

THE FORT WORTH HUMANIST QUARTERLY

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Briefs

Darwin Day Celebration scheduled in Austin

The Center for Inquiry will host a Darwin Day Celebration at the Commons Learning Center, The University of Texas, JJ Pickle Research Campus, 10100 Burnet Road, Austin, TX from noon until 5 p.m., February 13, 2016.

The event will include a keynote lecture by Andrew Ellington entitled "Evolution in the Test Tube and in the Wild." In addition demonstrations will be presented by the Vertebrate Paleontology Laboratory, and a workshop for teachers will be conducted by the Texas Memorial Museum.

Children will be able to participate in crafts, games, and show-and-tell events.

This organization is a long-standing member of the Austin secular community. No RSVP is required.

David Silverman releases new humanist book

Author David Silverman, president of American Atheists, has released a new book entitled *Fighting God: An Atheist Manifesto for a Religious World*.

Born into a religious Jewish family, Silverman received a Jewish education but says that he never believed. In college, he debated Orthodox Jews, and he is a well-known activist.

His book offers both passionate and humorous perspectives for his type of in-your-face activism. Supposedly on her deathbed, his Jewish mother told him that his honesty not only helps atheists, but also every person in any religious minority because, in the end, atheists are fighting only for equality for all.

Humanist Zachary Moore says Keller invocation practices deny equal treatment of humanists in public square at City meetings

By Wanda Foster

After more than 18 months of work, the battle for religious and ideological freedoms rages on in Keller, where Zachary Moore, a citizen of Keller and executive director of Keller Humanists, has been denied the right to give a public invocation without receiving treatment different than that afforded to other citizens who give Christian invocations to open Keller City Council meetings.

Since May 2014, Moore, a molecular biologist and prominent member of Dallas and Fort Worth atheist communities, has attempted to present a humanist invocation before a Council meeting and to be received in an inclusive, constitutional way. He had hoped to achieve that before the end of 2015, but the year is closing, and he says he has not yet been afforded equal treatment despite having an ongoing dialog since May 2014 with Mayor Mark Mathews and Senior Pastor John Salvesen of Bear Creek Bible Church, an evangelical Christian denomination. Pastor Salvesen has coordinated Christian invocations for the City for more than a decade.

Since this charge, the Fort Worth Humanist Quarterly has reached out to Mayor Mathews twice and so far has received no reply to requests for further information and clarification.

When Moore initially asked to be on the invocation agenda, he said he was

told that his request was denied.

Emails received from Pastor Salvesen in June 2014 apologized for taking so long to get back to Moore because he had been away on two trips. In that exchange, Pastor Salvesen sought to verify whether or not Moore was a part of an "atheistic group" and how he wanted to open up a council meeting "in lieu of a prayer." He explained that he wanted this information to be able to better communicate his request to the mayor's secretary.

Moore responded the same day with a brief explanation of a humanist invocation which invokes the guidance of "our common humanity, our social responsibility, and our shared interest in creating and maintaining an excellent city." He also provided an example of a humanist invocation.

Various exchanges continued throughout 2014. One of those, from Pastor Salvesen to Moore in October, stated that "the mayor has informed me that he has denied your request to be included on the invocation list."

But a subsequent email also in October offered a compromise to allow the invocation on December 2, 2014, provided that Senior Pastor Salvesen prayed after Moore's invocation.

Moore knew in advance that he had to agree to appear with Pastor Salvesen before he would be allowed on the invocation agenda, but at the time he said he considered it a step in the right



Zachary Moore seeks right to equal treatment in public invocation practices at Keller City Council.

direction to at least be allowed to present a humanist invocation. He said the rationale given for requiring a second invocation was that his was not made to a deity and so could not rightly be considered a prayer and that a Muslim prayer would be qualified as a prayer because they pray to a god.

Moore said he tried explaining that various religious belief systems provide for prayers without praying to any gods, including Cambodian Buddhists, who he describes as beautiful people in terms of religious practice. Moore said Salvesen responded that Buddhists and other nontheists would also be disqualified from giving unaccompanied invocations.

"I found it disappointing that, unlike other citizens, nontheists cannot give an invocation without having it diluted by a Christian message."

