

HUMANISTS

Volume 14, Number 4

Happy



Humanist

of FORT WORTH

April, 2013

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).

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FAITH: The belief in something without evidence.

Meeting
April 13, 2013 7:00 PM

SPEAKER:

Alexis Lohse, Student - TCU

TOPIC: Freethinking Frogs

See page 4 for more info.

! Thanks !

Many 'thank-yous' to the members and friends who are assisting with the cleanup and rearrangement duties after our meetings. It is much appreciated.

If you are interested in lending a hand please see one of the Board Members.

! Thanks !

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

April 2013

Officers and Board Members

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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, Dolores Ruhs,
or a member of the Board for an application.

Pay in cash or mail the application, with your check, to:

Dolores Ruhs, Treasurer-HoFW

1036 Hill Top Pass

Benbrook, TX 76126-3848

PRESENTATION FOR APRIL MEETING

At our April meeting, Texas Christian University (TCU) student Alexis Lohse will speak to us about her experiences founding TCU's newly formed, already controversial, FIRST EVER atheist/agnostic/secular student group, the Freethinking Frogs. Since TCU has traditionally been one of the most conservative campuses in the nation, Alexis's work is truly groundbreaking. Baylor denied approval of a similar group on their campus some time ago, forcing the Baylor students to meet off-campus (so much for free speech and freedom of association at Baylor). As of this writing, between 15 to 20 students have signed up. Alexis has submitted all the paperwork to make the Freethinking Frogs an official campus student group, and she is awaiting approval from the administration. Alexis will bring us up to date on the latest news. We need to support Alexis and the Freethinking Frogs.

Hope to see you there.

Sam Baker

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Alexis is also a valuable and knowledgeable contributor to discussions in the Westside UU Forum on Sunday mornings.

Dick Trice

MESSIN' WITH TEXAS: RELIGIOUS RIGHT SCHEME BACKFIRES IN LONE STAR STATE

Texas legislators had what they thought was a bright idea in 2011: cut \$73 million in family planning funds.

Religious Right groups eagerly backed the scheme because some of the money was being funneled to Planned Parenthood, a common target for theocrats' wrath. The Family Research Council (FRC) trumpeted Texas officials' decision to "quit its partnership with the abortion tycoons."

The truth is, none of the money subsidized abortions. Planned Parenthood used the funds to pay for things like contraception and health care services for low-income women. But this mattered not to the Religious Right, so the funding was axed.

How's this working out for Texas? Not so well. As *The New York Times* recently reported, the state cut \$73 million--but will spend \$273 million to pay for a rash of unplanned pregnancies.

The Texas Legislative Budget Board says the cuts will likely lead 300,000 women to lose family planning and health services, resulting in 20,000 unplanned births. Taxpayer support for these pregnancies will exceed \$200 million.

Chagrined lawmakers are now looking for ways to restore the funding.

The embarrassing incident could have been avoided if legislators hadn't put stock in Religious Right distortions in the first place. For years, groups like the FRC have portrayed Planned Parenthood as solely an

abortion provider. In fact, Planned Parenthood offers an array of health services to poor women that are often not available anywhere else.

By accepting simplistic Religious Right arguments, Texas legislators set off a chain reaction. Aside from costing taxpayers money, they negatively affected the lives of poor women all over the state.

Lawmakers in other states should take note. The Religious Right's oppressive agenda comes with a price tag, indeed a hefty one. If its reckless efforts to mix church and state don't spark costly litigation, they put into motion a series of events that can quickly grow out of control.

What's especially sad about this incident is that it took a loss of money to get legislators to sit up and take notice.. The fact that a Religious Right scheme caused low-income women all over Texas to lose access to services they relied on wasn't enough to spur them to action.

You can call this many things - callous, short-sighted and misguided among them. One thing you can't call it is "pro-family."

CREDIT:

The above article was reproduced from
Church & STATE
April 2012
Editorials, page 14.

From the . . .



. . . *Sam Baker*

YOUR STATE AND FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVES DON'T REPRESENT YOUR VIEWS AND NEVER WILL

I am going to make a prediction: you and I are going to die without ever having had a Congress person or state representative--someone we voted for--represent our views. Our views might be represented by somebody from Vermont or California or maybe Austin, but not by anyone who actually represents us--someone to whom we can write a letter and from whom we can get a response.

Here's the sad truth: we might as well have been born in North Korea insofar as having had a voice in the Congress or the state legislature (yes, being born in North Korea would have been much worse for other reasons). Is it too much to ask that our voices be heard even if our arguments don't prevail?

