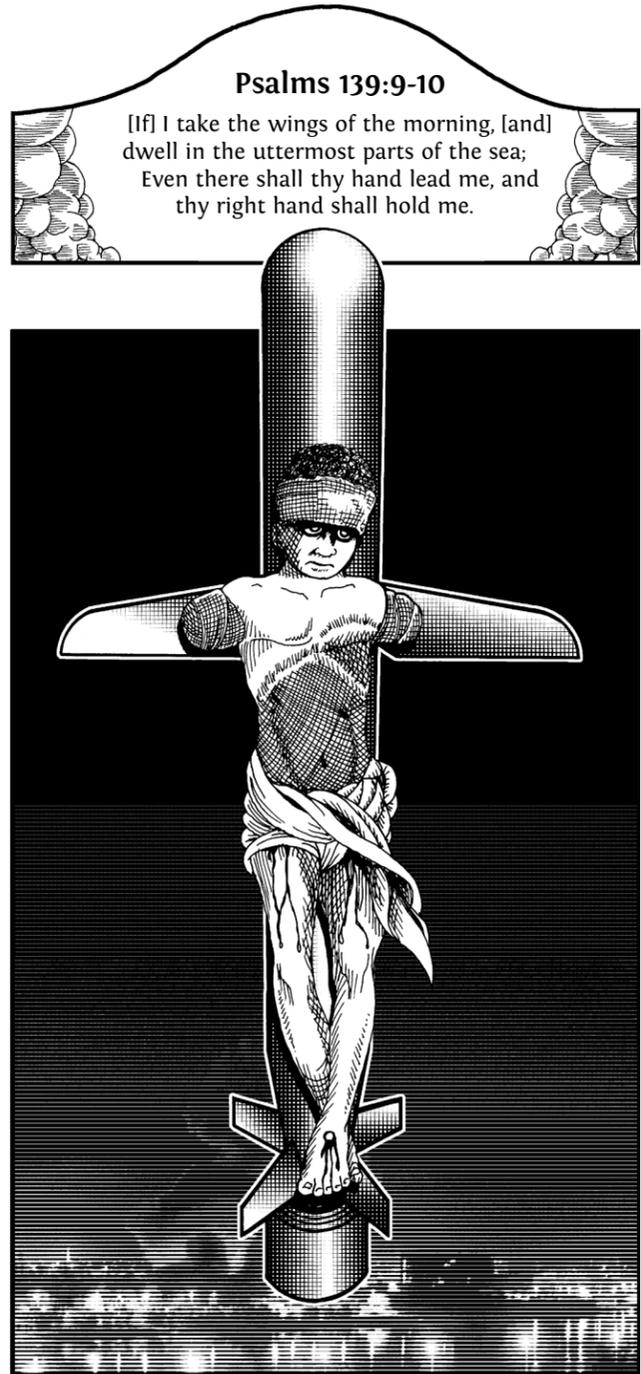
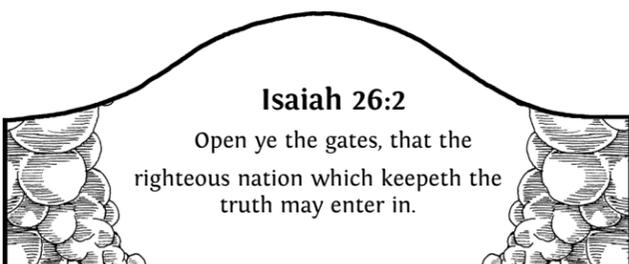
The invasion of Iraq employed a tactic called **Shock and Awe**. It is a military doctrine that uses brutal levels of power and force to frighten, scare, intimidate, and disarm the enemy.

One of the innocent Iraqi civilians who was “disarmed” in the bombing of Iraq was a 12 year-old boy named Ali Abbas. Twelve days after the war began a stray bomb demolished his house outside of Baghdad. Ali lost his parents, his brother, and 13 other members of his family. He also lost his arms. News photos showed his body covered in third degree burns.

Gloating over his initial success at bombing Iraq, President Bush declared that Saddam Hussein’s hold on his country was loosening “finger by finger.” “I don’t know whether he survived. The only thing I know is he’s losing power,” Bush said at a news conference with British Prime Minister Tony Blair. “The grip I used to describe that Saddam had around the throats of the Iraqi people is loosening. I can’t tell you if all 10 fingers are off the throat, but finger by finger, it’s coming off.” All of Ali’s fingers are gone. The United States’ grip on Iraq continues.

One Nation Under God: A Bible History

by Mike Konopacki



We are pleased to present the next 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 33rd annual convention in October 2010. Mike is a political cartoonist and labor rights activist.

Bush and the Iraq War

On Friday October 7, 2005 the British newspaper *The Guardian* printed this story: “George Bush has claimed he was on a mission from God when he launched the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, according to a senior Palestinian politician in an interview to be broadcast by the BBC later this month . . .”

One of the delegates, Nabil Shaath, who was Palestinian foreign minister at the time, said: “President Bush said to all of us: ‘I am driven with a mission from God’. God would tell me, ‘George go and fight these terrorists in Afghanistan’. And I did. And then God would tell me, ‘George, go and end the tyranny in Iraq’. And I did.”

White House press secretary Scott McClellan rapidly denied it saying: “No, that’s absurd. He’s never made such comments.”

But in June of 2009, Robert Draper published a bizarre story in *Gentlemen’s Quarterly* on how Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld would use biblical passages to illustrate his **Worldwide Intelligence Update**, a daily briefing to the President on the Iraq War. These Crusade-like messages were the brain child of Major General Glen Shaffer, a director of intelligence for the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Secretary of Defense. Rumsfeld saw the Scriptures as a way of making a personal connection with a president who frequently quoted the Bible.

For example, the March 3rd cover had a color picture of a fighter jet ready to take off from an air craft carrier. Superimposed on the picture was a quote from **Psalms 139:9-10** “[If] I take the wings of the morning, [and] dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.” On April 3rd a U.S. tank roars through the Swords of Qadisiyah monument in Baghdad beneath the words of **Isaiah 26:2**, “Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.”

State/church news

States disguise bible courses as literature,

The South Dakota House and Senate passed a nonbinding resolution encouraging the “academic study of the bible in South Dakota public schools.” It passed the House 58-8 and the Senate 25-10.

“It sends the message that other religious texts are not as important as the bible, which I think is probably a dangerous path for us to start down,” said Sen. Angie Buhl, D-Sioux Falls.

Sen. Tom Hansen, R-Huron, also opposed it. The state should let “the church regulate church things,” he said.

The Arizona House voted 42-15 on Feb. 21 to let high schools offer elective courses on “critical evaluation and examination of the Bible as a literary work.”

House Minority Leader Chad Campbell, D-Phoenix, opposed the bill, predicting a constitutional challenge.

Georgia, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas already have laws allowing such classes.

A New Hampshire bill sponsored by Rep. Jerry Bergevin appears to be dead, the Concord Monitor said Feb. 22. The House Education Committee 17-0 to table a bill mandating bible study in all schools.

“The holy bible is the bedrock of Western civilization. Love it or hate it, it’s in every aspect of humanity,” Bergevin, R-Manchester, said earlier.

Such resolutions and/or laws aren’t genuine efforts to honestly explore and investigate the bible, said Andrew Seidel, FFRF constitutional consultant. “Under the Constitution, the bible may be permissibly taught as literature in public schools, so why are legislators pushing these laws? Because they know that, in practice, many of these classes will not be an academic study of literature but another chance to emulate the tobacco industry and ‘get ’em while they’re young.’

“That’s why FFRF’s mission is so important,” Seidel said, “Schools aren’t necessarily going to police themselves and toe the appropriate constitutional line. Teachers will do as the legislature intends and inculcate rather than educate, and FFRF will be there to fight for the Constitution and the rights of those schoolchildren.”

Ariz. voucher ruling has wide implication

On Jan. 26, Maricopa County Superior Court Judge Maria del Mar Verdin rejected arguments by the Arizona Education Association and other groups that the state’s new “empowerment scholarships” violate a constitutional provision which specifically bars state aid to private and parochial schools.

The ruling paves the way to make vouchers available for all of the more than 1 million children now in public schools, the Arizona Daily Star reported.

The plan Verdin upheld is relatively small and is designed for special needs students. Sen. Rick Murphy, R-Glendale, said that after legal hurdles are overcome, he wants the program to become the template for students statewide.

Virginia judge enjoins county prayer

U.S. District Judge Michael Urbanski issued a preliminary injunction Feb. 3 in *Jane Doe v. Pittsylvania County, Virginia*, barring the Board of Supervisors “from continuing its present practice of routinely opening its meetings with Christian prayers” and “from invoking the name of a specific deity associated with any one specific faith or belief in prayers given at Board meetings.” Urbanski also ruled the plaintiff can no longer proceed as Jane Doe but must use her real name in the case filed on her behalf by the ACLU.

Ruling only affected Bronx Household

The 2nd Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals clarified on Feb. 17 that a district judge’s Feb. 16 temporary restraining order stopping New York City from enforcing its policy of evicting churches from public schools applied to only one congregation, the Bronx Household of Faith.

About 50 religious groups worshipping in public schools have been given eviction notices by the city. The state senate passed a bill in February to overturn the appeals court decision evicting church worship from schools.

Court: Bad manners got Christian fired

A federal appeals court on Feb. 7 ruled against a woman who claimed she was fired as a counselor at the Centers for Disease Control because of her Christian beliefs.

Marcia Walden refused to counsel a woman in a same-sex relationship and referred her to another counselor, saying that her “personal values” prevented her from helping the woman.

The Atlanta-based 11th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals in Atlanta ruled Walden was fired for the manner in which she handled the referral, not because of her beliefs, and that the CDC feared she would continue that behavior.

Maine bill funds religious schools

On Feb. 9, Maine Gov. Paul LePage and state Education Commissioner Stephen Bowen revealed details of a bill that would remove a ban on public money going to religious schools.

“For some families that are struggling financially . . . to be able to get some help with tuition to come to a Christian school would be very very helpful,” said Bangor Christian School Headmaster Jim Frost. “It would help us with our student enrollment.”

“[T]he state has a responsibility to provide a public school system,” said Chris Galgay of the Maine Education Association, “that’s what the Constitution says. It doesn’t say anything about private schools, religious schools. We have choice . . . that’s a parent’s choice . . . but it’s not the taxpayer’s respon-



sibility.”

Indiana creationism bill dead, for now

Indiana House Speaker Brian Bosma, R-Indianapolis, procedurally killed a creationism bill by moving it to the Rules Committee, ensuring it won’t be voted on this session, the Indianapolis Star reported Feb. 14. The Senate had passed the bill 28-22 to let schools teach alternate theories of evolution.

“I felt, given the fact that we have a U.S. Supreme Court case that appears to me to be directly on point, that this is a fight that really should not be fought at this point,” Bosma said.

Middle school student loses prayer case

A principal in Craryville, N.Y., didn’t violate a student’s First Amendment rights when he told her to omit religious sentiments from her speech at a “moving up” ceremony, a federal judge ruled Jan. 23. The speech ended with, “As we say our goodbyes and leave middle school behind, I say to you, may the LORD bless you and keep you; make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; lift up His countenance

upon you, and give you peace.”

U.S. District Judge Gary Sharpe ruled that the applicable judicial standard was *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*, which lets schools censor speech for legitimate educational reasons. The plaintiff wanted *Tinker v. Des Moines School District* applied, which held that school can censor only if speech will cause “substantial disruption” or infringe on others’ rights.

Sharpe said use of school funds and equipment made the event school-sponsored.

Court deals blow to U.K. council prayer

Formal prayer at council meetings in England and Wales were banned by the High Court in London after it ruled in a test case brought by an atheist councillor and the National Secular Society, the Irish Times reported Feb. 11.

The court said prayers at the monthly Bideford Town Council meeting were not lawful. The National Secular Society’s Keith Porteous Wood said it was pleased at the court’s “clear secular message,” adding that all council meetings should be “equally welcoming” to all councillors, religious or not.

Overheard

Looking back at our history ever since the Reformation, the countries that have had separation of church and state have had happier states of affairs than those that haven’t. It certainly is one of the things, unfortunately, that the Americans are struggling with now — the role of the church in the political process. In my estimation, some of them are going in the wrong direction.