He asked to be added to the invocation rotation and to participate in interfaith

(continued on page 4)

Clean Water Fund coordinator speaks to HoFW

Conservation, underground aquifers recommended to reach water goals

by Wanda Foster

Rita Beving, North Texas Outreach coordinator for the Clean Water Fund, outlined the gaps between current Texas water usage, water needs, and water planning and budgeting in the state, as she spoke to about 20 HoFW members

at the November monthly meeting.

Our water region, Region C, uses the most water in the state and poses some of the greatest challenges to statewide water usage requirements that often pit farm areas against urban users with different water priorities.

Although the most efficient form of water storage is underground, she said, "yet in the last water plan our region proposed \$21 billion with a *b* out of \$53 billion of water infrastructure projects, and most of them are reservoir projects."

Short-sighted planning of this nature is inefficient and will increase water bills annually throughout our region and others in Texas for the foreseeable future, she added.

Beving says reservoirs are less efficient than aquifers both because they cost more than double as much to build, and the water evaporation rate is higher. Underground storage aquifers provide less evaporation and cost substantially less than reservoirs.

In the next 50 years, the State predicts that water usage will grow by 17 percent in Region C, much of it as a result of population growth. Beving said the best way to meet this growth challenge is conservation, such as building underground aquifers, reducing lawn watering—50 percent of all usage—and using efficient toilets.



Rita Beving, North Texas Outreach coordinator for the Clean Water Fund, speaks to an HoFW audience in November about drought and water conservation in Texas.

Inside this Issue

Briefs	1
Keller Invocation Practices	1, 4
Murry Book Review	2
Calendar: January - March	2
Letters to the Editor	2
Humanist Perspectives: Jay Lotven's Story	3

Book Review

Reason and Reverence: Religious Humanism for the 21st Century

by **Morris Meador**

Since the December Book Club meeting was deferred until after the holidays, perhaps more readers have enjoyed the opportunity to complete our new book entitled *Reason and Reverence: Religious Humanism for the 21st Century* by William R. Murry.

A Unitarian Universalist theologian, Murry served as president and academic dean of Meadville Lombard Theological Seminary between 1997 and 2003. He holds multiple degrees, including a doctorate of theology and culture from Drew University and a Master of Divinity from Yale University.

thereby paving the way toward future generations of humanists.

Religious naturalism finds meaning in the natural world and rejects the notion of a supernatural realm. Historically, humanist views have also supported these types of belief systems, but Murry considers that this view has been too anthropocentric in that it regards humankind as the central or most important element of existence. In contrast, humanistic religious naturalism makes nature rather than humankind the ultimate force on earth.

The difference in these two views may seem subtle, but Murry believes much of our ecologic and climate crises are the result of our failure to know our place in nature as part of it rather than as lords over it.

Murry adds that another advantage of integrating religious naturalism with humanism is that it results in an increase of personal depth and a language of reverence, which he says often is missing from traditional humanism.

People need and want to express these emotions in a nonsupernatural way, he says. Humanistic religious naturalism also gives humanism an epic story—the story of evolution—to replace the creation story of the Bible. He says we need this “Big Story” to find ourselves and orient ourselves in our universe. He considers that a credible story has been absent for too long.

Murry’s major objective in this book is to lay the foundation for a robust future of humanism by emphasizing religious naturalism as an integral part of humanism and as an emphasis that will lead to a solid basis for the humanist movement of the future.

Murry points out that since publication of the original Humanist Manifesto in 1933 our world has changed dramatically. Much of the optimism that arrived with the new scientific method was dashed by major world events, such as World War II and the Great Depression.

He suggests that many old-guard humanists defined humanism too narrowly and have not allowed for different opinions. Much of this humanism is shaped by positivism and rational empiricism. In recent years, he says that post-modernist thinking has added its own set of challenges. Humanism has begun to have reduced influence among Unitarian Universalists.

Murry presents humanistic religious naturalism as a way to correct some limitations of traditional humanism,



Murry summarizes by stating that humanistic religious naturalism is all about becoming more fully human through “the transformation of the mind and heart from self-centeredness to a sense of one’s self as a part of a larger sacred whole and to a deep commitment to the human and natural worlds. It is about the transformation from a shallow life of fear, greed, hedonism, and materialism to a meaningful life of love and caring, gratitude and generosity, fairness and equity, joy and hope, and a profound respect for others.”