About twenty percent of the American people are "Nones"--they have no religious affiliation--and the percentage of Nones has been growing dramatically in the last few years. Do Nones make up twenty percent of the Congress? Hell no. I haven't seen a poll but I doubt two percent of the Congress are Nones. What are your chances of being able to vote for, much less of being represented by, a None? Zero. What are your chances of being represented by a fundamentalist nutjob? Excellent.

There are multiple reasons for this, but perhaps the principal reason is because your choices are limited by your street address--not by your ideas, mind you, but by where you happened to find a place to live. The state legislature draws wacky looking districts for the purpose of maximizing the influence of the dominant political party (and whichever one it is often doesn't make a helluva lot of difference on issues like military spending and war), and the two choices you get (if you even get two) are limited by the voter make-up in the

district you happen to fall into. Since the Nones are a non-racial minority, the legislature is not gerrymandering districts to insure that the Nones have a voice, and likewise the legislature is not gerrymandering districts to insure people who favor, say, stricter animal welfare or environmental laws, are represented either.

Even worse, not only are non-racial minority views not represented, but a number of important ideas held by a substantial majority of the people have little to no representation in our government either. Year after year, poll after poll shows that a clear majority of the people favor Medicare for All, yet only a small minority of congress people and senators favor it. Similarly, a majority of the people favor reduced military spending, higher taxes on the wealthy, and the ability of Medicare to be able to negotiate drug prices, yet we don't have any of them.

The solution? We need some form of proportional representation (Google it) so that minority views are represented in the Congress and state legislatures. It requires multi-member districts instead of winner-take-all, single member districts. Choice Voting (Google it), where a voter can rank order his preferred candidates, would result in the election of candidates who are more closely aligned with the people they are supposed to represent. We will never have a better government without these reforms. Did you ever hear anything about them in school or in college? I never did.

Democracy is the art and science of running the circus from the monkey cage.

H.L. Mencken (1880-1956)

Editorial . . . Know Your Bible? 8
Don Ruhs

All Bible quotes are taken from the King James Version (KJV).

From: Various sources, including the Holy Bible.

DO THE MATH!

Gen. 6:15 (the building of the Ark of Noah)
And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. (A cubit is about 18-22 inches, or 1.5-1.8 feet.)

COMMENTARY:
This vessel, then, is to be 540 ft. long by 90 ft. wide by 54 ft. deep, using, generously, 1.8 feet per cubit. It might have been an impressive craft for the days in which this passage was written, but not so impressive by today's standards. There are ships today larger than that. Much larger!

Be that as it may, it's not likely that any of our modern vessels would be large enough to house two of every animal on Earth. Or was it seven of every animal?

Understanding that there are more than 1.5 million species of animals on Earth today it becomes more and more difficult to believe this preposterous fable.

From *Science Daily*, Aug. 24, 2011 — Eight million, seven hundred thousand species (give or take 1.3 million).

Let us remember that the ark was to carry enough food for the animals to last for 150 days (Gen. 7:24). The ark, its animals and the food were to be taken care of by no more than eight people (Gen. 7:13).

1 Kings 7:23 (the building of Solomon's house)
And he (Hiram of Tyre) made a molten sea, ten cubits from the one brim to the other (its Diameter): it was round all about (a Circle), and his height was five cubits: and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about.

COMMENTARY:
The distance around the circumference (C) of a circle is determined by multiplying its diameter (D) times π (Pi, the value of which is 22/7, or 3.1416) a mathematical symbol designating the ratio of a circle's circumference to it's diameter.

Therefore: $C = \pi \times D$; the Circumference is equal to the Diameter (10 cubits) multiplied by π (3.1416) or, 31.416 cubits. Not *thirty cubits!*
The Holy Bible is claimed by the religious fundamentalists to be the inerrant Word Of God. One would think that a god would know better than to teach faulty math!

.....
Matt. 12:40
For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights and three nights in the heart of the earth.

COMMENTARY:
It is very doubtful that a human could survive *three days and three nights in the whale's belly!* Two factors come into play in this scenario: First, there would be the lack of oxygen; Secondly, there would be the digestive juices produced inside the whale's belly!

Whales

Whales have a three-sectioned stomach. The first section of a whale's stomach breaks down its food by crushing. The second section mixes the food with digestive juices and the third further mixes the food and digestive juices.

As for "*the Son of man*" to be "*three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*" there is a definite problem with simple basic math.

When Jesus was sentenced to death by crucifixion, it was not acceptable for it to take place during the Jewish Sabbath (sunset Friday evening to sunset Saturday evening). Therefore, it was decided that Friday afternoon should be the time of the crucifixion and burial before the beginning of the Sabbath.