Ian Forrest, Perth County councillor, London, Ontario, supporting the council’s 5-4 decision to substitute a moment of silence for the Lord’s Prayer
London Free Press, 2-3-12

The thinkers who gathered in Philadelphia, Pa., to adopt the Constitution fully understood the danger of state-sponsored religion because they understood how the British had used it as an instrument of unjust political power. That’s why they proscribed it. Because they did so, religious freedom today is a given of life in the United

States, to the point that it’s not even a legitimate issue. People simply are free to worship as they choose, or not at all. The resolution, then, is a simple case of political pandering, a perennial theme for lawmakers.

Editorial decrying a state House resolution declaring 2012 as “The Year of the Bible.”
Scranton Times-Tribune, 2-3-12

Alaska Airlines made the right call in ending their prayer card program. Aside from the fact that it is simply not very reassuring to a traveler to have the airlines currently operating their flight distributing a card that suggests they should start praying, it is just wrong to pretend that America was ever a monolithic nation of Caucasian Christians. That time never existed. Not then and not now.

Elise Patkotak, op-ed
Anchorage Daily News, 1-31-12

Ellie says 'crank' up the sound

“Oh, the content. Oh, the spelling. Oh, the grammar. OH, THE ALL CAPS. It makes me laugh, it makes me cry, and it makes me want to read it out loud.”

So writes Ellie Rypinski (a pseudonym, due to where she lives and family ties), leading into her video rendition of the Crank Mail section from Freethought Today. She has 13 episodes online at youtube.com/user/ffrfcrankmail (or just type “ffrf crankmail” in YouTube’s search box). She devoted a special edition to the messages of hate to Rhode Island teen Jessica Ahlquist.

Ellie reads the mail in a precise, pedantic voice, enunciating clearly. Her facial expressions almost make you believe, despite the inanity of the profanity and lack of clarity of thought, that this is indeed serious business instead of just a real hoot.

“Several folks have messaged me over the past few months to say that they ordered sample issues of Freethought Today thanks to my videos, so, all the better!” she says.

A little more about you, please?

I’m a freethinking agnostic who finds beauty and meaning in our natural world — no gods required. I grew up with a non-practicing Catholic father and Methodist mother. When my parents married in the 1970s in my mother’s church, my dad’s church refused to acknowledge the marriage because it had been performed the wrong way (in the Methodist tradition) by the wrong people (by a Methodist minister).

When I was 5 or so, my mom came into our living room where I’d been playing with toys. She looked at me and asked a serious question: “Honey, do you want to be Catholic like your daddy or Protestant like your mommy?”

Like most 5-year-olds, I felt closer to my mom, so I “selected” Protestantism on that basis. True story. That’s exactly the way it went down. That’s the way my religion was determined!

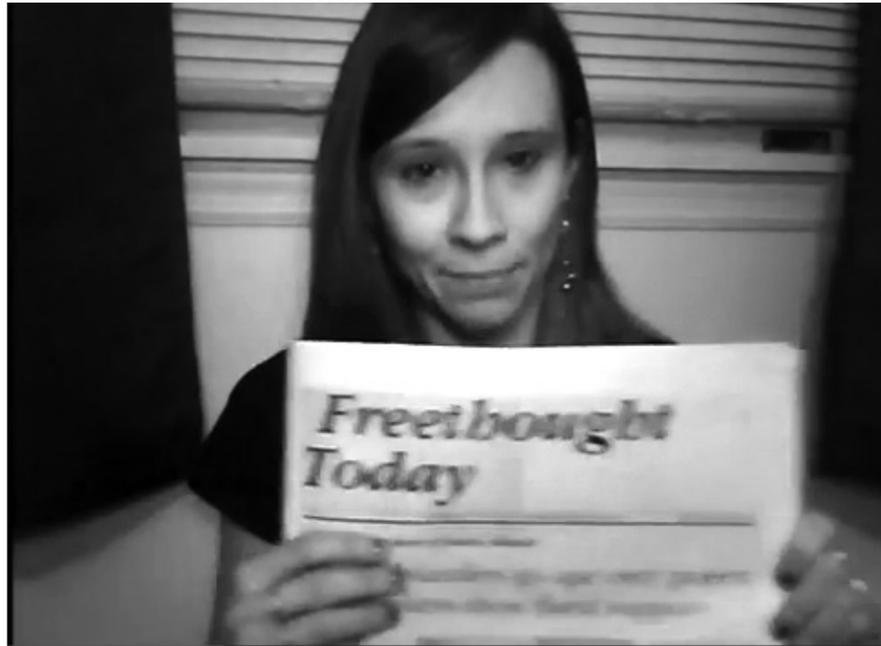
After several years of Sunday school at her Methodist church, I grew out of religion. It didn’t hold any answers for me any longer. Actually, it never truly had. I’d always felt like praying to god was like reciting a few lines in my elementary school’s yearly Christmas concert: I memorized words and spoke them out loud with a cheesy forced grin on my face.

Then, I’d give up the act, return to the risers, and twirl my hair around a bit until it was time to go home. In high school, I dropped out of my confirmation class and turned to secular philosophers and great writers to re-contextualize my life.

When and why did you decide to start recording the Crank Mail?

I’ve been subscribing to Freethought Today for a few years now. The Crank Mail section always made me cringe. One day, I started reading it out loud to myself, and I was a bit taken aback at how ridiculous and hurtful it sounded. I tried to imagine how it would feel to hear someone in my own community looking me straight in the eyes and spouting the same hateful garbage to my face.

I read one or two pieces in front of



the mirror and thought, wow, this is kind of scary. I want others to see how scary this is.

How do you deal with repeating all the profanity?

In real life, I reserve the F-bomb for rare and meaningful circumstances.

But if I want to stay true to conveying the author’s original message, I need to read the letters exactly as written. No exceptions. I’ll admit that saying “nigger” and “faggot” doesn’t come easily, though.

What is your goal in doing it?

Sharing the Crank Mail

A sampling of recent comments to FFRF from the Christian righteous, printed as received:

Why?

You and your foundation are on the same level as the people who took out the towers in New York City. Yes your scum of the earth I hope there is a God and you burn in hell for all the terrible things you have done. Why don’t you move to, say Afghanistan, and see what you get. — Greg Rumsey, Casper, Wyo.

Christian nation

The USA is founded upon Christian principals and will always reflect that in society and in some policies. In my public high school the teachers and students discussed god and religion in open classes without fear from anyone. In fact my teachers encouraged religion almost on a daily basis. Best Education I could receive, Thank you tax paying citizens. God Bless! — Sincerely, Samuel Fischer, a recent graduate of 2011

PS: If you try to find my high school we are likely to shoot you. Every one owns guns, even in our trucks parked in the school parking lots. Around here we dont like your kind. If you came to town, you run the risk of what “Mississippi Burning” was for the African Americans.

“O GOD!” FROM YOUR MOMS

I WONDER WHY ALL OF YOUR MOMS SCREAM OUT “O GOD!” WHEN I’M FUCKING THEM BUT THEY ALL HAD RAISED NON-BELIEVERS. CAN YALL TELL ME WHY THEY CALL OUT TO GOD WHEN I’M HUMPING THEM? I SURE WOULD BE PLEASED TO SEE ONE OF YALL. THIS IS MY REAL ADDRESS, COME SEE ME AS I HUMP YOUR MOTHER AND MAKE HER SCREAM “O GOD!”. — Kenneth Oberman, San Antonio, Texas

Assholes

Stay the fuck out of my business U prick fucks! — URassholes@yahoo.com

Statue in Montana

Fuck you and your organization. If you have a problem with Jesus, God or any other aspect of Christianity then get out of this country. Go live in Iran, Iraq or some other third world nation. Grab your rug, incense or what ever other form or worship you choose and leave. Once again fuck you and your organization. — David

Fuck you

Fucking die communist pigs, America was founded by religious followers. fuck you — Adolf Hitler

Jesus Lord of Lords King of Kings

Are you ready to answer to God almighty

one day? Your legal staff will not be able to help. There will be no ACLU (Anti Christian Liberties Union) Get prepared the day is coming when Every Knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord including Mr. Barker and his Wife. BTW no Supreme Court to appeal to either. — David Jones, Wetumpka, Ala.

You

All I can say is FUCK YOU AND THE HORSE YOUR RODE IN ON. This country was built on religious freedom, both Christian and Jewish. You peole totally suck. You should be exterminated. — Miles Lewis

Victory

Dear Ms. Gaylor, the only sham residing in America today is our so called Muslim President and organizations like FFRF. Imagine people have nothing better to do then be morons, haters, backbiters and whiny two year olds. God will not be mocked and satan is the Prince of this world. My heart goes out to you for you sway with every wind of doctrine and your ears are tickled by your own empty voices. — Peggy Palmer, Menifee, Calif.

Get a life

This is the worst organization eva... bitching about a statue.. How about you go and fuck yourselves. The reason this country is failing is because we are ditching God. — John Craiger, Ukian, Calif.

UN-AMERICAN

YOU PEOPLE ARE NOT AMERICANS AT ALL!GET A JOB,RAISE SOME MONEY AND GET THE HECK OUT OF THE U.S.A. TRY YOUR LUCK IN AFGHANISTAN. — ANTHONY POLAND

my right to puruse life as endowed to me by my Creator

Stop trying to destroy the constitution of this land. It is unconstitutional and you all should be tried in a court of law for breaking the law endowed to us in this land by our CREATOR. JESUS IS LORD OF AMERICA AND WISCONSIN!!! — Felicity Farrell

Truth

I’m so sick sick of u pigs being offended by everything.This is a christen country. U should Find a roof and jump off it. And if u ever protest around my house expect trouble. Yours in Christ knights templar — Jack Frost

whats your point?

Your president and your ffr is smelling like 1938. Brown shirts and All that goes with the prince of darkness. — philip nachazel

Reading it out loud transforms each message from a bunch of words on a page to something much richer. The added nonverbal signals like facial expressions and intonation remind the viewer that there’s a real live human being behind the words. Real live human beings who might live down the street and work at your favorite grocery store. Real live human beings who work at your local schools and vote in elections.

So many people mistakenly believe that religion is innocuous. It draws an artificial dividing line between people. Religion preaches intolerance. It causes wars. It disconnects families, and it discourages individuals from understanding the world through science.

I read it because I want viewers to understand exactly how intolerant some advocates of religion can be. We shouldn’t gauge a belief system by the smiling photographs of church parishioners posing at the soup kitchen in the religion section of the daily newspaper. We need to look deeper.

— Edited by Bill Dunn

Goodbye

Well,you have /b/s attention, lazy faggots. We will dismantle you systematically from your Website up. Let’s go back to when Athiestfags removed the right to Pray in school. Why? You lazy queers didn’t want your kid to go to the lands above. I have no problem against Athiests in general, it’s just dipshits like you who ruin America over their own greed for “religious freedom” because you must be to fucking stupid to ignore it. Well, i’m going to Do’x the website, have fun with it while you can. — Sincerely, The 14 year old /b/tard

Webaster’s note: The site has not been “Do’x’ed” or “Denial of Service attack.”

please cease to exist

What is it going to take to get organizations such as yours and the ACLU to cease to exist. Dan Barker is a cocksucker and Laurie Gaylor a bitch. — David Jones, Wetumpka, Ala.

Hello

FREEDOM FROM FREAKS FOUNDATION — Donald Hump, Tampa, Fla.

stupidity

you clowns need to back off. stop telling us what to do. oh i am so offended so ia m going to take you to court. why dony ypou clowns go live under sharia law and tell us how you like it. you are the problem along with obama and other other libtards thats wrong with this contry. — Matt Brandlely

free thought

do the rest of america a favor and do something rational for a change, like kill yourselves. — John Smith

Newland, NC

Fuck you and your Godless messages! May you all rot in hell you commie pukes! — Randy Brown

Jesus Statue

I suggest you take that statue and the tiny 25x25 foot piece of land and shove them up your collective asses. You unAmerican bunch of fucking morons. why dont you take a flying fuck at a rolling donut. — Arleen Cobler, Clinton, Mont.

you

I WOULD GLADLY LIKE TO TELL YOU ANTI-RELIGIOUS, ANTI-CHRISTIAN ASSHOLES TO GO TO HELL, BUT I DON’T REALLY HAVE TO BECAUSE THAT IS WHERE YOU OBVIOUSLY ARE GOING ANYWAY WHEN YOU DIE SO YOU CAN JOIN THE \DEVIL HIMSELF IN ETERNAL DAMNATION! — Allen Rossini, Manitowoc, Wis.

