

HUMANISTS

of FORT WORTH

Volume 13, Number 7 Happy

Humanist

August, 2012

This newsletter is presented by the Humanists of Fort Worth (HoFW), Texas for its members.



The "Happy Humanist" symbol is presented by IHEU (International Humanist and Ethical Union).

IN THIS ISSUE

Page:

1. August meeting notice; Volunteers needed; HoFW meeting schedule and location;
2. **AFFIRMATIONS OF HUMANISM.**
3. Message from the Chair-Sam Baker;
4. *Editorial* - **Robert G. Ingersoll** - Don Ruhs;
5. Chair's report on DFW COR summer meeting-Sam Baker;
6. Introduction to August topic-Dick Trice; HoFW Meetup site;
7. Minutes of July meeting-John Fisher;
8. Treasurer's Report-Dolores Ruhs;
9. **Church & STATE** ; **BOOK NOOK**
10. Membership categories; Officers

Meeting

August 8, 2012 7:00 PM

Speaker: Dick Trice

Topic: "Lies, Larceny, and Lamentations."

See page 6 for more information on Dick's topic.

! Volunteers Needed !

We need volunteers (6) each month to join us at 6:15 P.M. to help with setting up and arranging the meeting room.

Chairs need to be arranged depending on the type of meeting we'll be having, i.e., a scheduled speaker, a discussion session, or a social gathering, etc..

Tables and covers need to be brought from storage to be used at the greeter's table, the snack and coffee service, and the pamphlet display.

After our meeting, tables, covers, etc. must be returned to storage and the room re-arranged to accommodate the needs of other groups; we use the room once a month, others use it more frequently.

A sign-up sheet will be available at the greeter's table.

! Volunteers Needed !

The Humanists of Fort Worth (HoFW) meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 PM at the Westside Unitarian Universalist Building, 901 Page Ave.



THE AFFIRMATIONS OF HUMANISM: A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES *



WE ARE COMMITTED to the application of reason and science to the understanding of the universe and to the solving of human problems.

WE DEPLORE efforts to denigrate human intelligence, to seek to explain the world in supernatural terms, and to look outside nature for salvation.

WE BELIEVE that scientific discovery and technology can contribute to the betterment of life.

WE BELIEVE in an open and pluralistic society and that democracy is the best guarantee of protecting human rights from authoritarian elites and repressive majorities.

WE ARE COMMITTED to the principle of separation of church and state.

WE CULTIVATE the arts of negotiation and compromise as a means of resolving differences and achieving mutual understanding.

WE ARE CONCERNED with securing justice and fairness in society and with eliminating discrimination and intolerance.

WE BELIEVE in supporting the disadvantaged and the handicapped so that they will be able to help themselves.

WE ATTEMPT to transcend divisive parochial loyalties based on race, religion, gender, nationality, creed, class, sexual orientation, or ethnicity and strive to work together for the common good of humanity.

WE WANT TO PROTECT and enhance the earth, to preserve it for future generations, and to avoid inflicting needless suffering on other species.

WE BELIEVE in enjoying life here and now and in developing our creative talents to their fullest.

WE BELIEVE in the cultivation of moral excellence.

WE RESPECT the right to privacy. Mature adults should be allowed to fulfill their aspirations, to express their sexual preferences, to exercise reproductive freedom, to have access to comprehensive and informed health-care, and to die with dignity.

WE BELIEVE in the common moral decencies: altruism, integrity, honesty, truthfulness, responsibility. Humanist ethics is amenable to critical, rational guidance. There are normative standards that we discover together. Moral principles are tested by their consequences.

WE ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED with the moral education of our children. We want to nourish reason and compassion.

WE ARE ENGAGED by the arts no less than by the sciences.

WE ARE CITIZENS of the universe and are excited by the discoveries still to be made in the cosmos.

WE ARE SKEPTICAL of untested claims to knowledge, and we are open to novel ideas and seek new departures in our thinking.

WE AFFIRM HUMANISM as a realistic alternative to theologies of despair and ideologies of violence and as a source of rich personal significance and genuine satisfaction in the service to others.

WE BELIEVE in optimism rather than pessimism, hope rather than despair, learning in the place of dogma, truth instead of ignorance, joy rather than guilt or sin, tolerance in the place of fear, love instead of hatred, compassion over selfishness, beauty instead of ugliness, and reason rather than blind faith or irrationality.