It seems that Jesus "*yielded up the ghost*" at about the ninth hour, around 3:00 PM (Matt. 27:50). He was then taken down and buried in a sepulcher donated by Joseph, a rich man of Arimathaea. Crucifixion, and burial, on Friday, Resurrection on Sunday.

From the burial Friday evening to Saturday evening is one day; then from Saturday evening to the resurrection Sunday morning is less than a second day. From Friday to Saturday to Sunday may be construed as occurring within three days, but not "*three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*"

Humanists of Fort Worth

April 2013

Humanists of Fort Worth

Minutes

March 13, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM by the Chair, Sam Baker.

There were twenty members present, including visitors.

Our speaker was Professor William Roche of the Philosophy Department of Texas Christian University, who spoke on *Evidentialism and the Problem of Disagreement*.

Refreshments were served following the presentation.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

John Fisher

John Fisher, Secretary

Humanists of Fort Worth

April 2013

Humanists of Ft. Worth (HoFW)

Treasurer's Report

Report Date: 13-Mar-2013

Beginning Balance 13-Feb-2013 **\$901.54**

CREDITS	Date	Amount
Bank Deposit	2/14/2013	130.00
Dues Collected	3/13/2013	
Pam Hughes		25.00
Don & Dolores Ruhs		40.00
Jay & Suzie Lotven		40.00
Cynthia Williams		25.00
Addl. Income		
Donation for Snacks		9.00

TOTAL CREDITS \$269.00

DEBITS	Activity	Ck. #	Date	Amount
William Roche	Honorarium	421	3/13/2013	25.00
Bobbie Lotven	Cookies	422	3/13/2013	4.99

TOTAL DEBITS \$29.99

TOTAL CREDITS LESS DEBITS **\$239.01**

Ending Balance 13-Mar-2013 **\$1,140.55**

Attest:

Signature: *Dolores M. Ruhs* Date: 13-Mar-2013

Dolores M. Ruhs Treasurer
Don Ruhs Clerk

Copies:

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

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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* March 2013, page 22

AROUND THE  WORLD

Iran Sentences Evangelist To Prison For Proselytizing

Iran has sentenced a U.S. citizen to eight years in prison for allegedly threatening national security through his leadership role in Christian house churches, Reuters has reported.

Reports offered little detail of the trial, but Saeed Abedini became an ordained minister through the American Evangelical Association in 2008 and a U.S. citizen in 2010 through marriage, the wire service said.

The Religious Right-allied American Center for Law and Justice represented Abedini in court, but was only allowed to attend the trial for one day to present a defense.

"This is a real travesty - a mockery of justice," ACLJ Executive Director Jordan Sekulow said. "From the very beginning, Iranian authorities have lied about all aspects of this case, even releasing rumors of his expected release."

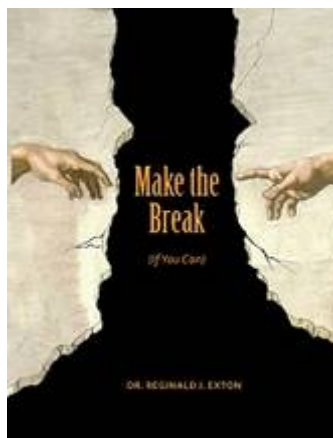


the BOOK NOOK

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

Make the Break (If You Can)

Dr. Reginald J. Exton, former NASA Scientist.



FROM THE HUMANIST PRESS:

Dr. Exton gathers a representative list of events, scientific observations, and religious developments that lead the reader to the eventual realization that there is voluminous evidence that humanity itself created gods and religions to shield itself from the unknown.

Buy the paperback version of this book, in magazine format, directly from The Humanist Press at \$9.99. Also available in ebook format at \$7.99.

<http://www.humanistpress.com/>

COMMENTARY:

This is an excellent read for those of us who enjoy science-based evidence in answer to the religious fundamentalists' preachings. Although, as we well know, they most likely wouldn't pay attention to the truth if it hit them square in the face!

Don Ruhs, Editor

Reminder

**HoFW Membership Renewal
For fiscal year 2013-2014
Is due the first of March**

Dolores Ruhs, Treasurer

See membership categories on page 3.

Reminder

Secular Humanism: A definition

Secular humanism is a philosophy and world view which centers upon human concerns and employs rational and scientific methods to address the wide range of issues important to us all. While secular humanism is at odds with faith-based religious systems on many issues, it is dedicated to the fulfillment of the individual and humankind in general. To accomplish this end, secular humanism encourages a commitment to a set of principles which promote the development of tolerance and compassion and an understanding of the methods of science, critical analysis, and philosophical reflection.