Black Collar Crime Blotter

Compiled by Bill Dunn

Arrested / Charged

Kendall Libby, 57, Falmouth, **ME**: Domestic assault. Kendall, pastor of the nondenominational Grace Church, which meets at Windham High School, was charged with assaulting his wife after police were called about 11 p.m. She didn't require medical treatment. *Source: AP, 2-14-12*

Gordon Yeboah, 20, Abesim, **GHA**: Unnatural carnal knowledge. Yeboah, founder of Holy Spirit Fellowship Church, was arrested for having sex with a pregnant sheep after passers-by heard loud bleating and saw Yeboah naked from the waist down behind the animal, police said. *Source: ghananation.com, 2-13-12*

An unidentified **Christian pastor**, 43, and **his wife** are charged with murder in the deaths of their 3 children in Boseong, **S.KOR**. Police said the couple starved the children and beat them to drive off evil spirits. The children were 10, 8 and 5. The couple allegedly cited a bible verse: "Do not withhold discipline from a child."

Police said the husband was pastor of an obscure Protestant congregation called Hyung-jae [Brother] Church. *Source: AP, 2-13-12*

Uzi Rivlin, 64, Teaneck, **NJ**: 13 counts of child endangerment by sexual conduct, aggravated criminal sexual contact and criminal sexual contact. Rabbi Rivlin, who taught at Temple Beth Abraham, is accused of molesting 2 Israeli boys who came to live with him as part of a scholarship program. The boys, both 13, complained separately to authorities after they returned to Israel. Rivlin has been married 38 years and has 6 children. *Source: The Record, 2-9-12*

Hodgson Marshall, 89, Saskatoon, **SK**: 2 counts of indecent assault. Marshall, who lives at his religious order the Congregation of St. Basil, is accused of molesting 2 boys in 1959-60 at a Catholic boys' school. Police said he had a one-way mirror set up and would fondle boys on the pretense of inspecting their muscles.

Both alleged victims are now 66. "We said very emphatically we wanted charges pressed," said an accuser, who was 14 at the time. "We were let down at school. We didn't want to be let down again." *Source: StarPhoenix, 2-8-12*

Milton Wells, 62, Kalamazoo, **MI**: 2 counts of 1st-degree criminal sexual conduct and 8 counts of 2nd-degree criminal sexual conduct. Wells resigned as pastor at Open Door Ministries Church of God In Christ during the investigation, which involved 2 victims under age 13. *Source: Kalamazoo Gazette, 2-2-12*

Eugene Boland, 65, Omagh, **N.IRE**: 4 counts of indecently assaulting a female child. Boland is accused of committing the offenses in 1990-92 while he was pastor at a Catholic parish in Derry. *Source: Belfast Telegraph, 2-1-12*

David K. Allen, 49, Gatesville, **TX**: Capital murder in the March 2011 death of his wife, Paula Allen, 54, who died of smoke inhalation and burns in a fire in the couple's mobile home behind New Life Church of Restoration, where her husband Allen was pastor.

David Allen recently remarried, according to Coryell County records, which show a marriage license was issued to him and Megan Lynn Griffith, 27, also of Gatesville.

He told police he jumped out the window to escape the flames. *Source: KWTX, 2-1-12*

Augustine Iga, Kampala, **UGA**: Iga, pastor of Revival Prospering Church, is charged with murder in the death of Peter Mujabi, 18. Police spokesman Ibn Ssenkumbi said a friend of Mujabi's mother told her to take him to Iga's church because the pastor could cast out demons and improve the man's medical condition.

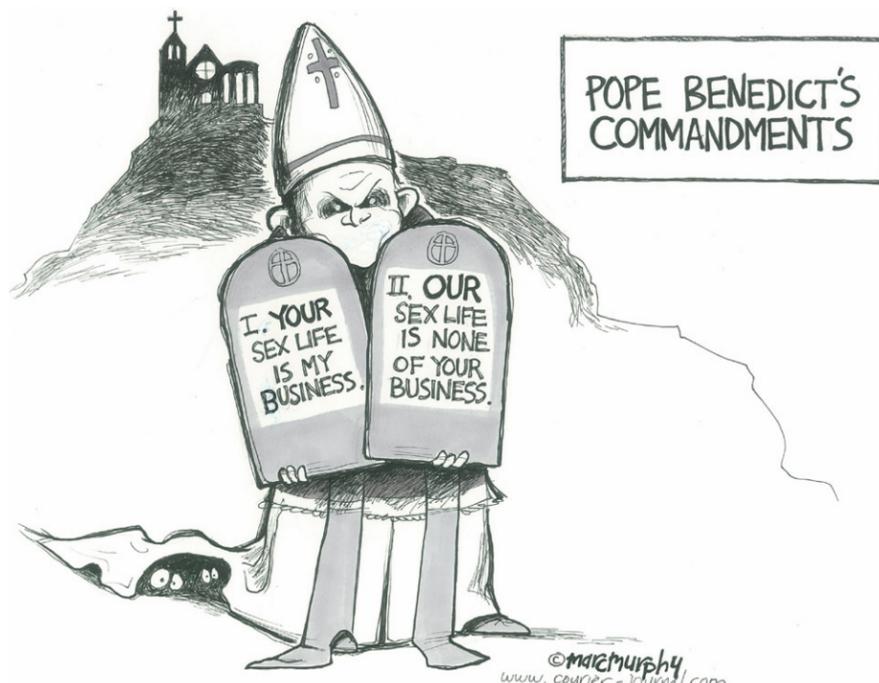
"We shall arrest such pastors," Ssenkumbi said. "And in cases where people have died in churches as pastors are praying for them, we shall charge those pastors with murder." *Source: The Observer, 2-1-12*

Russell L. Rodman, 58, High River, **AB**: 2 counts of sexual assault and 1 count each of gross indecency, indecent exposure to a person under 14 and sexual contact with youth by a person in authority. Charges stem from alleged incidents with 3 boys, then ages 11 to 14 at the time of the incidents, alleged to have happened at Rodman's Calgary home in 1981-95.

During much of that time, he was involved with Baptist churches in several volunteer positions and leadership roles. The case is linked to church activities, but a court gag order keeps certain details secret.

"Life has changed," said Rodman's son. "I'm not going to have my kids stay at his house for a sleeper if I'm not there." *Source: Calgary Sun, 1-31-12*

Josue D. Garcia-Lopez, 20, Houston: Aggravated sexual assault of a child. Garcia-Lopez is charged with raping a 12-year-old girl Dec. 23 in the church parking lot during bible study



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class at Templo Getsemani Church. The girl told police they had sex in the suspect's SUV. They first met at bible study at another church.

"He said he knew [the girl] was 12 years old because she told him, but he didn't believe her and thought she was joking with him because 'she looks older,'" the complaint said. *Source: Houston Chronicle, 1-30-12*

Anita Collins, 67, New York: Grand larceny and related charges for stealing about \$1 million from the Catholic Archdiocese of New York, where she worked in a financial office for 7 years. She wrote hundreds of checks, each for less than \$2,500, to her son and logged them as payments for legitimate church expenses.

In a 2010 profile in the archdiocesan newspaper, she said, "My faith has always been a steadfast part of my life." *Source: Religion News Service, 1-30-12*

Jongkyu Kim, 37, and **Myunghwah Jeong**, 35, Alpharetta, **GA**: Reckless conduct. Kim, associate pastor at Sae Han Presbyterian Church, and Jeong, his wife, are accused of leaving home at 6 a.m. to go to church and leaving their 3 young children unattended.

A police report said a neighbor found their toddler son roaming the parking lot of the town-home complex. The child was wearing "adult shoes" and was crying. Police said the older children were asleep in the home. *Source: WS-BTV, 1-30-12*

William D. Harrison Jr., 50, Williamston, **SC**: 2 counts of lewd act on a minor. Harrison, a registered sex offender who worked at Redemption World Outreach Center, is accused of molesting the victim in 2009-10. He was convicted of criminal sexual conduct with a minor in 1997 and served 7 years in prison.

In a statement, Apostle Ron Carpenter Jr., church founder, said not to worry. "During his employment, we were aware of his previous incarceration. However, every step was taken to ensure that at no time he would come in contact with kids." *Source: WYFF, 1-27-12*

Christian Turcios, 26, Scottsdale, **AZ**: 13 counts of sexual exploitation of a minor, 26 counts of child molestation and 13 counts of unlawfully recording. In 2010, it was alleged he molested an 11-year-old boy at a church summer camp at Phoenix First Assembly, where he was volunteering. He refused to cooperate and was never arrested.

Then he was hired as a janitor at Highland Church, where he also babysat church members' children. A probe into child porn eventually led to Turcios' home, where videos were allegedly found of him having sex with boys. Another video showed a 7-year-old undressing, a boy he babysat for.

Police said he "placed himself in positions where he could be around children during church camps and other activities." *Source: NewTimes, 1-26-12*

Jeffery London, 48, Lauderdale Lakes, **FL**: Sexual battery and 4 counts of sexual assault. Arresting deputies said he had just returned from conducting bible study at Bible Church of God, where he was youth pastor. His accuser, now 18, told a friend from church that London had molested him since he was 8. His mother had him live with London because she was "facing hard financial times." *Source: WFPB, 1-25-12*

An unidentified priest and a church elder at the Church of the Prophet Elijah in Fyska, **GRE**, near Thessaloniki, are charged with looting of antiquities for digging inside the church chancel. Other suspects are being sought. Vil-

lagers reported loud drilling noises coming from inside the church. *Source: AP, 1-27-12*

Matthew Clark, 33, Bartow, **FL**: Soliciting a lewd act. Clark, senior pastor at Blessed Assurance Temple, is accused of propositioning a male detective. *Source: WTSP, 1-26-12*

Floyd S. Crenshaw Sr., 51, Danville, **IL**: Felony official misconduct. He's accused of extorting money from a prisoner at Danville Correctional Center in exchange for "good time" off the man's sentence. Crenshaw started as prison chaplain in 2007 while he was pastor at Christian Center of Hope Baptist Church.

Bank records show he got \$4,000 from the prisoner's wife. *Source: Commercial-News, 1-26-12*

Peter Kennedy, 72, a defrocked Irish priest, was extradited from Brazil and charged in Dublin with 55 counts of sexually abusing 18 children from 1968-84. Kennedy fled to England in 2002 and was defrocked in 2003, the year the church paid \$425,000 to a victim. *Source: AP, 1-25-12*

Richard Roberts, 63, Tulsa, **OK**: DUI and speeding 15 or more miles per hour over the speed limit. Roberts, son of the late Oral Roberts and CEO of Richard Roberts Ministries, was stopped for going 93 in a 55-mph zone in a black Mercedes at 12:10 a.m. A breathalyzer showed a 0.11 level. *Source: News on 6, 1-24-12*

Rick Bartlett, Bastrop, **TX**: Animal cruelty. Bartlett, Bastrop Christian Church pastor, is accused of keeping his neighbor's cat in a cage in the back of his truck for 3 days and throwing it off a bridge to his death. Bartlett claimed he thought Moody, 12, was a stray even though it had a name tag with an address. He told police he forgot Moody was in the truck. Bartlett apparently had complained earlier about cats straying into his yard. *Source: KEYE-TV, 1-23-12*

Mark S. Bullock, 47, Towson, **MD**: Indecent exposure. Bullock, pastor at Church of the Immaculate Conception, was observed naked from the waist down by customers at Bush River Books & Movies in Abingdon.

The Baltimore Archdiocese has removed Bullock's "faculties to function as a priest." *Source: Baltimore Sun, 1-22-12*

Brien N. Hall, 42, Ash Flat, **AR**: DWI, refusal to submit, careless driving and driving left of center. The police report said Hall, pastor at Hardy United Methodist Church, denied drinking although his speech was slurred and his eyes bloodshot. He later tested 0.15 on a breathalyzer.