It is hard to convey the great insight revealed in this book in this short space, but the book provides a map showing where humanism should advance.

Humanistic religious naturalism provides a solid platform for speaking to environmental and political issues as well as a person’s sense of meaning in this life. I highly recommend this book for anyone concerned about the future of humanism or, indeed, for the future of the human race.

Book Club meets fourth Saturday of the month

The Humanist Book Club formed by HoFW member Morris Meador meets the fourth Saturday of the month at Westside Unitarian Universalist Church, 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, 76110, except during the holiday season. Schedule changes, if they occur, are announced on the HoFW Meetup calendar.

The next Book Club meeting will be held January 23 when the group will discuss *Regaining Balance: The Evolution of the UUA* by Michael Werner. This was the book originally planned for discussion in December, but cancelled as a result of the holiday season.

The group is still deciding which book will be next, but William R. Murry’s book, *Reason and Religion: Religious Humanism for the 21st Century*, remains on the book list.

The public is invited to read the book and participate between 3 and 4:30 p.m.

	January 2016	February 2016	March 2016
Key HoFW Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular Meeting, Wednesday, January 13, 7 p.m., 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, TX Regular Dinner Social, Wednesday, January 27, 6:30 p.m., at Buffalo West, 7101 Camp Bowie West, Fort Worth, TX 76116 Check announcement at http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events HoFW Book Club, Saturday, January 30 from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, TX: <i>Reason and Reverence: Religious Humanism for the 21st Century</i> by William R. Murry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular Meeting, Wednesday, February 10, 7 p.m., 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, TX Regular Dinner Social, Wednesday, February 24, 6:30 p.m. to be announced at http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events HoFW Book Club, Saturday, February 27, 3 to 4:30 p.m., 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, TX 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular Meeting, Wednesday, March 9, 7 p.m., 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, TX Regular Dinner Social, Wednesday, March 23, 6:30 p.m. to be announced at http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/events HoFW Book Club, Saturday, March 26, 3 to 4:30 p.m., 901 Page Avenue, Fort Worth, TX
Other Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Humanist Association shares sponsorship of the 2016 Secular Social Justice Conference January 30 - 31 at Rice University in Houston. Topics will emphasize economic justice, women of color beyond faith, African American humanist traditions, and the shared struggle and social history of secular humanist people of color. Alix Jules, chair of the Dallas – Fort Worth Coalition of Reason Diversity Council, will be one of many featured speakers. Information is available at www.secularsocialjustice.com. Other sponsors include the Black Skeptics Group, the Atheist Alliance of America, and African Americans for Humanism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> David Silverman, President American Atheists: “Fighting God,” hosts a Free Event in Houston Tuesday, February 2, 2016, 7 to 9 p.m.; Trini Mendenhall Community Center, 1414 Wirt Rd, Houston, TX; After walking into the community center, look for the room with the Humanists of Houston (HOH) sign posted outside the door. Discussion is based on Silverman’s newly released book: <i>Fighting God: An Atheist Manifesto for a Religious World</i>. RSVP is required on Meetup at http://www.meetup.com/humanism-177/events/2016-02 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Metroplex Atheists hosts local events every month as shown at the following Web site: http://www.meetup.com/Metroplex-Atheists/?https=off Freethinkers of Fort Worth hosts game nights and regular social events posted on Meetup at http://www.meetup.com/FWFreethinkers/

Letters to the Editor

All HoFW members and other readers who wish to write Letters to the Editor responding to articles that appear in this publication are invited to express their own views and provide feedback.

Our newsletter policy requires letters to reference a specific article that has appeared in one of the two most recent issues. We do not publish open letters or third-party letters.

Responders should limit their letters

to 150 or 175 words and provide the writer’s email address. In addition, for those who require anonymity, please provide the name you would like published with the letter.

All letters should be exclusive to *The Fort Worth Humanist Quarterly* and should not be published in any other publication.

Anyone who would like to submit a letter can do so by e-

mailing the editor at the following address: vicechair@hofw.org.

Space is limited, so we make no guarantee that all letters will be published. Letters may be edited or shortened to fit the space.

We request that all content show a respectful tone, even when the viewpoints expressed differ from those of *The Fort Worth Humanist Quarterly* or any other party.