WE BELIEVE in the fullest realization of the best and noblest that we are capable of as human beings.

* by PAUL KURTZ

From the . . .



Sam Baker

America's Secular Religion: MARKET FUNDAMENTALISM

We only have to put up with Christmas and Easter once a year, but there is another religion pounded into us virtually every day of the year. It is a secular religion, but oddly enough it is propounded primarily by people who also cling to traditional religion. I refer to this ubiquitous American religion as market fundamentalism. It is a religion which masquerades as economic theory.

I call it a religion because, like traditional religions, it survives on faith, even when plain evidence contradicts its dogma.

Its priests are politicians who tell us if only we will have faith in unregulated free markets, our economic and social problems will be solved by the invisible hand of self-interest.

Unlike traditional religion, it actually delivers on its promises to a considerable extent. Market fundamentalism promises that goods and services will be delivered to the most people at the lowest price through the mechanism of competition. Any religion is aided when its proponents can point to some supporting evidence, and the free market normally works well for a lot of things, including shoes, computers, cars, and washing machines. These are markets where for the most part there are numerous sellers and numerous buyers with knowledge of prices and quality who have the choice to refuse to purchase.

In other words, market fundamentalism works--except when it doesn't. Market fundamentalist dogma states that if unregulated markets don't work, then it is the fault of government meddling, virtually always as the result of the misguided desire on the part of bleeding-hearts to help someone. Just as in traditional religion, when the facts don't fit the dogma, then the facts have to change, not the dogma.

The Community Reinvestment Act ("CRA") was passed in 1977 in order to prohibit the industry-wide, racially discriminatory banking practice of "redlining"--i.e. designating entire neighborhoods off limits to loans regardless of the creditworthiness of any particular individual resident. When the subprime mortgage fiasco hit, the reality was that the desire for higher yields in a low interest rate environment drove the demand by the banks for subprime mortgages which they were pooling into securities for sale to unsuspecting investors. However, the idea that market demand caused the origination of loans to non-creditworthy borrowers ran counter to market fundamentalist dogma, so the facts had to change.

Market fundamentalists promoted the idea that the government, through the CRA, "forced" the banks to make loans to people (read minorities) who couldn't qualify for them, and therefore it was the government, not the market, that caused the subprime crisis. A huge percentage of the public bought this explanation even though the data clearly show that virtually all the subprime loans were in "good" neighborhoods, not the poor neighborhoods which were the target of the CRA, and, more importantly, that the rate of default on CRA loans is not appreciably higher than the default rate on prime loans.

Now the market fundamentalists are telling us that faith in the unregulated free market is the answer to our health care crisis.

Really? If you are injured in an automobile accident, will you be able to shop around for the lowest cost hospital? Of course not. In order to have a free market, buyers must be able to refuse to buy. When your appendix is about to burst, you don't have the luxury of walking away from the fastest treatment you can get, whatever the price is.

The nativity scene on the courthouse lawn is not the biggest religious threat we face.

*Editorial . . . Robert G. Ingersoll**Don Ruhs*

If anyone could be considered a patron saint for Humanist ideals, it must be Robert G. Ingersoll. Although he was not a member of a recognized Humanist organization as we know it today, his life and actions embodied the Humanist principles we hold dear. Though he lived in the nineteenth century, having died in 1899 (July, 21) he still speaks to us in the twenty-first century.

He was born August 11, 1833 in Dresden NY to the Reverend John Ingersoll, a strict Bible believer, and a Congregationalist/Presbyterian minister, and Mary Livingston.

Of his father:

“My father was a kind and loving man. He loved his children tenderly and intensely. There was no sacrifice he would not and did not gladly make for them. He had one misfortune, and that was his religion. He believed the Bible, and in the shadow of that frightful book he passed his life. He believed in the truth of its horrors, and for years, thinking of the fate of the human race, his eyes were filled with tears.”

Robert gained prominence as an attorney and lecturer who fought for human rights. He spent much of his life traveling and lecturing against man’s mistreatment of his fellow man, of men’s mistreatment of women, and of the abuse and mistreatment of children. He abhorred slavery in any form.

