

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).

May 25th Meeting

Topic: "An evening with Mark Twain"

Presenter: James Doores

Mr. Twain has made himself available to us through the courtesy of James Doores. Those of us who have been fortunate enough to have visited with this great observer of American culture and idiosyncrasies advise those of you who have NOT to mark this date on your calendar and join us for the evening.

Invite friends and family. Twain's words are open to all.

****Note****

A change of meeting date was necessary to accommodate Mr. Doores' very busy schedule.

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*** Membership Dues ***

If you've not paid your dues for the year 2012-2013 you need to do so immediately to remain eligible as a member of HoFW and to continue to receive the monthly newsletter!



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:*

I've had the honor of being Chair of the Humanists of Fort Worth for one year. I want to thank everyone in the group for making this past year a wonderful experience. We've had some wonderful guest speakers; we've increased our presence on the internet and reached out to other freethinking groups in the area. These have been baby steps, I am hopeful they will lead to bigger things for the group in the coming months and years.

Our speakers have ranged from social to political, to educational, to reflective. Our topics have ranged from religious freedoms, to free will, to the Occupy Wall Street on social justice, a talk on evolution, and several guests speakers on women's issues about worthy charities. I hope you have enjoyed them as much as I have.

Our next speak will be very special and will be on a special day. We will not hold our meeting on the second Wednesday of the month like normal (May 9th), but instead will have special meeting on Friday May 25th. Mr. James Doores will perform a talk in the persona of Mark Twain. I am sure this will be a great event. Please plan on coming to this event and invite everyone you know!

I need to mention the group need to elect officers for the coming year. The board was hoping to get a nominating committee together to vest nominees. Unfortunately, no members have stepped forward to be on the nominating committee. In light of this we will still have elections for officers for the coming year. Originally the elections of officers should be in May; however with the special event meeting for May 25th and with the lack of nominations, I feel it is best for the election to happen in June. We will hold elections at the June 13th meeting.

Lastly, I have to mention, as much of a labor of love the Humanists group is for the Chairperson, I have to exclude myself from being elected Chair in the coming year. I hope to continue to contribute to the group in ways that I can, but for the coming year, I cannot be Chairperson. Over the next month, the group needs to think about who will lead the group.

I want to thank everyone for being a part of the Humanists of Fort Worth. Looking forward to seeing you at our next meeting!

Respectfully,

Gene Gwin

Chair, Humanists of Fort Worth

**CAPITALISM, MEDICINE AND THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY:
RESISTANCE TO REFORM, PART TWO
Submitted by John Fisher, Secretary, HoFW**

Health care reform: a debate uniquely American, one likely to stretch indefinitely into the future.

Discussion of the issue among pundits tends to have high political content: from the right come denunciations of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, signed into law by President Barack Obama on March 23, 2010 and informally known as "Obama-care", as being a socialist, deficit deepening assault on physician autonomy and patients' individual liberties. From the left issue assertions that the individual mandate, requiring everyone to obtain health insurance, originated from a conservative think-tank, and that opponents now decry the idea out of a pre-existing disdain for a progressive-minded President. In an election year especially, the political component is inseparable from any of the issues.

Examples from medical journals of the past one hundred years make clear that the American medical professional community has seen itself as protagonist, and socialism ("state medicine" in this context) as the villain, in the long struggle over the direction of healthcare in the United States, and has declared its position in terms of "whether the practice of medicine is to be a private arrangement between the free doctor and the free patient, . . . or whether the State shall take the profession over and regulate medicine as it does education . . .".⁽¹⁾ Such sentiments have been voiced emphatically throughout the history of the debate. In national political discourse as well as the controversy within the industry, advocates of reform have often been viewed as traitorous socialists or communist sympathizers who not only would commandeer healthcare into the service of a welfare state, and away from free market principles necessary to successful practice, but would divert the entire government and character of the United States away from that of a free republic toward that of a communist regime. ^(2, 3)

From the standpoint of the need for reform, there is no denying uneven quality of care, high costs of practice borne by providers, health insurance premiums so high as to be unaffordable for many consumers, horror stories of health-care denials and "dumping" by private insurers (some having been documented in Michael Moore's 2007 movie *Sicko*) which continue to be heard from across the country, and the millions of uninsured, many of them the working poor, significant numbers of them flocking to emergency rooms, free health clinics and fairs across the country. The health insurance

industry has mounted a sophisticated public relations campaign aimed at having itself perceived as being on the side of reform (and indeed had a seat at the table when the new legislation was crafted), but the above-cited concerns juxtaposed with reports of extravagant salaries and lavish homes and lifestyles for private-insurer CEO's, added to the reality that the insurance industry lobby remains adamantly opposed to any new policy that would reduce profits, calls into question, for many observers, its integrity on the issue. ⁽⁴⁾

Given the entrenched positions, attempts to repeal Obama-care, pending Supreme Court decision on the new law's constitutionality, budget and public debt concerns and the continuing rifts between conflicting visions for the country, the health-care debate will likely continue for a long time to come.