THE FORT WORTH HUMANIST QUARTERLY

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Opinion

HoFW Humanist Perspectives

By Wanda Foster

Jay Lotven, the son of a Russian, Jewish immigrant, was born in Springfield, MO in February 1934. While he often speaks of his life as disinteresting, his description belies the experiences of a fully lived life that has taken many labyrinthian twists and turns.

He comes from a long line of displaced relatives, who traveled far from their Russian roots. His father came to the U.S. about 1921, having fled from Russia during the latter years of the Bolshevik revolution, which erupted into Civil War between the Bolsheviks and the nonsocialists, also known as Reds and Whites. His grandmother left without hiding, but his father and three brothers had to leave in secret.

"Women could leave Russia, but men could not because they were building up the Army, so they didn't want men to leave. He was young, and he hid in a hay wagon and left the country. It's a long story," he said. "They got out."

Both Jay's father and his grandmother arrived in the U.S. through Ellis Island, NY, but they were preceded by his grandfather who arrived 9 or 10 years before them, having entered through Galveston, TX, which at that time was known as the Ellis Island of the southwest. Jay points to a book one of his relatives gave him entitled *Galveston: The Ellis Island of the West* authored by Bernard Marinbach, a faculty member of the Overseas Students Unit of Tel Aviv University. The book describes a massive number of Jewish people who emigrated from Russia to the U.S. through Galveston at the time. He was likely part of a project, the "Galveston Movement," which helped more than 10,000 Jews enter through the Port of Galveston.

An organization greeted his grandfather when he arrived and provided him with a list of occupations needed in the country. They told him that Joplin, MO needed shoemakers, and the whole Lotven family was made up of shoemakers so he went there.

When Jay was born in 1934, his father was a store manager in Springfield. His mother was originally from Springfield. Jay eventually had a brother, 8 years younger than him. Later in their lives he and the brother tried to get their father to visit Russia, but he would never go.

"He said he didn't leave anything there. In his mind it was like 1920, although it is different now," Jay said.

While Jay's grandparents maintained a kosher house, his parents did not.

"If they had lived today, my mother and father probably would have been humanists," he said. "They were Jewish but they were not religious Jews at all although they had Jewish background."

His family moved to Tulsa, OK at some point, likely for his father's job. As an immigrant, Jay said his father often had to take whatever work he could find. Like many women of the time, his mother did not work.

In Tulsa, Jay grew up going to public

school. He graduated from Will Rogers High School in 1952. He recalls the school as a good place to get an education, although he has no special good or bad memories there.

His first introduction to Jewish beliefs happened when he was 12 when his father sent him to religious classes in the evenings to prepare him for Bar Mitzvah, a Reform Judaism confirmation performed as a ceremony when boys reach 13. Jay described himself as a redneck at the time.

"I didn't fit in," he said. "We felt like all of the Jews in Tulsa had a lot more money than we did."

His first night at the school he got into a fight with another student. He said he has no idea what the fight was over. That part did not matter so much as the frictions surrounding cultural and socioeconomic class awareness.

After that he never returned to class. For a time, his father continued dropping him off in the evenings, but as when his father left Jay walked across the street to a grocery store and read magazines. Then before his father returned he walked back to the synagogue steps and waited for his father. That worked well until the night his father arrived early and discovered he was not in school. Jay remembers his father's acceptance of his decision, eventually admitting he had waited too long to send him to Jewish school.

In high school, Jay put his scrappiness and fighting energies to positive use by becoming a wrestler. He considers this pursuit did several good things for him, such as helping him go to college and understand other ways of life.

"Wrestling was a big deal, is a big deal in Oklahoma at Oklahoma State University (OSU) and at Oklahoma University (OU)," he recalls.

So many people went to matches that only those with even-numbered tickets could get in. When he was in school, the field house seated 10,000 people. Today he estimates that the new auditorium probably seats about 14,000.

As a student at OSU in Stillwater, OK, Jay obtained two degrees, including a bachelor of business administration and a bachelor of education, and he has a minor in biology. Altogether, he attended college 7 years. About 1954, he met and married Joy Garner (Counts). Joy and their son David Lotven are both loyal HoFW members. They also have a daughter Laurie, a retired teacher who lives in this area.