Of Man:

“There is no slavery but ignorance. Liberty is the child of ignorance. The history of man is simply the history of slavery, of injustice and brutality, together with the means by which he has, through the dead and desolate years, slowly and painfully advanced.”

“The man who does not do his own thinking is a slave, and is a traitor to himself and to his fellow man.”

Of Woman:

“Women have been the slaves of slaves; and in my judgment it took millions of ages for woman to come from the condition of abject slavery up to the institution of marriage. Let me say right here, that I regard marriage as the holiest institution among men.”

Of Children:

“If women have been slaves, what shall I say of children; of little children in the alleys and sub-cellars; the little children who turn pale when they hear their father’s footsteps; little children who run away when they only hear their names called by the lips of a mother; little children—the children of poverty, the children of crime, the children of brutality, wherever they are—flotsam and jetsam upon the wild, wild, mad sea of life—my heart goes out to them, one and all.”



Ingersoll considered the Judeo-Christian Bible to be the creation of men, not of divine inspiration. He engaged in presenting lectures challenging the Bible, reportedly to standing-room-only crowds.

He corresponded with Christian ministers who constantly challenged his views; some even called for good Christians to have him “tarred and feathered” and run out of town. Such was the “Christian Love” of that day.

HoFW Members,

The summer meeting of the DFW Coalition of Reason ("DFW COR") was held Sunday, July 1st at 3 p.m. at Spring Creek BBQ in Irving. John Fisher and I attended as representatives of the HoFW.

I attended in the hope that I would get to meet representatives of the other freethinker groups in the Dallas Fort Worth area. In this respect it was somewhat of a disappointment. The only attendees besides the two of us were Zachary Moore, Coordinator of DFW COR, Alix Jules, Director of the Fellowship of Freethought in Dallas, his wife and baby, and Kevin Butler, Regional Campus Organizer with the Secular Students Alliance.

Zach estimated that there are about 2,000 to 3,000 freethinkers across all member groups in the DFW COR. He briefly reviewed DFW COR's prior projects including the Fort Worth bus signs and the attempt to advertise at some movie theaters in Arlington (the ad agency backed out at the last minute). Plans for this fall's Texas Freethought Convention in mid-October were discussed as well as how to reach out to the LGBT community. The meeting adjourned about 5:00 p.m.

Here's the DFW COR website if you haven't seen it:

<http://dfwcor.org/>

Regards,
Sam Baker
Chair

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The United Coalition of Reason is a national organization that works to raise the visibility of local nontheistic groups all over America. Nationally, we do this by conducting campaigns which highlight the fact that nontheists live in every community across America. Locally, we do this by promoting informal cooperation among local groups, hosting local coalition websites, training group leaders, and funding publicity campaigns.

United Coalition of Reason
1777 T Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009
1.866.897.7248
Info@UnitedCoR.org

PRESENTATION FOR AUGUST 8 MEETING

"LIES, LARCENY, AND LAMENTATIONS"

Presented by Dick Trice, Past Chair—HoFW

A famous Marine general once said, "War is just a racket. A racket is best described, I believe, as something that is not what it seems to the majority of people. Only a small inside group knows what it is about. It is conducted for the benefit of the very few at the expense of the masses." This small group that reaps all the benefits uses religious beliefs as one of its prime weapons to control the approval and willingness of the masses to support and to die for the benefit of those few. We freethinkers are not so gullible. Here is some background to reinforce the truth of General Smedley Butler and to strengthen your humanist resistance.

Visit and Join Our Meetup Site!

The Humanists of Fort Worth has a Meetup site here:

<http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/>

Being a member of the HOFW does not automatically make you a member of the Meetup site. By joining the Meetup site you will automatically be notified of meetings and special events. In addition, you can post comments and videos in the Discussions area that you think will be of interest to the group, and you can read and respond to the comments of others there as well. Quite a few of our visitors found us on our Meetup site, and it is probably the best advertising vehicle we have.

Sam

Humanists of Fort Worth

Minutes

July 11, 2012

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m. by Chair Sam Baker.

The Chair called for reports from the officers.

Treasurer Dolores Ruhs gave the Treasurer's Report which was seconded and approved.

Secretary John Fisher read the minutes of last month's meeting, which was seconded and approved.