- 1 **California State Journal of Medicine, Vol. XXI, No. 11, November 1923, page 486, *The Socialization of Medicine.***
- 2 ***Ronald Reagan Speaks Out Against Socialized Medicine*, 1961, YouTube VLC Media File.**
- 3 **Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics", *Harper's Magazine*, November 1964, pp. 77-86.**
- 4 **Wendell Potter, *Deadly Spin: An Insurance Company Insider Speaks Out on How Corporate PR is Killing Health Care and Deceiving Americans.* New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010.**

In Passing

Lyllette Pharr, MSSW, one-time Director of Agency Services and Community Outreach of the Tarrant Area Food Bank. A longtime member of HoFW.

She and member George Cramer (d. Jan. 2007) were long-time friends.



Dear Joseph D.,

The *U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops* has done it again. Last week, they issued a proclamation calling for every priest, parish, and layperson to participate in a "great national campaign" to "defend religious liberty."

The USCCB has a strange definition of "religious liberty." For example, they have taken issue with a federal government decision not to reauthorize a grant to a Catholic organization that was hired to provide support for victims of sex trafficking but then refused to provide the comprehensive health care (including contraception and abortion services) that the grant required.

Forcing the federal government to fund substandard and incomplete services provided by religious groups is not religious freedom. It is yet another example of religious organizations demanding accommodation and special treatment.

We are going to continue monitoring the USCCB's call to action and we encourage you to do the same. The real threat to religious liberty is the radical redefinition of the term by groups like the USCCB and their increasingly aggressive attempts to use our government to force their theology on all Americans.

We need your help. You can write letters to the editor, talk to your elected officials, and remind everyone that the best protection for religious freedom is a truly secular government.

To read more about the USCCB and their campaign, you can visit our blog.

Lauren Anderson Youngblood
Communications Manager



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

April 2012

Fla. Legislature Approves Backdoor School Prayer Law

A bill that would allow Florida students to deliver "inspirational messages" has passed both houses of the Florida legislature.

Gov. Rick Scott is expected to sign the measure, but had not done so at press time.

SB 98 would allow school boards to grant students the authority to deliver an "inspirational message" during the student portion of any school assembly. No school officials would be permitted to review or edit these remarks. Opponents say the bill is a scheme to allow coercive prayer and proselytizing.

Florida law already lets students have up to two minutes at the beginning of the school day for silent prayer or meditation, and student-sponsored prayer groups are allowed to meet in schools. That passes constitutional muster because it doesn't infringe on anyone else's rights, but critics say these "inspirational messages" to a captive audience of students are something very different and could be unconstitutional.

A number of religious leaders consider the bill a misguided school prayer plot. Three clergy who work with Americans United (among them Rabbi Merrill Shapiro, president of AU's Board of Trustees) sent a letter to Florida senators expressing opposition to the bill in November. (The missive was also signed by eight of AU's state chapters).

A similar letter was sent to House members in January.



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.

Some personalities and authors whose writings are known to favor, or influence the Freethought/Humanist philosophy:

Editor

Mark Twain

In honor of Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens) [1835 – 1910], the subject of our May meeting, I'd like to suggest reading special writing of his: *"The War Prayer"* a book much different from his more popular works. After much concern by the author, and others, it was finally published—and probably none too soon—some six years after his death, in the November 1916 issue of *Harper's Monthly*.

**

My copy of "The War Prayer" was published in 1984 as a Harper colophon book.



Ingersoll

Another writer, well known to many, if not most, Freethinkers, Atheists, and Humanists is Robert G. Ingersoll (1833-1899).

He gained prominence as an attorney and lecturer who fought for human rights spending 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.

His views on Christianity were, to say the least, less than charitable. Some ministers of his day called for good Christians to have him tarred-and-feathered and run out of town. Such was the "Christian Love" of his day.

Even though he had served as a Colonel in the Union Army, he had a difficult time digesting the vagaries of war. His *"Visions of War"* describe very well the sorrows that were in his heart.

**

My twelve volume set of "Ingersoll's Works" was copyrighted and printed in 1900 by C.P. Farrell.

Editorial comment:

It seems as though *some* of our members have become a bit disinterested in the activities of the Humanists of Fort Worth. I feel somewhat disheartened by this disinterest. With this in mind, I'm wondering if there is something we, the body of the membership, might do to encourage them to return to a more active participation in the group.

In a community atmosphere where religious fundamentalism is accepted as the norm, I would hope that we, as freethinkers and humanists, could be that "voice in the wilderness" that would reach out and offer a rational answer to those who may be seeking an alternative to those erroneous ideas and ideologies they've been coerced to accept as fact.

