



Volume Nine Number 8 - September 2007

Meeting at Westside Unitarian Universalist Building 901 Page Ave Ft Worth 7 PM, 2nd Wednesday of each month - Sept. gathering is on the 12th. Many of us dine at Luby's Cafeteria at 5:30 prior to the meeting (8th Ave South of Elizabeth Blvd) Join us if you'd like!

Humanists of Fort Worth Meeting Minutes

August 8, 2007

The meeting was called to order by President, Dick Trice at Westside UU Church.

Treasurer Dolores Ruhs gave the treasurer's report and noted that we had received a \$1,000.00 grant from AHA for Russell's SMART program.

Movie night was successful with respect to attendance, but we lost money. After discussion on how to remedy the situation, it was decided to emphasize that donations are welcome in all publicity about the next event. A \$3.00 per person contribution was suggested, and any profit will be shared with Westside. Our next movie night will be August 25 showing "The Trouble with Harry."

Our next regular meeting, September 12, will be a showing of the first part of the documentary "A Brief History of Disbelief" by Jonathan Miller. The program was sent to us by AHA and this first part of three is entitled "Shadows of Doubt."

Dick distributed a petition, also from AHA, on separation of church and state calling for "First Freedom First." Joel Bailey also brought a petition for ending the war in Iraq for our consideration.

AHA has asked us to contact our local libraries and ask that they subscribe to the Humanist magazine. Several people volunteered to do so.

Dick noted that our chapter has two Humanist celebrants of 6 in Texas and 129 in the US. Russell has been one for many years, but Jeff Rodriguez recently earned the designation.

Several area peace groups (Peace Action, Code Pink, Vets for Peace, etc.) are sponsoring a Peace Rally on September 1 in General Worth Square, 900 Main Street, Fort Worth from 1:30 to 3:30.

The rally will protest the Iraq war at a time when the Republicans are conducting a "Straw Poll" meeting for the next presidential election. The groups will make

Reed moved that we add our name as co-sponsor of the Peace Rally. The motion was seconded and CARRIED. Dick will contact Lon Burnam and advise him of our willingness to participate.

Mike Little announced that the Green Party will appear at the Fort Worth City Council meeting tomorrow night to ask for Bush's impeachment. (Ed note: no mention in FW S-T report of the meeting).

Minutes will be published in the newsletter.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted, Reed K. Bilz, Secretary

Treasurer's report August 8, 2007 Beginning date July 7, 2007

Date Aug 11, 2007 Balance \$2,260.61

No additional income for the period

Debits

Ray Weil—Picnic drinks \$72.07

Dick Trice Programs 30.54

Total expenditures \$ 102.61

Ending Balance \$2,157.40

Submitted by Dolores Ruhs, Treasurer dated 8/8/07

Dolores has also reported donations of \$40 to Westaid by our members.

The movie, *The Trouble With Harry* shown on Saturday, August 25th was viewed by twenty-three members and friends of the Fort Worth Humanists.

The showing was preceded by drinks, snacks and conversation.

Bob Jones Univ. gets state aid

Dianne Knich *The Post and Courier* July 31, 2007
Charlestown, South Carolina

State lawmakers shot down a request for extra financial help for low-income students who will attend South Carolina's public colleges and universities next year.

Meanwhile, they approved \$2.5 million to help low-income students attend Bob Jones University, a private school in Greenville.

The State Commission on Higher Education had requested \$10 million to increase grants for some needy students attending public colleges and universities. Last year, low-income public school students received, on average, \$1,158 in grants while their private-school counterparts received \$3,100, nearly three times as much.

Layton McCurdy, chairman of the commission and former dean at the Medical University of South Carolina, said "the Legislature didn't think it was important enough. I'm not very happy about that."

The state Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission distributes "need-based" grant money to students who attend the state's private colleges and universities.

Legislators approved a bill this past session that allowed Bob Jones University to be added to the list of 20 other private schools that are part of that commission, and whose students are eligible for grants.

