

# FREEDOM FROM RELIGION *foundation*

P.O. BOX 750 · MADISON, WI 53701 · (608) 256-8900 · WWW.FFRF.ORG

May 7, 2019

**SENT VIA EMAIL AND U.S. MAIL:**  
**[jmoustis@willcountyillinois.com](mailto:jmoustis@willcountyillinois.com)**

Jim Moustis  
Township Supervisor  
Frankfort Township  
11000 W. Lincoln Highway  
Frankfort, IL 60423

Re: Unconstitutional religious events

Dear Mr. Moustis:

I am writing on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) to alert you to two unconstitutional religious events recently sponsored by Frankfort Township. FFRF is a national nonprofit organization with more than 31,000 members across the country, including more than 900 members in Illinois and a local chapter, FFRF Metropolitan Chicago Chapter. FFRF's purposes are to protect the constitutional principle of separation between state and church, and to educate the public on matters relating to nontheism.

A concerned local resident contacted us to report that Frankfort Township recently sponsored a religiously themed trip that included visits to the Ark Encounter and Creation Museum. A flier for the event (enclosed) is titled, "The Frankfort Township Board Presents Ark Encounter & Creation Museum."

Another flier advertises another religious trip in June, with the Township Board sponsoring a trip to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania to see a performance of "Jesus" at the Millennium Theatre, which describes itself as "Where the Bible Comes to Life on Stage."<sup>1</sup> The Christian theatre group's stated purpose is "to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ and sow the Word of God into the lives of customers . . . ."<sup>2</sup>

Sponsoring regular Christian-themed trips shows an endorsement of Christianity on behalf of the Township. This endorsement is unconstitutional and excludes the Township's non-Christian residents, who are being told that they are not part of the Township's favored religious group. We request that the June trip to Lancaster County be cancelled and that the Township not schedule religious trips in the future.

The Ark Encounter is a Christian ministry run by the creationist Ken Ham, who also built the notorious Creation Museum. Ham has been clear about the

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<sup>1</sup> [www.sight-sound.com/](http://www.sight-sound.com/).

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sight-sound.com/story>.

proselytizing nature of this park and the Creation Museum from the beginning. In his June 27, 2016 letter entitled, "Our Real Motive for Building Ark Encounter,"<sup>3</sup> he lays out a clear, evangelistic goal:

We are eagerly approaching what I believe will be a historic moment in Christendom. It's the opening of one of the greatest Christian outreaches of our era: the life-size Noah's Ark in Northern Kentucky. . . . The [creation] museum and Ark direct people to the Word of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Ham quotes bible verses to further illuminate his motive before finally stating it plainly: "our motive is to do the King's business until He comes. And that means preaching the gospel and defending the faith, so that we can reach as many souls as we can . . . millions of souls will hear the most important message of all . . . a message of hope from the holy, righteous Judge who, despite our sin, wants us to spend eternity with Him!"

While organizing and encouraging citizens to attend recreational events is a laudable goal, advertising and organizing a trip to a Christian museum and performance constitutes government endorsement of religion and alienates those Frankfort residents who are not Christian and who are non-religious. This message alienates residents who choose not to participate in religious activities, especially the 23% of the American population who are nonreligious.<sup>4</sup> It is a fundamental principle of Establishment Clause jurisprudence that the government cannot in any way promote, advance, or otherwise endorse religion. Advertising and organizing such events sends the message that the Township supports residents being evangelized. "The defining principle of Establishment Clause jurisprudence is that 'First Amendment mandates government neutrality between religion and religion, and between religion and nonreligion.'" *McCreary Cty. v. ACLU*, 545 U.S. 844, 860 (2005) (quoting *Epperson v. Arkansas*, 393 U.S. 97, 104 (1968)).

The Township must refrain from organizing religious events. We specifically request that the June religious event to Lancaster County be cancelled, and we request assurances that the Township will not sponsor any trips to the Ark Encounter or Creation Museum in the future. Please respond in writing with the steps you take to remedy these regular constitutional violations so that we may notify our complainant that this matter has been resolved.