Upon meeting a new neighbor, or new coworker, somewhere within our conversation I'm often asked which church I attend. When I answer that I'm a Unitarian Universalist, I'm then asked several questions about our beliefs. Invariably, of course, I'll be asked if I believe in God. When I ask "Which god?" the inquisitor's face takes on all sorts of interesting expressions.

If you've had any experience at all with the fundamentalist ideologies, you'll know where the conversation usually goes from there, i.e., the Bible, God, Creation, the Soul, Christ, etc., etc. None of their answers are ever supported by the "facts" of Science, History, Logic, or just plain old common sense. Many times they're amazed to learn that I *may* know more about their Bible than they do; maybe even a bit more than their pastor. When they finally decide I'm a "lost soul" most, but not all, will eventually give up. However, they'll "keep me in their prayers." Just in case.

The whole point of this particular commentary is, as I stated above, that we, any one of us, might be that "voice in the wilderness" who would be the catalyst to encourage them to *analyze* their beliefs in light of those three basic disciplines of Science, History, and Logic. We don't need to be evangelistic Humanists. Over the years I've received a heartfelt "thanks" from many folks who've taken a closer look at their own beliefs, weighed them against the basic "facts" and eventually abandoned their original beliefs.

So, I would ask, if you wish to see the HoFW survive and grow, take a personal interest in its activities. Become a part of its planning, speaking, or hosting of the meetings. Do whatever you can that strikes *your* interests and abilities. This organization belongs to you, the member, not the Chair, not me, nor the other officers. It's yours.

Don Ruhs
Editor, HoFW Newsletter
Past Chair

Meeting

June 13, 2012 7:00 PM

Past-Chair Dick Trice will be speak.

His topic will be:

**"TIME TO MEET MORE OF HISTORY'S
FREETHINKERS — A look at Darrow,
Diderot, J. Huxley, Mencken, Mill, Voltaire."**

Election of Officers

Due to a conflict of meeting dates, the annual election of officers will be conducted by e-Mail this year.

The HoFW Board asks for the cooperation of every member to make this election, and our organization, a continued success. Thank you.

**Humanists of Fort Worth
(HoFW)
Monthly Meeting, April 11, 2012**

Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Gene Gwin.

The Chair called for a reading of the minutes of the March meeting by the secretary.

The Chair called for a reading of the treasurer's report.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Motion in favor of making the annual donation of \$250.00 to Westside Unitarian Universalist Church for our use of the facility was seconded and approved.
2. Motion to purchase a new coffee machine for approximately \$40.00 was seconded and approved.

Upcoming election of officers:

The Chair reminded the membership of the upcoming election of new officers next month. It was noted that the Chair cannot continue in office at this time and so will not stand for re-election, and that the Vice-Chair and the Secretary are willing to continue in their respective offices if duly elected. The Chair asked for new nominations to be made at next month's meeting by any member knowing a member who would be a good candidate for any of the offices.

Upcoming speaker:

The Chair gave a reminder of next month's speaker, Mark Twain impersonator James Doores.

Tonight's speaker:

The Chair introduced tonight's speaker, Former Chair and HoFW Newsletter Editor Don Ruhs, who gave the talk entitled "Free Will: This Is My Take".

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
John Fisher, Secretary

Notice

The next meeting of HoFW has been rescheduled for Friday, May 25, 7:00 PM
at the Westside Unitarian Universalist Church Bldg.

Notice

TREASURER'S REPORT

Report Date: **April 10, 2012**

Beginning Balance: \$1,003.98
 Credits: 360.75
 Debits: 0
 Ending Balance: \$1,364.73

Dolores Ruhs, Treasurer

Membership Update

As of May 6, our current membership is 48 (Forty-eight).

A welcome "shout-out" to Walt and Linda McConathy, and Elinor Zind.

Walt had a career opportunity in Midland-Odessa and are returning after a few years away from us. They did, however, maintain the home they owned in Ft. Worth knowing they couldn't stay away from us forever. Together we say, "**welcome back old friends!**"

Elinor is a new member and we're happy to have her as a fellow Freethinker and Humanist!

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.

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 the Treasurer.

Our officers and Board Members:

Chair: Gene Gwin

Phone: 817-723-3444

Email: tgwin@att.net

Vice Chair: Sam Baker

Phone: 817-994-8868

Email: sambaker@hotmail.com

Secretary: John Fisher

Phone: 682-556-9894

Email: jmftthird@hotmail.com

Treasurer: Dolores Ruhs

Phone: 817-249-1829

Email: ruhsdol@sbcglobal.net

Recent Past Chair: Dick Trice

Phone: 817-446-4696

Email: trice933@att.net

Newsletter Editor and Past Chair: Don Ruhs

Phone: 817-343-3650

Email: laidback935@sbcglobal.net