The General Assembly then approved a \$2.5 million increase in the total pool of money the Tuition Grants Commission has to distribute to private school students.

Eddie Shannon, executive director of the Tuition Grants Commission, said that with the extra money, the commission can give about 800 low-income Bob Jones University students \$3,200 next year. That's the same amount most other needy private school students will receive, he said.

The bill to include Bob Jones University was sponsored by Sens. Michael Fair, R-Greenville, and Darrell Jackson, D-Hopkins.

Shannon said that although the bill didn't specifically mention Bob Jones University, "it happens to be the only new one that qualifies."

Before the legislation was passed, Shannon said, private colleges had to be nonprofit organizations, have a major campus and headquarters in South Carolina and be accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Under the new legislation, a private college can meet those criteria or it can simply be a bachelor's level institution chartered before 1962 with a major campus and headquarters in South Carolina, the latter of which allows Bob Jones to qualify.

Bob Jones University is not accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. It wasn't accredited at all before 2006, but in November, it earned full accreditation from the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools.

The accreditation makes students eligible for federal grants and loans.

Shannon said it's important that the state offer some support to students who attend private colleges. Such colleges offer students a choice to attend smaller schools. Many students fare better in a smaller environment, he said.

McCurdy said the Commission on Higher Education will continue to press for more money for grants for needy public-school students.

"In my opinion," he said, "money for higher education is one of the most significant pressing needs of young people in our state."

http://www.charleston.net/news/2007/jul/31/bob_jones_aid11798/

Interested in more about Bob Jones University? Cut and paste the following links:

<http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/Psychology/bju/fundam.htm>

Also: <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/cgi-bin/getcase.pl?court=US&vol=461&invol=574>

A schism in the Church lies behind an Evangelical bishop's dire warning.

A Church of England bishop has claimed that last week's flooding in the north of England was God's judgment on our sinful ways. "We are reaping the consequences of our moral degradation, as well as the environmental damage that we (Continued on next page)

(Continued from page 2)

have caused," said Graham Dow, Bishop of Carlisle. He singled out the Government's backing of gay rights as a key factor "of a general scene of permissiveness".

Does he seriously believe sexual practices of which he does not approve have an adverse effect on the weather? Does he think extra-marital sex contributes to global warming? This bishop sounds like he's been dreamed up by Richard Dawkins, as proof that superstitious moralising and shoddy science, are the core business of religion.

But there is more going on here. Dow provides a chilling glimpse into the desperation of the Church of England as it attempts to move with the times.

Recently it has competed with David Cameron in trying to push green issues up the agenda. Here is a great opportunity for the Church, goes the thinking, to show its relevance by emphasizing the need to be good stewards of God's creation, by issuing 'prophetic' warnings about the earth's precious resources.

But when Evangelical bishops join in, it all goes tits-up. They can't help blaming homosexuals for the increase in carbon emissions and the frequency of extreme weather conditions.

The bishop seems to be in a rhetorical muddle. He wants to join his with-it colleagues warning about climate change. And yet he also wants to signal his Evangelical credentials.

The Church of England is breaking up, and the Evangelical wing is preparing for independence. Bishop Dow's comments should be seen as an attempt to put clear flood water between himself and the liberals, and so impress his fellow Evangelicals with his defiantly biblical thinking. See:

<http://www.thefirstpost.co.uk/index.php?storyID=7572>

A resource for those who choose to raise their children un-churched:

http://www.atheistparents.org/art_toc.php

Court Gives Executive Branch Free Pass to Violate First Amendment June 25, 2007

In a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court today passed a ruling that severely curtails the ability of taxpayers to sue when government violates the separation of church and state.

In *Hein v. Freedom From Religion Foundation*, the Supreme Court found that lawsuits against the federal government's executive branch for unconstitutionally promoting religion can no longer be filed on behalf of taxpayers. A previous 1968 ruling found that taxpayers could sue when the Congress spent money on religion, a special exception that had been carved out in order to address this constitutional issue.