Sincerely,



Ryan D. Jayne  
Staff Attorney

Enclosure

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<sup>3</sup> [bit.ly/298EDJO](http://bit.ly/298EDJO).

<sup>4</sup> *America's Changing Religious Landscape*, PEW RESEARCH CENTER (May 12, 2015), available at [www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/](http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/).

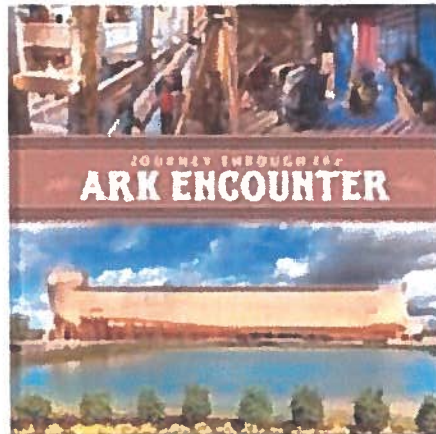
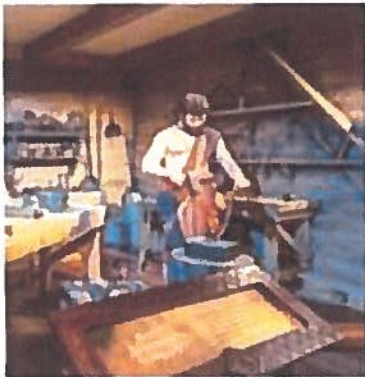
The Frankfort Township Board Presents  
**Ark Encounter & Creation Museum**

Monday, April 29, 2019 - Thursday, May 2, 2019

### Ark Encounter

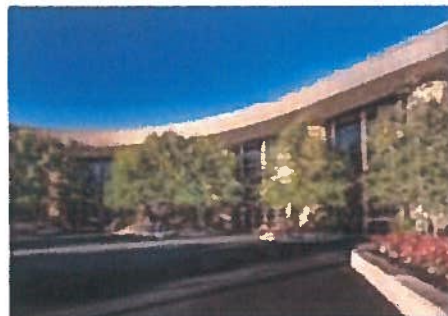
Situated in beautiful Grant County in Williamstown, Kentucky the Ark Encounter features a full-size Noah's Ark, built according to the dimensions given in the Bible. Spanning 510 feet long, 85 feet wide, and 51 feet high.

Ark Encounter is the largest timber frame structure in the world, built from standing dead timber, in part by skilled Amish craftsmen. Featuring three decks of world-class exhibits, this modern engineering marvel amazes visitors young and old.



### Creation Museum

Located in scenic Petersburg, Kentucky, this 75,000 square foot facility allows guests to experience earth history as God has revealed it in the Bible. Nearly 150 exhibits feature fearsome animatronic dinosaurs, talking heroes of the faith, and professional displays that honor God's Word. At the heart of the Creation Museum is a chronological retelling of biblical history in seven parts called the Seven C's. Guests step back in time, beginning with Creation, and fast-forward to Christ's return.



**COST:** \$699.00 per person/double occupancy ♦ \$899.00 per person/single occupancy

*Optional Group Insurance available for an additional \$55.00 per person*

Price includes: Round-trip motor coach transportation, 3 nights lodging at the Holiday Inn Express & Suites, Cincinnati, Ohio, 3 hotel breakfasts, 3 dinners, including a Riverboat Dinner Cruise & the Hofbrauhaus, admission to the Ark Encounter and Creation Museum, step-on guided tour of Cincinnati, luggage handling and all taxes and gratuities.

**DEPOSITS BEING ACCEPTED NOW:** \$100.00 per person. **FINAL PAYMENT** due by Friday, March 22, 2019

**To reserve your space contact Jodi Dilling at 815-806-2766**