When the officer started a field sobriety test, Hall told him he "thinks he has M.S. [multiple sclerosis]." He also told the officer he was blind in one eye. *Source: Salem News, 1-22-12*

Pleaded/Convicted

Rodney Andrews, 57, Elk Grove, **CA**: Pleaded no contest to embezzlement, theft by false pretenses, diversion of construction funds and unlawful use of personal identifying information. Andrews, 57, operated a company known as Andrews Investment Group and was pastor at the Comeback Christian Church, where he solicited parishioners and low-income property owners to refinance their loans, lower their mortgages or stall their foreclosures. *Source: Sacramento Business Journal, 2-10-12*

Cornelius Taylor, Sacramento, **CA**: Found guilty of 8 counts of sexual assault of a minor. Taylor met the victim at the church he pastored and convinced her to move in with him and his wife when the girl was 16. Prosecutors said

'If I had to write down every single [assault], I would be writing you a book.'
— Victim statement at Santos Rosado's sentencing

Taylor assaulted the girl several times a week in her bedroom, continuing after she turned 18. *Source: Sacramento Bee, 2-10-12*

Stewart O. Newman, 40, Omaha: A judge found Newman guilty of 1st-degree sexual assault of a child and 6 counts of manufacturing child pornography. He and his wife, since divorced, were part of a youth ministry that operated out King of Kings Lutheran Church.

Newman admitted he took photos of the girl and touched her but claimed he never penetrated her.

"To suggest that he was careful about penetration is just absurd," said Judge Patrick Mullen. *Source: World-Herald, 2-7-12*

Alexander Bede Walsh, 58, Abbots Bromley, **UK**: Found guilty of 19 counts of indecent assault and 2 counts of buggery involving 8 boys ages 8-16 and going back to 1979. Steps are being taken to defrock him as a priest in the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham.

Staffordshire Police Detective Tim Bailey said after the hearing: "He is supposed to be a man of the cloth but he has shown no compassion, no integrity and no humanity. He has forced grown men to come to court and relive childhood experiences of sexual abuse." *Source: BBC, 2-7-12*

Joe Ivey, 74, Walkersville, **MD**: Pleaded guilty to 2nd-degree sex offense in a plea deal that dropped charges of 2nd-degree assault and sexual abuse of a minor. Ivey, senior pastor at Barnesville Baptist Church, molested a girl who was 10 or 11 at the time during a sleepover at his home in 2010. *Source: AP, 2-7-12*

Menachem Youlus, 50, Baltimore: Pleaded guilty to mail fraud and wire fraud. Rabbi Youlus, self-described as the "Jewish Indiana Jones," sold fake Torahs for 6 years and stole hundreds of thousands of dollars through Save a Torah, a nonprofit he helped found in 2004. *Source: N.Y. Times, 2-3-12*

Royston Thompson, 25, Darlington, **UK**: Guilty of 2 counts of indecent exposure. Thompson, a Mormon priest, went to a female doctor for back pain and then complained of genital pain.

Prosecutor Clair Brinton said, "The doctor did go on to examine his testicles and said there was nothing wrong, only for the defendant to ask if she was sure and did she need to check them again." After the exam, he asked the doctor, "How was that for you, was that all right?"

Thompson was convicted earlier of exposing himself to a woman and leaving a "love note" on her car. He testified he was inspired by models flirting with strangers on the TV show "Babe Station." *Source: Northern Echo, 2-3-12*

Toris Young, 40, New Orleans: Pleaded guilty to theft of government funds and mail fraud. Young, pastor at Bible Way Baptist Church, submitted fraudulent receipts to get \$963,000 in loans from the Small Business Administration after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 to rebuild the church. *Source: WDSU, 1-27-12*

Timothy D. Killen, 30, Kingsport, **VA**: Pleaded guilty to having consensual sex with a minor over the age of 15 and 2 counts of taking indecent liberties with a minor while serving as a guardian. The relationship occurred while he was youth pastor at Heritage Baptist Church. Killen admitted he had sex twice with the minor in his pickup truck. *Source: Kingsport Times News, 1-19-12*

Samuel Slocum, 60, Lewis Run, **PA**: A jury found Slocum guilty of concealment of the whereabouts of a child and corruption of minors. He was acquitted of interference with the custody of a child and loitering and prowling at night.

The Catholic Diocese of Erie suspended Slocum as pastor at Our Mother of Perpetual Help and another parish. The charges stemmed from a relationship with a 15-year-old boy, whose friends and brother would also visit Slocum in the rectory. *Source: Buffalo News, 1-19-12*

Sentenced

Raymond-Marie Lavoie, 71, Quebec City: 3 years in prison after pleading guilty to counts of sexual assault involving 13 boys at a private Catholic school in the 1970s and '80s. Lavoie's victims were all boarders between the ages of 12 and 15. *Source: Postmedia News, 2-10-12*

James Donaghy, 53, Lisburn, **N.IRE**: 10

years in prison. The former Catholic priest was convicted of 23 sex offenses, committed over 17 years against 3 male victims in their teens. Source: BBC, 2-10-12

Santos A. Rosado, 46, Bethlehem, PA: 5 years and 4 months to 19 years in prison after pleading guilty to indecent assault, endangering the welfare of a child, corruption of minors and 2 counts of statutory sexual assault. Rosado, pastor at Centro de Adoracion, also agreed to give up the parental rights to the son he fathered with his victim when she was 18.

"If I had to write down every single [assault], I would be writing you a book, not an impact statement," wrote the victim, whom Rosado started molesting when she was 12 in 1993.

Rosado's wife, Marilyn, asked the judge to "restore him to the man that God wants him to be." Source: Morning Call, 2-7-12

Matthew Porter, 34, Granbury, TX: 10 years in prison after pleading guilty to 7 counts of possessing child porn and 8 counts of improper photography or visual recording. Porter was a volunteer associate pastor at The Church at Granbury, volunteered at Gateway Community Church and was chaplain at a nursing home.

Prosecutors said he hid cameras at the nursing home, at the home he shared with his parents and at church, taking photos of adults and children undressing at such events as weddings and baptisms. Source: Star-Telegram, 2-1-12

Tedd Butler, 46, Walker, MI: 1 year in jail to be served concurrently with another 1-year sentence for convictions of 1st-degree sexual assault and 2nd-degree criminal sexual conduct. Butler, pastor at Gospel Light Baptist Church, was initially charged with molesting a boy 50 to 60 times in 8 years at now-defunct Landmark Baptist Church but was struck a plea deal. The child was between 3 and 9.

He was also found guilty of fondling a boy, 5, in 2006. Source: Wood TV, 1-31-12

Oliver O'Grady, 66, Dublin: 3 years in prison for possession of child pornography. Police found 65,000 sexual images of children on a laptop he left on a plane in 2010. More child porn was found at the defrocked Catholic priest's home.

O'Grady was a priest in the U.S. for 30 years and served 7 years in a California prison for sexual abuse of children under 14. He was the subject of the 2006 documentary "Deliver Us from Evil." Source: Irish Examiner, 1-30-12

Derrick T. Griffin, 41, Minneapolis: Guilty of 1st-degree murder. Griffin, associate minister at True Vine Missionary Baptist Church, was convicted in the May shooting death of Kristopher Miller, 28. Prosecutors said Griffin shot Miller because he was jealous that Miller was out with Griffin's wife, from whom he was separated. Source: Star Tribune, 1-27-12

A German court in **Braunschweig** sentenced an unidentified **Catholic priest**, 46, to 6 years in prison on 250 counts of sexually abusing 3 boys ages 9 to 15 between 2004-11. Source: AP, 1-26-12

Valentine Krul, 61, Forestport, NY: 6 months in jail, 5 years' probation and restitution after pleading guilty to 2nd-degree larceny for stealing \$87,000 from the Church of the Sacred Heart and St. Mary Our Lady of Czestochowa. Krul used almost half of it to buy a condo in Florida. Source: Utica Observer-Dispatch, 1-25-12

Charles Thessing, 51, Morrilton, AR: 2 years' probation and \$1,450 fine and court costs after pleading no contest to introducing a prohibited article in a correctional facility. Thessing, pastor at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, was charged with smuggling a gallon plastic bag of tobacco to a prisoner on death row in Varner Supermax Unit. Source: Democrat-Gazette, 1-26-12

Kenneth Terrell, 47, Bloomingdale, GA: 115 months in prison, 3 years' supervised release and \$381,449 restitution for embezzlement. The pastor of New Harvest International Ministries took the money over a period of about 4 years. Source: First Coast News, 1-25-12

Kareem Ibrahim, 66: Life in prison for his part in a failed 2007 plot to blow up fuel lines and tanks at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport. Ibrahim, an imam in the Shiite Muslim community in Trinidad and Tobago, was the 4th person sentenced in the case. Source: Bloomberg News, 1-17-12

Joseph Quoc Hai-Nguyen, 66, TX: Suspended prison sentence for embezzlement after making restitution of \$84,450 to two Virginia Catholic churches: Our Lady of La Vang in Norfolk and Our Lady of Vietnam in Hampton. The Diocese of Richmond agreed with the sentence.

Hai-Nguyen entered an Alford plea, not admitting guilt but acknowledging there was enough evidence to convict him. Source: Virginian-Pilot, 1-21-12

Civil Lawsuits Filed

The Catholic **Diocese of Great Falls-Billings**, MT, is being sued by 10 plaintiffs who allege sexual abuse by priests. Lead attorney Tim Kosnoff said he expects many more alleged victims to come forward. "We're talking about the rape and sodomy of 8-, 9-, 10- and 11-year-old boys and girls by Roman Catholic clergy, often accompanied by acts of physical abuse." Source: KFBB, 2-8-12



Raymond Bishop Jr., Toledo, OH, pastor of Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church, is being sued by the church board for alleged refusal to stop preaching after being fired. Some in the congregation also accuse Bishop of using church funds to buy a Lexus and a Mercedes and other personal items at a cost of more than \$100,000. Source: Fox News, 2-8-12

Tyrone D. Gordon, 53, Dallas: Cameron J. Greer, 26, filed a lawsuit accusing Gordon of coercing men in his congregation at St. Luke Community United Methodist Church to engage "in sexual acts and relationships for his own personal sexual gratification" inside Gordon's office from 2003-10. Gordon resigned Feb. 15. St. Luke and the North Texas Annual Conference are co-defendants.

"I certainly hope it's not true. The devil is always busy," said Pamela Williams, whose husband served with Gordon on the School Board in Wichita, KS, when he pastored there. Source: Wichita Eagle, 2-5-12

The Catholic **Diocese of Fort Worth, TX**, **Bishop Kevin Vann** and the **Claretian Missionaries of the U.S.** are being sued by a man who alleges he was molested by **Fr. William Paiz** in 1983-87. Paiz taught religion at Nolan Catholic High School.

Tahira Khan Merritt, attorney for the former student, believes Paiz is still affiliated with the Claretian Order and may be serving as a priest in another state. Source: Star-Telegram, 1-31-12

The **Diocese of Camden, NJ**, is being sued by an Ohio man who alleges a Catholic priest molested him in the early 1970s as a first-grader. The suit uses the "late discovery" feature of the child endangerment law that lets plaintiffs allege they repressed memories of the events.

The priest, **Joseph E. Shannon**, 75, was accused in the 1990s of sex abuse by at least 4 other males. The diocese in 2002 paid settlements to several accusers as part of an \$880,000 suit involving 15 priests. Source: Philadelphia Inquirer, 1-29-12

Donald M. Stewart, **St. Anthony's Catholic Church** in Casper, WY, and the **Diocese of Cheyenne** are being sued by a Colorado woman who alleges Stewart, a church deacon, "imposed a sexual relationship" on her after she went to him for bereavement counseling in 2002.

The sexual relationship went on for years "in full view of the parish," the suit alleges. Stewart is also accused of physically assaulting the woman on back-to-back days in January 2008. Source: Casper Star-Tribune, 1-21-12

Civil Lawsuits Settled

A jury deliberated less than 4 hours to find the Catholic **Archdiocese of Hartford, CT** "reckless and negligent" in a suit filed by a former altar boy who alleged **Fr. Ivan Ferguson**, who died in 2002, molested him in the early 1980s. "Jacob Doe" was awarded \$1 million in damages.

"It's like a new beginning," said the victim's father, a former church deacon who testified during the trial. "Accountability is where it should be. Now he can start to heal. It's off his shoulders."

Doe presented evidence that senior church officials put Ferguson in a position where he could abuse Doe in spite of Ferguson's admission 2 years earlier he had sexually abused other boys.

A man testifying on behalf of Doe said Ferguson also molested him. "When I would resist, he would say, 'People will think you are gay if you bring this out,'" the man testified.