Jay's first job out of college in 1958 was at Federated Department Stores, which today owns Macy's and other stores. He stayed there until 1961 and then applied his business and biology skills to become a pharmaceutical representative in New Orleans. He recalls wishing to become a veterinarian, but that was not in the cards.

During the same period, he and Joy divorced twice and he eventually moved back to Oklahoma, where he stayed until 1967. That year, he came to Grand Prairie, TX and took a defense industry job at LTV, where he

negotiated contracts with the United States Air Force (USAF) and the United States Navy (USN). There he met Suzie, his current wife of 38 years. They married in 1977 and lived in Arlington. Suzie, also a long-time HoFW member, volunteers for HoFW and other organizations.

Jay left his job at LTV in 1977 and became a purchasing manager at American Airlines, where he worked on USAF and USN contracts for simulator systems. He stayed there until 1979, when he and Suzie decided to pursue their shared interest in and love of animals in San Francisco. They did well, opening one pet store in the city and another in the suburbs. Their home base remained there until 1997, although in their fifties they worked 2 years for the Peace Corps in Belize.

"I wish I could say it was all altruistic, but it was for the fun of it," Jay said. They went there between 1987 and 1988 to train teachers all over Belize. Also they received a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

"We are not really fond of USAID," he said. "There was a local politician in the area where we were, and he got money from USAID to build a road, and he used some of it to buy himself a pickup truck."

They used some of the money to build a cement, five-room school house, which had no running water and no electricity. The windows were wooden with shutters. The shutters were not painted when they left and apparently were never painted after that either. They were able to provide water by building a rain vat for collecting water from the roof, an improvement over the water from shallow wells children had at home. Money for the school was administered through the local Catholic Church.

"I don't mean to be so hard on the Catholic Church, but it was pretty bad. The Church had responsibility for designing the curriculum and providing books, and they had teachers that were supposedly teaching in English. They had sentences on the board that made no sense. They had words that didn't exist," Jay recalls.

Students who completed 9th grade were permitted to teach. They had other teachers they called trained teachers who completed the equivalent of 2 years of junior college.

Jay and Suzie continued to own their San Francisco pet shops during and after their Peace Corps years until Jay prepared for retirement about 1997. They moved, although he says they miss San Francisco every day. For 4 years after that, like many retirees of the period, they lived in Guadalajara, Mexico. They liked it very well until Suzie developed a major illness. That was when they learned the hard way that Medicare provides no medical services outside the U.S. So they moved to Fort Worth in 2001. The main reasons for coming here were to be near the children and the low cost real estate.

From the Editor:

Most HoFW members favor science and rationalism over religion, magic, and dogma. Within that realm, we remain very diverse, however, with different perspectives in a world often unfriendly to secular thought. This column presents our stories.

They first became members of West Side Unitarian Universalist (UU) Church and HoFW about 2007 after meeting former Westside UU Minister Emeritus Russell Eleven, an atheist and founder of HoFW, while attending an Iraq War vigil. When Minister Emeritus Eleven spoke, they became interested in knowing more about him, started going to the church, and joined HoFW about the same time. Even in their 70s and 80s, they often are seen helping set up chairs and snacks for monthly meetings.

Jay said he likes the idea of humanism very much and hopes to see a more progressive view of the world in Texas and throughout the U.S. while he is still alive. He and Suzie very much like the notion that humanists pay attention to actual events in the world and do their part to promote well-being in the community.

Jay feels international travel helps people build a broader view of the world than most Americans have. He says the knowledge he gained while traveling to England when he worked for LTV expanded his world view and his own progressive viewpoints.

Besides living in Mexico, he and Suzie spent 5 weeks in Europe several years ago. While they did see some skinheads, he said they never had a problem. When they returned to Fort Worth, he said he urged his son David to go to Europe even though he had to travel alone at the time. David did go for an extended visit, and "he ended up loving it," Jay said.

For years, Jay and Suzie have volunteered, including working for the Fort Worth Zoo, Meals on Wheels, and the Samaritan House. Nowadays, besides jogging periodically, he concentrates on Meals and Wheels and Samaritan House. He finds Meals on Wheels the most rewarding. He said some organizations appeared to feel they were doing them a favor by letting them volunteer, but those who receive Meals on Wheels really seem to appreciate them. They also enjoy taking food to Samaritan House the third Thursday of every month.

