

# HUMANISTS

# of FORT WORTH

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Humanist

June 2012

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



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

## Meeting

**June 13, 2012 7:00 PM**

Speaker: Past-Chair Dick Trice

Topic:

**"FOUR FREETHINKERS ALL HUMANISTS SHOULD KNOW MORE ABOUT— Clarence Darrow, Denis Diderot, Emma Goldman and H.L. Mencken."**

## \* NOTE \*

Due to other commitments, this issue is a much abbreviated version of the newsletter. Hopefully, the July issue will have more to offer.

If you have something to submit, please do so; keeping in mind that the topic should be related to the Philosophy of Humanism, Atheism, or Freethought.

Don Ruhs, Editor



## 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 Chair:**

The Coming Year for the HOFW

The thing that most distinguishes the HOFW from the other freethinker groups in the DFW area is our tradition of having good speakers with engaging topics at our meetings. As the new Chair of the HOFW, I hope to continue this tradition.

Early last year some members expressed interest in having talks on subjects other than Humanism, and Gene filled that request by having speakers on a variety of topics like the Occupy movement, the genetic proof of evolution, free will, a local resource for abused women and children, and Mark Twain.

Recently I heard some members express interest in hearing more about the philosophy of Humanism. One of the very best speakers we could have on the topic of Humanism is one of our own, former Chair Dick Trice. I am thrilled that Dick has agreed to speak at our June meeting about four historical figures that every Humanist should become familiar with. In addition, he has generously agreed to follow up in the near future with another talk about Humanism.

In addition to talks about Humanism, we can continue to have some talks on other topics of interest as well. What would you prefer? If you have a topic in mind, or if you would like to give a presentation yourself, don't hesitate to let me know.

This year I hope to renew our tradition of having a Winter party with food and wine in December.

Would anyone like to volunteer to head up the trash pick up on "our" stretch of road?

Last but not least, I welcome any suggestions you have for future meetings or for future activities. Please email me with any comments, suggestions, or thoughts you have and please put HOFW in the subject line.

Sam Baker

### **Officers and Board Members:**

**Chair: Sam Baker**

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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 or member of the Board for an application.

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

## ***A SUNDAY MORNING IN THE LIFE OF A HUMANIST CHURCH MUSICIAN***

I approach the fellowship-hall door of the Methodist church with trepidation this sunny Sunday morning, occasion of the monthly informal worship service. I have played bass guitar in the praise band here since my wife was alive and sang in the band, and when I was sincerely *trying* (at least on Sundays) to be a good Christian. This morning, I silently coach myself as I reach for the door: *These people loved Kathy, as people loved her wherever she went. Remember, I'm here today to honor her and for THE MUSIC, not to argue.*

My thinking has undergone quite a change in these past six years, occasioned by a sense of being abandoned by God in such events as my wife's health issues and rather sudden death (and actually, that same sense of abandonment over the whole trajectory of my life, once I stopped to look back with a critical and un-sentimental eye), a closer-than-desired look at the politics of personality and power .in another, tiny church where she and I had been volunteer co-directors of music, ethical struggles of an intensely private nature in my own life, and growing discomfort at "passing" for a social and political conservative amid an overwhelming majority of those - who wants a bunch of conflict? Not me. While stewing and fretting inside at a sense of repression, the upshot, to be brief, is that I am now a non-theist, a secularist and a humanist who no longer literally believes in the theology expressed by the lyrics of the songs I join in playing and singing on these monthly Sunday mornings, but who still loves the soaring expression of the human spirit so beautifully represented.

*THE MUSIC. It's always been THE MUSIC for me, since a child.* My father's big-band 78rpm records, Lawrence Welk, The Beatles, Jimi Hendrix, Hank Williams - and the music I heard in church, especially when the guitars started arriving (not without some initial resistance from traditionalists). A lot of my musical education occurred in a church setting as I grew up, and certain chord se-

quences first heard from the organ in the Southern Baptist church of my childhood weave themselves through the music I play now, seemingly imprinted at a cellular level.