"The sex as a 13-year-old kid with this old man wasn't something I looked forward to. I didn't want it to happen. I wanted my friendship with Father Ferguson to continue, but I didn't want the sex to take place." Source: Hartford Courant, 2-10/1-26-12

At least 550 people filed sex-abuse claims against the **Archdiocese of Milwaukee** by the Feb. 1 deadline in its bankruptcy proceedings. It's the most claims by far among the 8 U.S.

Catholic diocesan bankruptcies since 2004.

Another 100 or so claims were filed by vendors; state and federal taxing authorities; and church-related entities such as clergy and employee pension funds, which claim they are owed a total of \$70.4 million. In all, claims totaling \$103.4 million have been filed.

"We're looking at the tip of the iceberg," said James Stang, creditors committee attorney. "Statistically, sex crimes are grossly underreported."

Claims date at least to the 1950s. Alleged abusers include the late **Fr. Lawrence Murphy**, accused of molesting as many as 200 deaf boys, and two priests whose assaults in California already have cost the archdiocese \$17 million.

Documents filed in the bankruptcy identify at least 8,000 instances of child sexual abuse and 100 alleged offenders (75 of them priests) not previously named by the archdiocese, a victims' attorney said. Source: Journal Sentinel, 2-9/2-2-12

Legal Developments

A man who alleged he was sexually abused by a Catholic priest in Wisconsin dropped a lawsuit against the Holy See, the pope and two Vatican cardinals, said his attorney, Jeffrey Anderson. The suit alleged the defendants were aware of complaints against **Fr. Lawrence Murphy**.

Anderson, who also represents victims in the archdiocese's bankruptcy proceedings, said his client "felt that his energies would be best spent working alongside fellow survivors toward justice and healing at the archdiocese level." Presumably, the plaintiff has filed a claim in the bankruptcy proceedings.

The suit was dropped the day after U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Susan Kelly let stand 2 claims filed by childhood victims, dating back to the 1970s and 1980s. Kelly said the 6-year statute of limitations needs to be addressed at trial. Source: UPI, 2-12-12

Dale A. Elledge, 74, Blanchard, OK: A trial was ordered for Elledge, former teacher at Word of Life Ministries & Academy in Dibble, on 10 counts of lewd molestation and 4 counts of 1st-degree rape by instrumentation. He was charged in 2010 for raping 6 female students from 1998-2005.

According to court records, he made one victim "sit on his lap so he could help with her homework," then "he would place his hand under her skirt." Source: The Oklahoman, 1-6-12

As **Arthur B. Schirmer**, 63, Lebanon, PA, awaits trial on charges of murder and tampering with/fabricating physical evidence in the 2008 death of his second wife, Betty Jean. The official cause of death for his first wife, Jewel, was changed from "undetermined" to "homicide." Schirmer was pastor at Bethany United Methodist Church.

Jewel Schirmer died in 1999 of traumatic brain injury a day after her husband told police he found her bleeding at the bottom of the steps in their home. Police opened the case after he was charged in 2010 for Betty Jean's death.

Schirmer said Betty Jean hit her head on the windshield when he swerved to avoid a deer. Source: Lebanon Daily News, 1-30-12

Otis Holland, 55, Henderson, NV, wanted on charges of conspiracy, child abuse and 11 counts of sexual assault of a victim under 16, was arrested in Tijuana, MEX, and returned to the U.S. The pastor of United Faith Church allegedly molested children as young as 7. He fled last June.

According to a relative of an alleged victim, Holland brought some of his victims to a "torture" room in his home. "It was made for that purpose with soundproof walls. He had horrible things he used on the children in there."

All told, Holland is accused of abusing 4 minor girls. Source: KTNV, 1-27-12; AP, 1-26-12

Allegations

Antonin Caron, 68, a retired Maine priest, is being investigated for alleged incidents in

1982-86 at parishes in Mechanic Falls and Gray, said Diocese of Portland Bishop Richard Malone. Caron was acquitted in 1994 of sexual misconduct charges involving a young woman. In 2000, he was suspended for being involved with a sexually explicit website. Source: AP, 2-13-12

A Diocese of Rochester, NY, review board upheld child sexual abuse charges against **Dennis Shaw**, the priest removed in 2010 as pastor of Holy Family Catholic Church in Auburn.

The board also reviewed an earlier probe into alleged abuse in the late 1970s and early 1980s when Shaw was pastor at the now-closed St. Francis of Assisi Church in Rochester.

The board unanimously found allegations "credible and true," said a release from the diocese, which noted Shaw allegedly abused two boys under age 16.

In a statement, Shaw criticized Bishop Matthew Clark for not communicating with him better. "I am no saint and never pretended to be one," he wrote. "But I am more than willing to subject myself to the judgment of the laity instead of the politics of the diocese." He was ordained in 1974. Source: Auburn Citizen, 2-9-12

The Diocese of Buffalo, NY, said it has received a second complaint alleging sexual misconduct by **Fr. Secondo Casarotto**, 70, former pastor of St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church. Casarotto was removed from his pastorate Jan. 14 after being accused in a police report of groping a former parishioner inside the rectory. He was not charged.

In the new complaint, a woman, married and in her 30s, alleges he made unwanted sexual advances in 2008 when she was alone with him in her home. Casarotto belongs to the Missionaries of St. Charles Borromeo, aka the Scalabrini Fathers. Source: Buffalo News, 1-31-12

Removed/Resigned

Michael Cooney, 63, Mount Clemens, MI, was suspended as pastor of St. Peter Catholic Church for failing to promptly report allegations that a minor had been sexually assaulted on church property by a parishioner, said a statement from the Archdiocese of Detroit. Bishop Michael Byrnes said Cooney is not accused of abuse. **Michael Lentini**, 19, Macomb Township, MI, has been charged in the case with 3rd-degree attempted criminal sexual conduct involving a girl, 14. The alleged incident occurred in a basement area after Mass. Source: Detroit Free Press, 2-13-12

James E. Braley, 62, Plymouth, MA, was put on administrative leave as pastor of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha Parish due to an allegation of sexual abuse of a child in the early 1980s. He's not allowed to live at the rectory. Source: myfoxboston.com, 2-13-12

Charles R. Manning, Colorado Springs, CO, retired as pastor at St. Gabriel the Archangel Catholic Church about 3 weeks after police told him he was being investigated for alleged sexual abuse of a child. Manning was ordained in 1997 and served in 3 St. Louis parishes before coming to St. Gabriel. Source: Colorado Springs Gazette, 2-2-12

Gregoire Fluet, 56, Moodus, CT: Fluet, pastor at St. Bridget of Kildare Catholic Church, is on voluntary leave of absence, said the Diocese of Norwich. Police are investigating a parishioner's allegations of financial irregularities at the church. Source: NBC, 2-2-12

Wallace Harris, 64, former pastor at the Church of St. Charles Borromeo in Harlem, NY, was sentenced to "a life of prayer and penance" by the Vatican for alleged molestation of as many as 10 children in the 1980s. Harris is living in a Catholic-run residence "under very, very close supervision," said a church statement. No charges were ever brought because of the statute of limitations.

Harris can still say Mass but only for himself. Robert Hoatson, a New Jersey priest, called for him to be defrocked. "The many victims who have already come forward to report their abuse by Harris deserve better." Source: N.Y. Post, 2-1-12

Aryeh Rablag, chief rabbi of **Amsterdam's** Orthodox Ashkenazi community, who was suspended after signing a declaration against homosexuality, said he fears for his safety in Holland. Rablag is based in New York.

He and about 200 Orthodox rabbis and educators signed the Torah Approach to Homosexuality, which says gay people should, in effect, just take cold showers. Source: Jerusalem Post, 1-27-12

Victim advocates accused St. Louis **Archbishop Robert Carlson** of downplaying the seriousness of abuse allegations against suspended Colorado priest **Charles Manning**, who used to serve Missouri parishes.

David Clohessy, Survivors Network for those Abused by Priests director, said Carlson should "use church bulletins, church websites, church pulpits to let parishioners know that Father Manning has been accused and suspended and let them know there is, in fact, a pending criminal investigation."

Clohessy also questions why Manning wasn't listed in the Official Catholic Directory in 2002 and was transferred to Colorado in 2007. Source: KMOX, 1-26-12



Letterbox

\$5,000 to help FFRF keep fighting

As the political races are now in full flower, I see that religious faith becomes more and more of an issue. It seems that those opposed to abortion are the same people as those in favor of the death penalty, a paradox I find difficult to understand, nor can I understand why they don't see the paradox. As is the case with abortion, it seems that those who are in favor of less, or limited, government are the same people who want the government to promote their religion.

FFRF is at the forefront of trying to keep church and state separate. I hope you can also make those who object to church/state separation understand that you (we) do not object to them worshiping whomever (whatever) they want, just that government bodies do not participate.

To help you stay viable in your efforts for a long time, I am enclosing my check for \$5,000 for an After-Life Membership. Keep up the good fight.

Paul Fishkin
Wisconsin

Catholic employers want free ride

Requiring all to obey the Affordable Health Care Act does not infringe on anyone's constitutional freedom of religion. The First Amendment applies just as much to individual citizens as to religious leaders and institutions (including churches), so is the plan to give exemptions to all Catholic/Mormon/fundamentalist employers?

Requiring insurance companies to provide care without charging either the patient or employer means the extra cost will be picked up by everyone else. This would require all the rest of us to subsidize religious institutions, clearly unconstitutional.

In 1878, the Supreme Court ruled in *Reynolds v. United States* that the First Amendment freedom of religion means beliefs and opinions, not actions and practices. "Government could exist only in name under such circumstances." If this policy were allowed to stand, FLDS leaders must also be allowed to have more than one wife at the same time!

For far too long, religion has been allowed to intrude on our intentionally secular government. It is time to set things right again. The churches employing people must also be required to follow the laws. There have been too many victims because of religious exemptions and lax enforcement.

Ruth Walker
Iowa

Religious zealots inspire new Lifer

I continue to enjoy your newspaper and your efforts to counter nutty religious zealots! Enclosed is a \$1,000 check for Life Membership.

Andy Ross
Ohio

Time to take big leap of (non)faith!

I had been thinking about making the big leap to Life Membership for some time, so when I saw that Ron

Locatelli had done so in December, I figured how could I not join such a distinguished group? I'm so pleased to be permanently on board!

Becky Horton
California

Blind 'date' leads to long relationship

As I was reading the latest Freethought Today, I remembered how I reacted when I received my first issue some 15 years ago. Someone (to this day, I don't know who) had a copy mailed to me.

I remember opening it and, seeing it was an *atheist* newspaper, just let it drop to the floor. I was afraid I was going to be struck dead on the spot for reading that filth!

I was baptized and raised Catholic and couldn't imagine anyone reading this garbage. But in time, I read it cover to cover and, to say the least, it was an eye-opener for me. Since then, and because of wonderful authors like Dan Barker, Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, etc., I am finally and with no regrets a proud, liberated nonbeliever and will take every opportunity to tell anyone and everyone.

To whomever sent me that complimentary paper, all I can say is thank you, thank you, thank you.

Mary Ann Birkel
Nebraska

Comment clarified in Clergy Project story

In the Jan/Feb issue Clergy Project story by Craig, he mentions "the uninformed criticism coming from the atheist community." I would love to understand what he means by this. Maybe we can become better informed.

Joan Reisman
New York

Craig clarifies: My comment was mainly concerning some of the counterproductive comments that some nonbelieving pastors have been receiving from atheists. We have heard some atheists commenting that it is terribly unethical for a pastor to stay in ministry if he/she no longer believes, and that it is better to be unemployed than to transition out slowly. These comments come from a very uninformed position.

What they don't understand is that if a pastor announces his/her apostasy, it will almost always result in an immediate character assassination from the religious community. He/she may immediately become the pariah of the community, may lose their entire social network and even receive physical abuse. It's much more of a concern than just losing a job. Some pastors stay in ministry to protect their families from this attack, while they try to find a way to transition out in a more discreet manner.

Another issue is the fact that secular employers are often religious themselves. There are a number of cases of former pastors being denied secular employment by religious business owners. Plus, many employers don't understand the skill sets that pastors possess and won't even consider them for employment. It's a far more difficult prospect for a pastor to find other employment than many nonreligious people realize.

So when members of the atheist

community hurl insults at pastors who are trying to find a way out of ministry, what they sometimes do is actually drive the pastor back into the religious community. Some pastors are caught in this twilight zone between two worldviews, feeling welcome in neither.