He and Suzie are living out their retirement at a dressy little pink house on Hurley Street, part of a Southside neighborhood that must remind them of some of the areas they enjoyed in San Francisco. They also share the company of three dogs, Dulce, a 16-year-old former stray; Peanut, a 7-year-old dog acquired from a single mother; and Pepi, who is about 5. They also have a couple of cats inside and various strays they help feed and neuter outside to help reduce strays.

Health wise, Suzie and Jay are getting older, but they remain active and engaged in the community.

Mayor cancels humanist and Christian invocation and gives his own Christian prayer from Mayor's seat while presiding over Council

(continued from page 1)

activities, including the National Day of Prayer celebrated on the steps of Keller City Hall on May 7. He said he was surprised that he had not been contacted to participate in the event, in which a Christian, Keystone Church Pastor Brandon Thomas, gave a prayer.

At the time, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reported that Mayor Mark Mathews said Keller churches were contacted and invited to participate and that any faith would be welcome, but he added that there are no registered religious organizations in Keller other than Christian ones.

This all occurred during the midst of the various ongoing exchanges in which Moore had asked to be included and now feels he was excluded.

Moore was scheduled to give another invocation on August 18, 2015, and he did give it, but again he was required to be followed by a Christian prayer from Pastor Salvesen. This time, however, Moore said Salvesen used his platform to comment disparagingly on the content of the humanist invocation and to explicitly proselytize for Christian theism.

After the August invocation, Mayor Mathews sent Moore a thank you letter for his participation. Moore responded to the e-mail on September 2 by saying it was an honor and a pleasure to serve, but that he objected to the treatment he received on August 18. In his written reply to the Mayor, he stated that he is "concerned that by singling out the humanist invocations as having to be partnered with a Christian invocation, the City of Keller could be perceived (e.g., by the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union], AU [Americans United for Separation of Church and State], the FFRF [Freedom from Religion Foundation]) as discriminating against its humanist citizens. Especially when, as occurred on August 18th, the humanist invocation was followed by an explicitly proselytizing Christian prayer.

"When Pastor Salvesen makes his next request for invocation speakers, I will formally request that I be allowed to participate as a single speaker, just as all other invocation speakers are treated. I am convinced that this is a necessary step to protect the City of Keller from charges of discrimination," he said.

He was scheduled to speak October 6, but at the meeting both humanist and Christian invocations were suddenly cancelled. The October 6 cancellation of Moore's invocation happened without warning and aired on CBS news. Subsequently the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* and other news publications published related editorials and stories.

Shortly after Moore arrived at the October 6 meeting, he said a Council member took Pastor Salvesen aside privately, and they left the room together for several minutes. When the two men returned, the mayor called

Moore to the podium and relieved him of his invocation responsibilities for the evening, saying that he could go home because his invocation was not needed. Immediately after that, he also relieved Pastor Salvesen of his prayer responsibilities for the night.

Rather than have either Moore or Pastor Salvesen pray, Mayor Mathews gave his own Christian prayer while sitting as mayor in an official capacity presiding over an officially called City Council meeting. Since that time, Moore said he has emailed both the mayor and the pastor in an attempt to make up for the cancellation, but to no avail.

Moore said so far, the City has been "very unhelpful to me. It appears that my access to the public square has been denied."

In the meantime, on November 30th, the mayor for a time began assuming the duties of coordinating invocations. He sent a letter out soliciting various Christian ministers to give invocations and announcing that two prayers will be given before each meeting. Moore, the only non-Christian, said he was not contacted, despite repeated emails and attempts to be placed back on the invocation roster.

Now that two invocation slots are available at each meeting, Moore has formally requested that the City add a second nontheist, Randy Word, former President of Metroplex Atheists, to share his invocation with him.

Moore wrote an email to both Mayor Mathews and Pastor Salvesen on December 14 following up on an email sent to them on November 4th that did not receive a reply. The e-mail obtained from Moore said:

Hi John.

Following up on my email from November 4th, I haven't received any further communications from you or Mayor Mathews regarding the increased number of invocations on the agenda for the Keller City Council meetings. As you recall, I had suggested that since there were now twice as many opportunities for invocations, it would be a good faith gesture on the City of Keller's part to reinstate my cancelled invocation from October 6.