The Chair asked the members if they wanted him to attempt to secure Zach Moore to speak at a future meeting, and the members answered in the affirmative.

Standing in for the scheduled speaker tonight was Dick Trice, former Chair and Board member. Dick gave the audience three alternatives for a talk for the evening, and an abridgement of E.B. White's 1956 talk on government, religion, and freethinking was chosen.

After a short break for refreshments, there followed a Q. and A. session, in which our visitors were encouraged to ask questions about Humanism and our group, and they did so.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

There were twenty-seven members present and four visitors. Visitors were recognized and welcomed.

Respectfully Submitted,

John Fisher, Secretary

Humanists of Ft. Worth (HoFW)

Treasurer's Report

Report Date: 11-Jul-2012

Beginning Balance 13-Jun-2012 **\$1,337.92**

CREDITS	Date	Amount	
Dues collected		50.00	
Donation		31.00	
Snacks			
TOTAL CREDITS			\$81.00

DEBITS	Activity	Ck. #		
Dick Trice	Breakfast	482	7/2/2012	69.27

TOTAL DEBITS \$69.27

\$11.73

Ending Balance 11-Jul-12 **\$1,349.65**

Attest:		Date:	11-Jul-2012
Signature:		Treasurer	
	Dolores M. Ruhs	Clerk	
	Don Ruhs		

Copies:

Sam Baker	Chair
Gene Gwin	Co-Chair
John Fisher	Rec. Secy.
Dolores Ruhs	Treasurer
Don Ruhs	Board Member
Dick Trice	Board Member



Church

&

STATE



Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.

The 1st Amendment to the Constitution of the United States—"The Establishment Clause."

From: *Americans United for the Separation of Church & State* July/August 2012, page 22

Texas Professor Terminated After Cross Project

A Texas professor who complained about a taxpayer-funded tower featuring four Christian crosses, is out of a job.

Sissy Bradford, an adjunct criminology professor at Texas A&M University-San Antonio, complained in November 2011 about the tower, which was being built on private land near campus with city funds.

The tower also featured the university seal and was on track to someday become the property of the public school. Thanks to her protest and a letter from the Americans United Legal Department, the crosses were subsequently removed.

On May 16 of this year, Bradford was informed by the university that her services would *no* longer be needed even though she was already scheduled to teach four classes in the fall. No reason was given, according to the *San Antonio Current*.

This development came after Bradford had been subjected to months of vicious backlash from cross defenders. Things got so bad that she asked campus police to protect her, but her requests were ignored. (The university declined to comment on the matter).

According to the *Current*, she later complained to Texas A&M at College Station, which allowed her to file a statement with university police on Dec. 5. The newspaper learned that school police did open an investigation, but closed it without taking any action.



the BOOK NOOK

This space is intended to focus attention on books, authors, subjects and articles that may be of interest to humanists, agnostics, atheists, and freethinkers.

Roger Williams and The Creation of the American Soul

Church, State, and the Birth of Liberty

By John M. Barry, 2012
A Viking Penguin Book
464 pages

From the book's front flap:

For four hundred years, two fault lines have divided America: one is the proper relationship between the church and the state, and the other is the balance between the rights of the individual versus the power of the state. In this extraordinary book, award-winning and *New York Times* best-selling writer John M. Barry examines the origins of these fault lines. What he finds is as relevant today as it was when they first emerged in the seventeenth century. *The Washington Post* said Barry's earlier book *Rising Tide* could "change the way we think." So can this one.

I found this book to be an excellent source for learning the history of the early settlers, primarily the English in Massachusetts, and how they treated one another, especially if the "others" favored a religious (or non-religious) belief that differed from the accepted norm. The atrocities that one so-called Christian sect visited upon another so-called Christian sect is frighteningly mindful of how the "God-loving" Christians of today still treat one another, or any others who don't buy into their mythologies and superstitions.

Regards,

Don Ruhs, Editor

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES:

Single Member	\$25.00/yr.
Couple	\$40.00/yr
Patron	\$50.00/yr.
Student	\$10.00/yr.

Choose the category that best fits your needs.

See the Treasurer or member of the Board for an application.

Pay in cash or mail the application, with your check, to our Treasurer, Dolores Ruhs.

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