A much healthier approach is to become educated about the stresses and concerns that pastors face, especially for those who no longer believe. Many atheists are completely unaware of the social, psychological and financial minefields that we face. I think many more unbelieving pastors would be able to leave the ministry if they felt welcome in a new community of free-thinkers/atheists.

Obviously, some nonreligious leaders like (former minister) Dan Barker and Richard Dawkins are working to create a truly welcoming spirit.

Bishops wage war on reproductive rights

A national survey found that 98% of sexually active Catholic women use birth control at some point. Another survey reported that even among Catholics, 52% back the Obama administration's policy in that they believe that religiously affiliated universities and hospitals should be obliged to include birth control coverage in insurance plans.

Nevertheless, the Catholic bishops find even the administration's compromise position offensive. It seems that the bishops are more offended than their faithful are. The paternalistic bishops appear to be afraid to leave it up to women and men to decide to use contraception or not. The church insists on controlling the sex lives of its members, but at the same time protects the sex lives of its priests and bishops. In both areas, the church is morally bankrupt.

Unable to enforce its irresponsible, inhuman and irrational code of so-called ethics, the church seeks to have the government do it for them by adopting the church's warped theology. The current war on women's reproductive rights must end. When will Americans wake up to the growing assault on the principle of separation of state and church?

Eugene Provost
New Jersey

Border collies for evolutionary solidarity!

As a longtime follower and subscriber of FFRF, I did a double-take when I received today's Facebook post and saw that volunteer Scott Carney was wearing a T-shirt with the image of a border collie and the words "My 27,083,514th cousin. . ."

As a lover and rescuer of border collies for 25 years, I'd love to get one of these for *both* the dog and the evolutionary solidarity! Please ask Scott if he'll share his source with me.

Neil Clark
California

Editor's note: Go to evogeneao.com/store.html to order.

Rhode Island billboard especially timely

I was more than pleased upon viewing the FFRF "Keep religion out of government" billboard in Rhode Island.



Over the past year or so, I've noticed more and more billboards in the same area that threaten us with "heaven or hell." It was a breath of fresh air to come across a nonthreatening, realistic and intelligent message.

As an atheist, it's rare that I come across public messages such as this one, and I'm glad that someone has finally taken the time to share this message. With the events happening in Cranston involving the prayer banner the high school, the message is even more relevant.

I think that it will encourage those who may be hesitant to stand up for what they (don't) believe in.

Seth Bonenfant
Rhode Island

Crow evenings featured fiddling, fried chicken

The Jan/Feb issue was one of your best. I'm an old fighter pilot, so I got a lot out of Melvin Brantley's story.

Professor James Crow was someone I knew reasonably well when I lived in Madison in the '60s and '70s. My girlfriend at the time, a horn-playing grad student in genetics, and a lot of other grad students and I, would take our instruments (mine was a bass fiddle) out to Shorewood, where Jim and his wife, Ann, lived, and spend the evening playing and drinking.

Ann always laid in a large supply of fried chicken, which she seemed to think was just the thing for grad students.

Dennis K. McDaniel
District of Columbia

Connecticut florists deserve big hugs

As a former Connecticut resident and longtime FFRF member, I want to hug Sean Condon and Stephanie Ewart-Condon, proprietors of Glimpses of Gaia, for supporting FFRF's attempts to get flowers to Jessica Ahlquist in Cranston, R.I.

I just finished reading their statement and comments (Jan/Feb12) and am so proud to know there is a business in America which stands up to the hatemongers. Their actions reinforce my hope that there are Americans who still "believe" in and support the U.S. Constitution.

What really stands out in all of this is the fact that this outrage is aimed at a young student in Rhode Island, a state co-founded by a man from Massachusetts because he felt that there was insufficient state/church separation there. Maybe Rhode Islanders need a reminder what Roger Williams stood for.

I wish the Glimpse of Gaia florists all the best in the future. They have become two of America's heroes.

George West
New Mexico

Crank Mail reveals awful revelations

I'm rereading the Crank Mail in my



latest issue and marveling at the colossal ignorance and hatred consuming these people. As an active humanist in Florida, I work hard to extend good wishes and respect to all beliefs or non-beliefs. Goodness without a god sums it up. I go to monthly humanist meetings; my wife goes to her church. After 47 years together we have no problem with that.

Your newspaper continues to be a welcome source of common sense and sensibility. I particularly enjoy the regular features on the growing number of young people who are considering the evidence, or the lack of it, and walking away from the fables and fairy tales, not to mention the horrific passages and commands to kill contained in the holy bible, easily the most murderous book ever published.

My friend and your frequent contributor Barbara Walker recently printed out several pages of biblical commands to commit violence and passed them around at one of our meetings. It's easy to see where your Crank Mail writers get their inspiration. Keep up the wonderful work.

Don Blair
Florida

Editor's note: See Page 6 for a Barbara Walker column on "bible morality."

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For a variety of reasons that have nothing to do with FFRF, I almost didn't renew my membership this year. Then I found myself with five free minutes this morning (a rare event), so I sat down with some food and hot beverage and dug into the Jan/Feb edition.

It was the Crank Mail. The misogynistic, venomous, homophobic, often confused correspondence was nauseating. I didn't get to eat, but I did renew for the year, and I will continue to renew each year until I have some disposable income to become a Lifetime Member.

Michele Leary
California

•••

It literally took my breath away to read the horrible comments in last issue's "Sharing the Crank Mail." I could hardly fathom that such inane, insane, utterly stupid, vulgar, vicious and potentially dangerous citizens actually live among us.

I am always in awe at the sheer courage that all the great people at FFRF routinely muster in order to continue their vital and valiant efforts at enlightenment.

Don Worrell
Alabama

•••

The mayor and city clerk in New Haven, Conn., should be implored to read the hate mail in each issue of Freethought Today to understand the "good" that prayer begets. Such mail comes entirely from religious zealots and hatemongers and exemplifies the damage that blind belief causes.

I always feel 100% safe at FFRF conventions, even though prayer is absent!

Edward Rensin
New York

•••

No doubt most of your readers view the Crank Mail with revulsion and disgust. I, on the other hand, consider some of these letters educational. What we have here are diverse examples of creative writing, spelling and grammar.

Perhaps there are more valid reasons for calling these writers "creationists" than their fervent belief in the legends of an obscure tribe of desert nomads.

R.G. Huber

New Jersey

Rep called out for 'evil' Ahlquist slur

An Ohio member shares his letter [edited here for space] to Rhode Island state Rep. Peter Palumbo, who went on the radio to call Jessica Ahlquist an "evil little thing."

I am a patriotic veteran. While I think your position of supporting government-sponsored prayer is wrong, I do support your First Amendment Right to express your position. However, your inflammatory remark to a young lady was rude and unwarranted and could encourage other religious zealots to persecute her.

I support every student's right to pray in school. I do not support any government entity placing itself in the position of leading, approving or disapproving of such prayer. Prayer is a private matter and the government has no business either fostering it or discouraging it.

I would also encourage you to read Matthew 6:5-6 and note what Jesus himself said of public prayer.

Is this issue really about private persons communicating with God, or an exercise in power by the religious group that has a plurality in the community?

Ron Taggart
Ohio

Ski slope Jesus out of place in U.S.

The so-called "Jesus Shrine" has no business being on federal land. While the idea of a World War II memorial is, in the abstract, an excellent idea, to simply copy shrines that were seen by American soldiers in Italy, a fundamentally Catholic country lacking in freedom from religion, and place it on federal land is ludicrous.

We are most certainly not Italy. We are the United States of America. And, when last I looked, Montana is one of those very states.

Perhaps the Knights of Columbus might be made aware of that simple fact, and move their statue to a private location. One where it would be safer and less subject to the graffiti and other abuse that public objects are subject to.

Steven A. Ager, M.D.
Pennsylvania

Retiree performs secular memorials

You might be interested to know that I referred to FFRF when I officiated at a secular memorial service at the retirement community where I live. I was well-received for doing so, and others have asked me to do memorials for their family members.

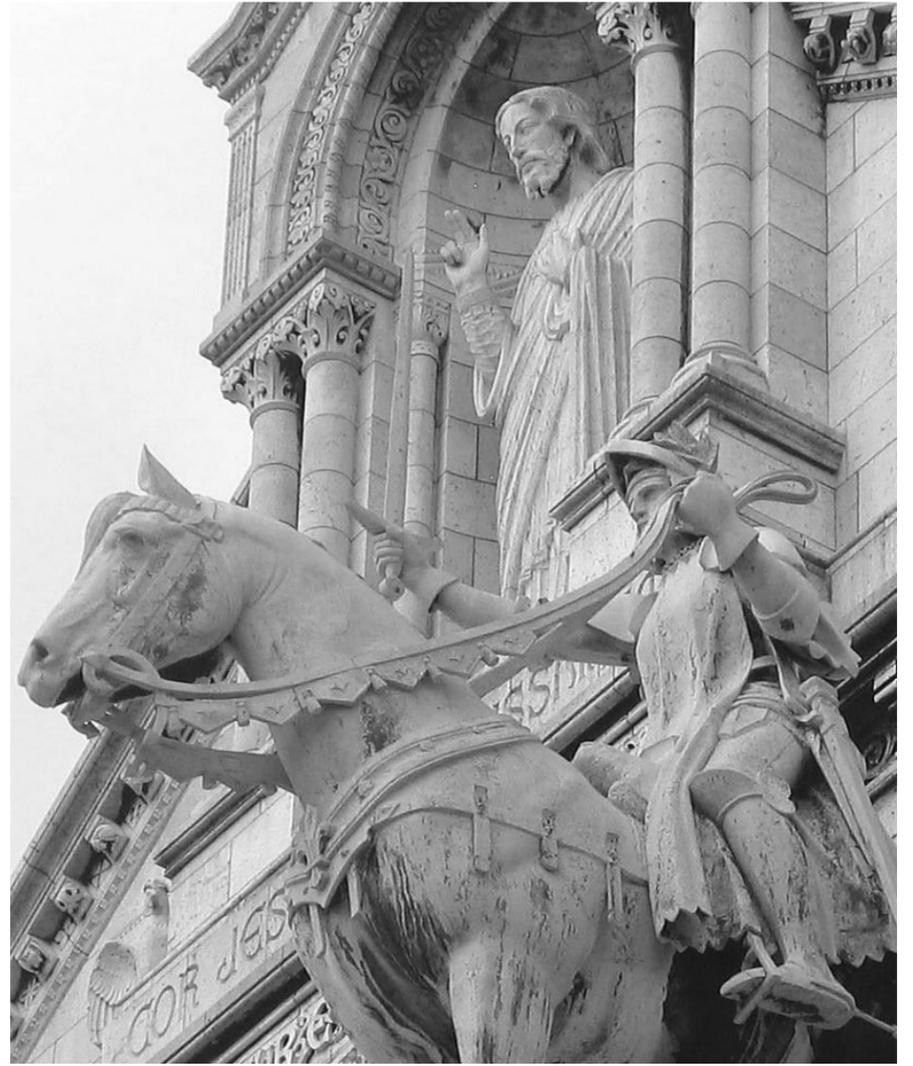
I'm a retired professor (Bryn Mawr College), and I circulate Freethought Today to friends here.

Philip Lichtenberg
Pennsylvania

Editor's note: See ideas on funerals and secular memorials at ffrf.org/news/timely-topics/

Exactly how would one stock 'nothing?'

People throw the term "universe" around as if it were a simple and understood concept. If you have any members who are experts on the subject, it would be interesting and enlightening to interview them or have them explain the extraordinary difficulty of defining "the universe."



Jesus and Joan

Californian Walt Bilofsky, who took this photo in Paris, asks, "Why does religion cause people to kill one another? I went to Sacré-Coeur Basilica to ask the Prince of Peace. But he didn't say anything. Neither did Jeanne d'Arc, but the message was clear. One thing I do know: No one was ever killed in the name of atheism."

In a similar vein, the claim is made that the universe was created out of "nothing." As I was working my way through the university many years ago, I had several warehouse jobs. I have always wondered how one would stock "nothing" and how one would know when they were out of it. Perhaps your readers can explain.

Another thing you might ask for is atheist "editorial" examples: King James Bible Psalm 23:2:

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." Punctuation error. Should be: "He maketh me to lie, down in green pastures."
"There is no god but Allah." Run-on sentence. Should be: "There is no god."