I would also like to submit for inclusion in the 2016 invocation rotation, my friend and neighbor Randy Word, who is President of Metroplex Atheists. As one of the oldest non theistic organizations in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, the Metroplex Atheists (in addition to counting Keller residents among their membership) are activists for social justice, particularly with regard to state/church matters.

I strongly believe that including this perspective, in addition to my own humanist perspective, would demonstrate that the City of Keller is committed to serving all citizens equally, regardless of religious opinion.

On December 15, 2015, Pastor Salvesen wrote:

Hi Zachary,

It's a good thing I checked my junk e-mail because yours was in there along with some others that shouldn't have been. Here is the email that the mayor had sent out on Nov. 30th. You and I are scheduled for April 5. He put me with you. If you would like to do it on a different date or go after me let me know. I know you had some issues with my going after you.

I also noticed now that he sent the email to only about 10 of the clergy on the list that was for the first half of 2016, so you were not the only one who didn't receive it. I'll have to go back and re-send it to the ones he missed.

Take care,

John

Zachary responded the same evening to ask whether the mayor is now handling the invocation coordination and to again repeat his request to be paired with another nontheist, Randy Word.

If the practice of the City of Keller is to include two invocation speakers, then I must insist that I be paired with another nontheistic invocation. The reason for this is due both to your invocation on August 18th, as well as the invocation which was scheduled for October 6th of this past year.

Moore was referring to the requirement to have Pastor Salvesen follow his prayer with a Christian invocation, which did not previously exist as a practice in the City. In addition, Moore described that prayer as proselytizing on behalf of the Christian faith only.

Moore said two organizations, the FFRF and a Christian group, the Liberty Institute, have expressed the opinion that the City of Keller's practice regarding invocations is not legally defensible.

After months of reviewing the situation, the FFRF weighed in on the issue in early October by having their attorney, Sam Grover, write a letter to the City, which Moore said coincidentally arrived before his scheduled invocation on October 6. Dated October 1, the letter stated that the organization has 23,000 members whose purpose it is to protect constitutional separation of church and state. The organization has some 1,000 members in Texas.

The letter points out that only on rare occasions at least one non-Christian, a reference to Moore, has been allowed to deliver invocations on behalf of Keller humanists, most recently at the August 18 meeting. The letter states that:

We are informed, however, that at each event in which a humanist invocation has been delivered, it has been followed by a Christian prayer delivered by Pastor Salvesen. At the August 18 meeting, Pastor Salvesen



Randy Word, former president of Metroplex Atheists, has agreed to share the invocation with Moore if the City continues to demand two invocations before a City Council meeting and continues to require a Christian prayer to follow a humanist invocation.

followed the Humanist invocation with an explicitly sectarian prayer, invoking the name of Jesus Christ and stating that "our biggest problem . . . is our disconnection with God.

We write to ensure that the Keller City Council adopts a fully constitutional invocation policy, such that it does not appear to be impermissibly favoring Christian messages over all others. Pastor Salvesen cannot be permitted to modify the invocation practice to include a Christian prayer at meetings where a non-Christian delivers the invocation.

As a preliminary matter, prayer at government meetings is unnecessary, inappropriate, and divisive. The best solution is to discontinue invocations altogether. Council members are free to pray privately or to worship on their own time anyway. They do not need to worship on taxpayers' time.

The Council ought not to lend its power and prestige to religion by opening its meetings with prayer. As a local government, citizens, including Keller's nonreligious citizens, are compelled to come before you on important civic matters, to seek licenses, permits, to participate in important decisions affecting their livelihoods, property, children, and quality of life. Christian prayers exclude the nearly 30% of Americans who are non-Christians, either practicing a minority religion or no religion at all. It is coercive and intimidating for these nonreligious citizens to come to a public meeting and be required to either make a public showing of their nonbelief or show deference to a religious sentiment they do not believe in, but which their city council members clearly do.

The *Fort Worth Humanist Quarterly* invites anyone directly involved in these events to provide their viewpoints, and we will publish them in the next issue in the interest of clarity and mutual understanding. People can submit Letters to the Editor as outlined on Page 2 or can respond to our questions already provided to them.