I recently had an exchange on Facebook with one of my Methodist friends wherein he remonstrated with me concerning the un-Christianity of certain of my political views as expressed on the social medium, and I answered him sturdily, maintaining my position. This is a low-level anxiety in the back of my mind this morning.

For close to three years, I have declined participation in the Communion that is offered at each of these informal worship services. With the previous minister, this was no problem; he seemed to send me a lot of silent understanding and acceptance. But the rotation has taken place, and there is a new minister now. After the short Meditation, I begin my measured walk, off to the side and as unobtrusively as possible, back to the instruments where we will play one more song after everyone but me has partaken. The new minister turns toward me and loudly intones, "This is NOT a Methodist table." I do my best not to cringe, and continue my walk to the front. *Let me at that bass guitar; let me at THE MUSIC. And never mind this other.*

Earlier, I had seen the sense of alienation in the expression of the man I had the Facebook exchange with, and that of his wife, as we rehearsed before the service started.. The flushed faces, the narrowing of the eyes, the arms akimbo. I hope I can remain friends with these people in spite of differences of belief, and I would enjoy continuing as bass guitarist for this praise band. Whether either of those things come to pass or not, time will tell.

John Fisher  
Secretary, Humanists of Fort Worth

## **Humanists of Fort Worth**

### **Minutes**

**May 25, 2012**

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. by Chair Gene Gwin. There were twenty members, including one new member, and six visitors in attendance.

This month's speaker was Mark Twain impersonator James Doores, portrayer of the iconic American writer and humorist since the late 1960's, who tonight gave a performance of depth, humor and insights relevant to our times.

After a short break for refreshments there was a Q&A session.

The Chair reminded us that next month we will return to meeting on the second Wednesday of the month.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
John Fisher, Secretary

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### **Treasurer's Report** **May 25, 2012**

Since there was no business conducted at the May special meeting there will be no treasurer's report at this time.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Dolores Ruhs, Treasurer



**Church**

**&**

**STATE**



the **BOOK NOOK**

*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—June 2012, page 22

**Oklahoma High Court Rejects ‘Personhood’ Amendment**

A ballot initiative that would define a fertilized egg as a person is “clearly unconstitutional,” the Oklahoma Supreme Court has held.

In an April 30 decision, the justices unanimously rejected the initiative, which will now be prohibited from appearing on the ballots in November (*In re Initiative No. 395, State Question No. 761*). The Oklahoma court said the U.S. Supreme “has spoken on this issue,” citing the justices’ 1992 ruling barring states from placing an “undue burden” on women seeking abortions.

The initiative would have made abortion illegal, along with most forms of contraception and some fertility treatments.

Nancy Northup, president and CEO of the Center for Reproductive Rights, one of the groups that sued over the initiative, said in a statement, “In this case, the Oklahoma Constitution said it best: It is not acceptable to propose amendments that are ‘repugnant to the Constitution of the United States.’”

The defeat in Oklahoma is the latest in a series of losses for the Colorado-based group Personhood USA, which has been drafting these amendments in the hope of getting them passed in several states. Other states that have rejected “personhood” laws recently include Mississippi and Virginia.

Nonetheless, Personhood USA is pushing ballot initiatives in Ohio, Florida, Montana, Oregon, California and Nevada, as well as a bill in Arizona. The organization has also said it may try again in Mississippi

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

While the below listed books were not necessarily written by humanists nor freethinkers, the contents themselves seem to favor our interests about our Universe: Including our Solar System; the Earth and the creatures that inhabit it; and the many inventions and innovations we’ve been able to create and improvise.

“Everything You Need to Know About Everything You Need to Know About—Your World, and everything around it, in a nutshell.”

By Daniel Tatarsky  
© Anova Books Co., Ltd. 2011

“Everything You Need to Know About Everything You Need to Know About—The Universe. From the big bang to the big crunch in a nutshell.”

By Chris Cooper  
© Anova Books Co., Ltd. 2011

“Everything You Need to Know About Everything You Need to Know About—Inventions.”

By Michael Heatley and Colin Salter  
© Anova Books Co., Ltd. 2011

**NOTE:**

Tatarsky gives a brief reference to “How the universe was created—*according to the world’s six leading religions.*” The remainder of the book deals with scientific aspects.