Glen Salter
Arkansas

Staying sober is what really matters

Congratulations to John F. from Ohio for making it in Alcoholics Anonymous without God [Jan/Feb12 letters, "AA, not religion, my higher power"). I have done the same. Alcoholism is a terrible disease, and AA offers enough latitude for nonbelievers to recover with the help of the fellowship. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop drinking.

Hang in there, John, your sobriety and testimony help me, too.

Doug Swanson
Oklahoma

Atheists don't knock on believers' doors

This letter was published Feb. 9 in the Eureka, Calif., Times-Standard newspaper, writes FFRF member Carole Beaton. "I have had three calls (my number is in the phone book), all telling me how great it was! I was disappointed. I was hoping for at least one cussing Christian to respond."

Several times a month a couple of lovely people packing bibles knock on my door. I'm sure they feel that they are doing a wonderful service by telling as many people as possible about their particular version of god. All these good people seem to be Mormons or Protestant fundamentalists. Not a single Jew, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Catholic or atheist has knocked on my door to press their particular point of view on me.

I usually tell these door-knockers that I am a good atheist, and how would they like it if a pair of atheists knocked on their door and tried to talk them out of their god belief? They stare at me with a puzzled look on their faces. I hope it gives them something to think about. I assure them that no atheist will ever knock on their door, as atheism is a personal belief arrived at through the process of reason, not indoctrination.

I urge these good people to volunteer their time helping others in this world, the real world, and leave the rest of us alone to believe as we wish.

Carole Beaton
California

Pickpockets view popes differently

I have never believed in gods or ghosts, nor have I ever understood after a little education what the word god meant. There are so many different gods that are patterned after so many different people and animals that it gets confusing, and each of the various gods have different attributes and/or dimensions.

Seeing how people all see things so differently, according to their beliefs, culture and experience, reminds me of that old saying, "When a pickpocket looks at the pope, all he sees are the pope's pockets."

Sheldon East
Florida

Meet a Member

Activist hat fits

Pittsburgh prof

Name: Stephen Hirtle.

Where I live: In an eclectic neighborhood called Regent Square in the east end of Pittsburgh next to the 560-acre urban woodland Frick Park with hiking and mountain biking trails.

Where and when I was born: Oak Park, Ill., in 1954. I moved a few times before high school, spending several years in the Boston, Cleveland and Chicago areas. Our family finally settled in Naperville, Ill. That move also marked the end of our minimal church attendance as a family.

Family: My son, Ben, and daughter, Molly, both in their early 20s, live with me in between their various adventures, which have taken them wide and far. They have been atheists their whole lives, but also were members of a local Unitarian Universalist church, which gave them the opportunity to meet other atheists their age.

Education: I studied mathematics

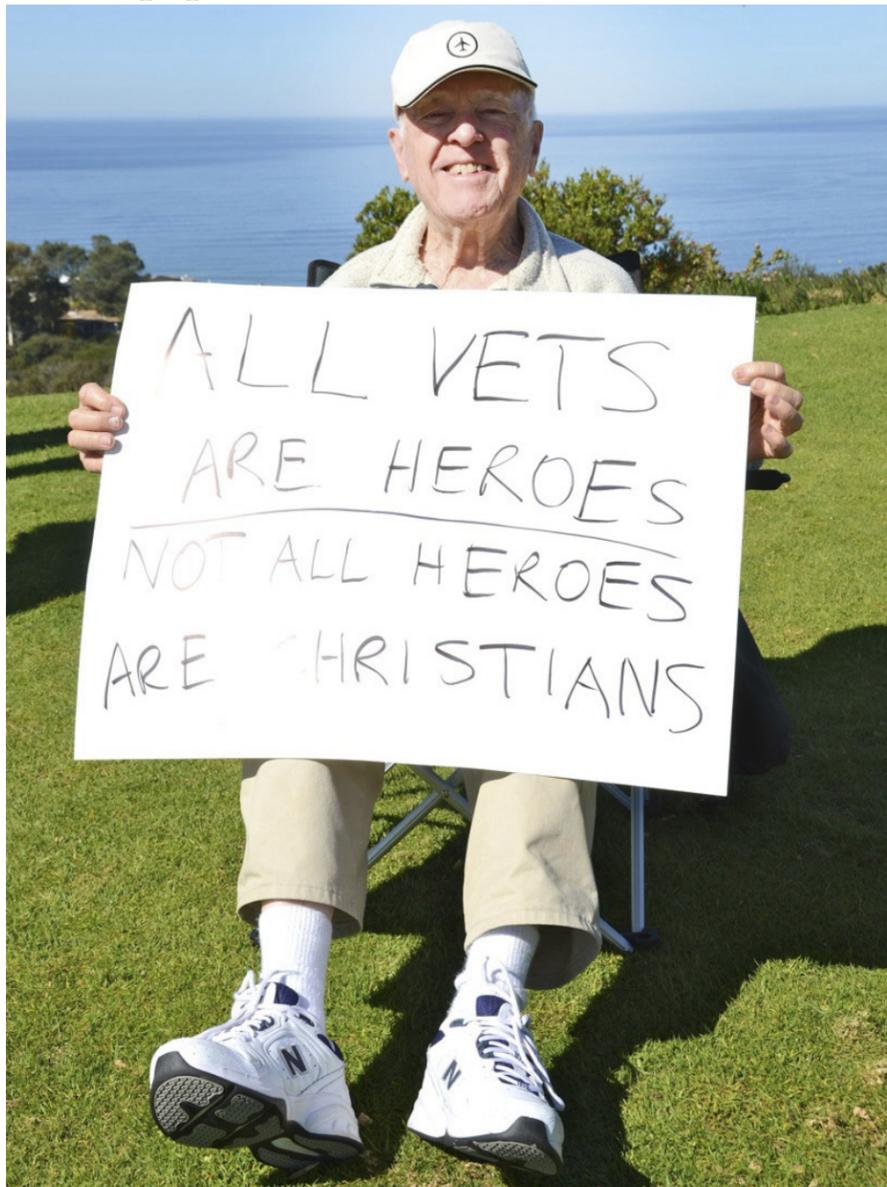
and psychology at Grinnell College in Iowa, followed by a Ph.D. in mathematical psychology at the University of Michigan. My research has focused on building formal models of spatial memory, looking at how we divide up space by neighborhoods and what kind of landmarks we use to keep track of where we are when traveling.

Occupation: I am a professor in the School of Information Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh. I have had the chance to live and work in New Zealand, Thailand, Austria and Norway over the years. Most recently, I finished a monograph on geographical design, which answered questions such as “Why doesn’t your GPS tell you ‘Go to the top of hill and turn right at the stop sign?’”

Military service: None, but I have protested many military actions, including illegal funding of the Contras in Nicaragua in the mid-1980s.

How I got where I am today: Spiritually, I have always been more interested in actions rather than good in-

Atheist pops out of foxhole, sees shadow of cross



FFRF member Patrick O’Reiley counter-protested at a Feb. 9 rally of supporters of the Mount Soledad cross in La Jolla, Calif. Patrick and others gathered to support the 9th Circuit’s decision a year ago ordering removal of the cross. The Liberty Counsel, a Religious Right legal group, has appealed to the Supreme Court to take the case, which has been going on for more than 20 years. Courts have consistently found the huge religious symbol on public land unconstitutional, with backers of the Latin cross belatedly attempting to portray it as a “war memorial.” Congress interceded to “save the cross.” Congratulations to FFRF’s Life Member/Board Member Steve Trunk, principal plaintiff in the continuing saga, who is a vet and atheist. He became plaintiff after original litigant Phil Paulson, also a vet, died. Both Phil and Steve have been awarded FFRF’s Atheist in Foxhole award. See their speeches about the case at:

ffrf.org/outreach/awards/atheist-in-foxhole-award/

Patrick served three years in the U.S. Army in World War II, including service with the 42nd Infantry Division in Germany. After earning two degrees, he joined the Army Reserve, was commissioned a first lieutenant and advanced to captain. After about a decade, he transferred to the Air Force Reserves and retired as a captain. Patrick is a youthful 88 and plays tennis every other day.



Stephen Hirtle (right) protests Duquesne University’s refusal in 2010 to recognize a secular student group because it conflicted with the school’s Catholic mission.

tentions. Earth Day and the ecological movement seemed like the moral right thing to support but was ignored by organized religion in the early days. In terms of science, I was always curious why people believed weird things. I also dabbled in magic tricks, which taught me that what you think you are seeing is not necessarily so.

Some connections with Unitarian Universalism allowed me to meet other atheists, who were clearly strong moral people with belief in God. I am no longer affiliated with UU’s, but I’m glad that they still bring Dan Barker to Pittsburgh, on occasion, for a Sunday service!

Where I’m headed: In addition to working with local freethinkers, I volunteer my time to maintain a set of 80-year-old clay public tennis courts in a neighborhood park and work with an environmental group that promotes sustainable, natural landscaping in urban neighborhoods.

Person in history I admire: There are so many. Right now, I would say Neil deGrasse Tyson. He’s a serious scholar who promotes science and does so with humor and flair.

A quotation I like: I always like how Penn Jillette puts things. Sometimes it’s serious: “Believing there’s no God means I can’t really be forgiven except by kindness and faulty memories. That’s good; it makes me want to be more thoughtful. I have to try to treat people right the first time around.” (NPR’s “This I Believe”)

Sometimes it’s just snarky but true: “It’s fair to say that the bible contains equal amounts of fact, history and pizza.” (“Penn & Teller: BS!”)

These are a few of my favorite things: I have recreational interests in juggling, tennis and promoting (and

occasionally playing) acoustic music, mainly guitar and pennywhistle. Traveling is a good part of my job, and I enjoy seeing the world.

These are not: Pittsburgh drivers. It’s the only place I know where, rather than “Drive Slowly,” the signs say things like “Maintain Speed through Tunnels” to try to get drivers to stop hitting their brakes.

My doubts about religion started: When people were using religion to justify the Vietnam War, it made no sense to me. By the time I got to high school, I could think of no evidence that there was a god. At the same time, I saw people wearing religion on their sleeves and still doing immoral things.

Why I’m a freethinker: I’m a scientist at heart, who wants to see evidence and data to back conclusions. Having studied cognitive psychology, I also understand both how easily the mind can be fooled, but how those adaptations make sense from an evolutionary perspective.

Ways I promote freethought: I’m active in the several local groups, including the Steel City Skeptics, Pittsburgh Secular Freethinkers and the Pittsburgh Center for Inquiry. Each has various events, from discussion groups and lectures to a monthly Drinking Skeptically group for socializing. (I favor Festivus, brewed for the rest of us, an ale from Full Pint Brewing Co.) I also support secular groups at Carnegie Mellon University and at Pitt, as well as a yet-to-be-formed group at Duquesne University.

More recently, I worked with FFRF to remove a nativity scene from the lawn of the Municipal Building in Ellwood City, Pa. I also very much enjoy attending the national FFRF conventions.

In Memoriam

Clifford V. Moravetz, 1961–2012

Clifford Vincent Moravetz, 50, Colton, Calif., died Jan. 19, 2012. He was born July 23, 1961.

He had worked with computers since 1985, most recently for 12 years as a senior software engineer at QuadraMed. His hobbies included model trains, hiking and camping. Some of his best times were spent outdoors with family and friends.

Clifford had been an FFRF member since 2001. He also belonged to the Inland Empire Atheists, Agnostics & Skeptics meetup group in Riverside, where his introduction said: “I

was an Adventist for my whole life until becoming an atheist in early 2001. Looking back on a lifetime of being a believer, all I can say is that I wish I’d never been a believer. Currently I’m a moderator at Walk Away From Fundamentalism.”

He was preceded in death by his oldest sister, Cheryl.

Survivors include his parents, Alice and Clifford Moravetz; a sister, Julia Wise; a brother, David Moravetz; a nephew and four nieces.

FFRF offers sincere condolences to Clifford’s family and friends.

Meet a Member

No miracles up this Saint's sleeve

Name: Judy Saint.

Where I live: Northern California, near Sacramento.

Where and when I was born: Oregon in the 1950s.

Family: My partner (and still nonlegal wife), Kathy, and a wonderful son and daughter, both contributing well to society and to those who know them.

Education: University of California-Davis, bachelor's degrees in mathematics and psychology and an M.A. in educational leadership.

Occupation: Retired, now doing part-time driving instruction for those great, inquisitive 15- and 16-year-olds. In my time, I've owned my own companies, written books, taught high school math, programmed computers (Fortran, of course) and oh, so much more. It's been a good ride.

How I got where I am today: My mother avoided her well-heeled family, instead living in near poverty with five children. She shunned their materialism and judgmental ways, teaching us kids the better lessons the bible offered, without ever saying the words bible, or God, or Jesus, or salvation. She emphasized goodness, education and a helpful spirit. She felt there was a god taking care of her, but never spoke of it.

I was allowed a lot of freedom, from chores and from rules, because she believed we were all good at heart, and would find our own way by making our own rules. My abilities led to a full-ride scholarship at UC-Davis (thank you, social programs for poor students). My first husband was ill for 10 years, before he finally died at age 27 from a hereditary condition. Taking care of him all those years helped me learn what really matters in life. I've always been out there at the forefront taking risks and living life.

Where I'm headed: Same as everybody.

Person in history I admire and why: Jim Henson, because he long pursued working in a field he loved (puppets) before it was socially acceptable. Cervantes' fictional character Don Quixote, also for following his convictions and taking risks beyond the norm. Marie T. Rossi, military helicopter pilot, who showed me what it felt like to be touched by a role model, helping me learn how important role modeling can be. I saw her in her cockpit and said aloud to myself, "Wow, women can do that?" Marie was killed in action just after her interview on TV.

A quotation I like: Shakespeare: "This above all, to thine own self be

true, then it shall follow as night follows day, thou shalt not then be false to any man." (Polonius to Laertes in "Hamlet")

These are a few of my favorite things: Nonfiction books and valid documentaries, motorcycles, big rigs, changes in the weather, counterintuitive learning and thinking.

These are not: Using words like fault, blame, should, ought to, must; talking with food in your mouth, as is so popular in movies; political game-playing (scamming the public); poor grammar.

My doubts about religion started: Several years ago, around Christmas, I began researching the history of our major holidays. I was fascinated by the way these supposed traditions all fell apart when I saw how sloppily they were hodgepoded together, mainly by the Catholic Church. I mean, a bunny that hides eggs being connected with a dead man coming back to life? Seriously? Christmas being outlawed in early America? For real? That made me look into the history of the church itself, which led to examining history of religion in general.

One day I let myself realize that prayer actually did nothing. That was the turning point. It took a few months more before I let myself wonder if there was even a God. It took two years and much more research for me to conclude there wasn't even a real Jesus. The website pocm.info (Pagan Origins of the Christ Myth) made a big difference for me, showing me how ubiquitous christs were, and stories of others who traditionally were born of virgins, walked on water, etc.

Then I found many websites giving me all sorts of information, which I now use in my contact with others when I discuss atheism. I would not have been prepared to talk about it openly had I not spent hundreds of hours reading books, researching online and involving myself with memberships. Now there is no stopping me.

One relative thinks I will someday revert back, but that would be like believing in Santa again — just can't happen. I know too much. I also study how the brain works and psychology and other sciences to help me understand why people believe in superstitions. That tells me, as it seems most of our leaders in this movement agree, that our time is better spent talking with the open-minded, not the religious fanatics.

I'm still finding new areas to doubt. I recently heard Christopher Hitch-



Judy Saint (right) and Laura Hitchings are co-coordinators of the Ask an Atheist project. Judy is also pictured in the photo (below) with the group headed for Sacramento's Second Saturday Art Walk.



ens say he has no respect for faith. That struck my "respect for religion" nerve that was embedded at a young age, and I quote his phrase now! So, my doubting continues to grow.

Why I'm a freethinker: The question I can't answer is, "How could I have ever *not* been a freethinker?" I mean, there I was a believer, better able than most to apologize for the bible right down to handling the tough questions about evil and seeming contradictions, the whole thing. I used my intelligence to reinforce my belief, and I was good at it! How could I have not questioned this whole arena before hitting the age of 57? I was too smart for that. How did it happen?

I've studied lately enough to realize I was using "confirmation bias" and other survival skills which have evolved in humans, so I'm not too hard on myself. But I can surely identify with those believers who are still caught up in the words of that man-made book. It's like seeing your childhood playground again: "Gee, I thought the slide was so much taller than that. It's actually pretty small."

There's no going back once you see behind the curtain and realize it's only man-made. As a teenager in the hippie era, I saw the "Question Authority" poster and thought I was, but, oh no, I was only questioning which shampoo to buy. Little did I know what was really out there waiting to be questioned.

Ways I promote freethought: I bought 50 bright-blue T-shirts that say "Ask an Atheist" front and back, with our local meetup group name at the bottom. We walk around local public events in pairs for visibility, smiling and making casual eye contact in case anyone wants to ask a question. I also

created the website outatheist.info to help others do the same. Even if no one asks anything, we are doing our part to dispel harmful myths by showing the public we buy hot dogs and pet police horses just the same as they do.

It's working very well so far. I also wear my T-shirt once or twice a week as I go shopping, to a car wash, stopping by work briefly, or stepping out to grab a hamburger. Sometimes older people stare or look away, but usually I get either positive support or a valid question or two. I'm not trying to persuade staunch believers. That's a waste of my time on this earth. I care more about being visible for others who might be on the fence or too scared to come out. At events sometimes, someone will approach me specifically because they have seen several others wearing the same shirt at the same event. It helps break the ice. Now is the time we must come out and be visible. This is the best thing atheists can do.

I feel this passionately. Hey, why not buy your own T-shirt, either from FFRF or have a local shop make one for you with your own saying? If it's cold outside, put your T-shirt on over your other clothes. It's even a little trendy. I think we need to display the word "atheist" specifically, even though it's taking a bigger risk than using less-stigmatized words for nonbelievers.

My Facebook profile picture is my FFRF Out of the Closet billboard, which says, "No God, no Christ, no Lord: There isn't even a real 'up.' Goodness comes from people."

I'm "out" everywhere I can be. Not everyone is ready, willing or able to take such a risk as this, so since I am a risk-taker and ready to be approached, that is what I do for the cause.

Overheard

I am the atheist who called about carbon dating. I want to say to the first caller that I'm not really concerned about the eternity of my soul, because I'm an atheist. OK? I believe that when I die, I die. That's it. No big thing.

Comment from newspaper's call-in line

Longmont [Colo.] Times-Call, 2-5-12

For I am an atheist, and we atheists have to keep our stick on the ice. We have no faith. We are polite. We do not

believe. We are not interested in belief. The world would be a better place if we made more noise.

Columnist Heather Mallick, "Atheists should make more noise"

Toronto Star, 1-29-12

Take this home. Separation of Church & State.

Note left inside City Council member Tony Dale's bible in Cedar Park, Texas
Austin American-Statesman, 2-6-12

Meet up with FFRF at Reason Rally March 24!

Join FFRF on National Mall, at D.C. dinner parties

The Freedom From Religion Foundation, one of several principal sponsors of the historic Reason Rally in Washington, D.C., is holding two dinner parties sandwiched around the Saturday rally, expected to be the largest gathering of the secular movement in world history.

Author, atheist and social activist Barbara Ehrenreich will be exclusively addressing FFRF's Saturday night dinner party, where she will receive FFRF's Emperor Has No Clothes Award.

The first major rally on the National Mall for seculars, atheists and agnostics is sponsored by 17 secular groups, including FFRF, and takes place Saturday, March 24 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Speakers include *The God Delusion* author Richard Dawkins, Adam Savage of the Discovery Channel's "Mythbusters," teenage state/church litigant Jessica Ahlquist, James Randi and a host of freethinking activists, authors and musicians, including FFRF Co-Presidents Dan Barker and Annie Laurie Gaylor. Dan will be debuting a new song, "Reason," as part of his concert and remarks.

Look for FFRF's 20-foot booth on the Mall inside the tent by the stage, which will offer free souvenir placards and clothing decals, with books, pins and bumper stickers for sale. Enjoy interactives and participate in a raffle to win free money (all pre-In "God We Trust," with prizes of \$1 through \$100 bills for lucky winners).

FFRF's pre-Reason Rally dinner party is Friday night, March 23, at the Phoenix Park Hotel, 520 N. Capitol St. NW, across from Union Station near the Capitol. **Barker**, the "Friendly Neighborhood Atheist" songwriter, will entertain with freethought tunes after supper.

The distinguished **Ellery Schempp**, a powerful orator, will speak on "The Real Assault Against Religious Liberty." Schempp, a Lifetime FFRF member, was the catalyst as a teenager for the Supreme Court decision, *Abington Township v. Schempp*, a case that ended bible reading and devotionals in public schools in 1963.

Check-in and a social hour starts at 5:30 p.m., with a three-course dinner (\$55) served at 6:30. Seating is limited.

Please register now to avoid disappointment. Registrations should be received no later than Friday, March 16. Go online to ffrf.org/outreach/reasonrally/.

The Friday dinner at the Irish-specialty Pheonix Park Hotel starts with classic Caesar salad, has a choice of chicken bruschetta (topped with spinach, feta and sun-dried tomatoes served with mashed potatoes and veggie), OR Vegetable Wellington (mixed vegetables baked in puff pastry over grilled portabella risotto). Desert is Bailey's Irish Cream Mousse served in a chocolate cup and stopped with chocolate shavings.

Conclude the Reason Rally on a high note at **FFRF's post-Reason Rally dinner gala** on Saturday around the corner at the Washington Court Hotel, 525 New Jersey Ave. NW. The post-dinner speaker is **Barbara Ehrenreich**: atheist, feminist, former Time magazine columnist, prolific author and weighty social critic.

Ehrenreich is author of *Bright-Sided: How Positive Thinking is Undermining America*; *This Land is Their Land: Reports from a Divided Nation*; *Bait and Switch: The (Futile) Pursuit of the American Dream*; and *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*; as well as many other books. The distinguished journalist has always been an "out" atheist, proudly and publicly identifying as belonging to "the race of 'none.'"

Check-in and a social hour begins at 6 p.m. with dinner at 7, followed by Ehrenreich's acceptance speech. She will sign books after her speech.



Photo: Brent Nicastro

Ellery Schempp

Please sign up now to ensure seating. Registration (\$100 per person) closes Friday, March 16. Register at ffrf.org/outreach/reasonrally/.

Saturday's dinner at the Washington Court Hotel starts with mixed greens, includes a choice of Dill-Crusted Chicken Breast (with saffron couscous and ratatouille veggies) OR Curried Chick Peas (with cardamom-scented Basmati Rice and veggies). Dinner ends with Ginger Spice & Honey Mousse Cake.

Registration must be in advance — no walk-ins! Book and sales tables will be up at both dinner parties and plenty of chance to socialize.

FFRF has reserved a small number of rooms at both hotels for FFRF'ers.



Barbara Ehrenreich

Check ffrf.org/outreach/reasonrally/. Phone FFRF at 1-800-335-4021 weekdays central.

To join the two-mile walk to the Mall with FFRF staffers, meet up at 9:30 a.m. Saturday in the lobby of the Phoenix Park Hotel.

Music begins at 10 and the rally opens at 11 a.m.

Lots of helpful details, last-minute updates and souvenirs are available at the Reason Rally website: reasonrallys.com



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

FFRF Reason Rally Dinner Parties

**Pre-Reason Rally Dinner Party, Fri, March 23
Featuring Dan Barker & Ellery Schempp — Phoenix Park Hotel**

No. registering

- Friday Chicken Bruschetta Dinner(s), \$55 per person incl. tax, gratuity
- Friday Vegetable Wellington Dinner(s), \$55 per person incl. tax, gratuity
- Gluten-free option Vegan option

**Post-Reason Rally Dinner Gala — Sat., March 24
Featuring Honoree Barbara Ehrenreich — Washington Court Hotel**

- Saturday Event - Dill-Crusted Chicken Dinner(s), \$100 per person incl. tax, grat.
- Saturday Event Vegetarian Dinner (s) (Curried Chick Peas), \$100 per person incl. tax, grat.
- Gluten-free option Vegan option

Make checks payable to "FFRF"

Total: _____

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)*

Mark Your Calendar!

35th Annual FFRF Convention Weekend of October 12-13, 2012

Portland, Oregon

Hilton Portland & Executive Tower
921 SW Sixth Avenue