"The Supreme Court's decision allows the Executive Branch to steamroll over the Establishment Clause and spend our money to promote sectarian causes," said Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association. "The faith-based initiatives office is a case in point. Our money is being funneled to religious groups, who use that money to proselytize. But no longer do taxpayers have a right to challenge such cases of unconstitutional use of their hard-earned dollars."

In Justice Souter's dissent, he wrote, "When executive agencies spend identifiable sums of tax money for religious purposes, no less than when Congress authorizes the same thing, taxpayers suffer injury."

The Freedom From Religion Foundation's original suit was challenging the constitutionality of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. "Bush's religious beliefs drive many of these initiatives," explained Speckhardt. Faith-based initiatives funding went to the Healing Place Church in Baton Rouge, LA, whose mission (according to its website) is to "assist those who are struggling with addiction [to] become free through the Power of God."

This church was highlighted by President Bush in his 2003 State of the Union address as a model for this government program, even though they rely "solely on the foundation of the Word of God to break the bands of addiction."

"The Supreme Court makes the distinction between illegal actions performed by the Legislative Branch and the Executive Branch," Speckhardt continued. "But there should be no such distinction. A violation of the First Amendment should be heard in a court of law, not protected by this new Court which is placing political and religious ideas over that of their mandate to protect the Constitution."

Justices Alito, Kennedy, Scalia, Roberts, and Thomas were in the majority, marking another time the new court has been narrowly divided with all Catholic Justices in the majority. Scalia and Thomas said they would have gone further and overturned the 1968 ruling.

www.americanhumanist.org

It's a matter of where you were born!

A person born in, say, Texas will very likely grow up to be a conservative Christian. would be a firm believer in the Trinity and would fully expect to go to Heaven after he/she died. But if circumstances had been different -- perhaps the stork became disoriented in a storm -- and they had been born and raised in Saudi Arabia, they would almost certainly be a Muslim, believing in Allah as the sole, undivided deity, and hoping for an eternity in Paradise. If they had been born in India, they probably would have adopted Hinduism and believed in the pantheistic principle of Brahman -- that all reality is a unity. They would believe in the transmigration of the soul and expect to reborn into a new body after death -- hopefully a human body. The religious beliefs that a person hold so firmly are largely an accident of birth location.

With the various religions teaching different beliefs and practices, it can be argued that only one faith teaches the truth; perhaps none do. If there are 270 major religions in the world, then -- to a first approximation -- the chances of any one religion being completely true is miniscule. Yet people tenaciously believe in the truth of their faith to the exclusion of all others.

According to the beliefs of most monotheistic religions, it should be a simple task to determine which religion is the "true" one: one simply has to ask for God's assessment during prayer. However, [a small pilot study](#) that we have conducted appears to indicate that assessing God's will may not be possible.

See: <http://www.religioustolerance.org/>

The Great Christian Almond Pasteurization Crisis of 2007

When you peruse the internet looking for random/ ridiculous religion-related stories to report on a blog, you occasionally find exactly what you're looking for. This is one such example.

You see, the Almond Board of California (yes, them) have recently decreed that all almonds produced in California, destined for distribution throughout North America and Mexico, must be pasteurised in order to protect consumers from salmonella. Apparently this is a problem for [Christian raw foodists](#) (who only eat raw food, of course), as they see pasteurisation as a

form of cooking

Now, you may ask what being a Christian has to do with raw food. The answer lies in the teachings of Jesus who said, among many other things, that "it is bad for body and soul to eat cooked food: "...prepare not your foods with the fire of death, which kills your foods, your bodies and your souls also."

The ruling of the shadowy, Orwellian Almond Board of California would not be such a problem for raw foodists if they were able to procure said nuts from elsewhere. Unfortunately, "California happens to be the only U.S. state commercially growing almonds. In addition, California grows about 80% of the world's almonds, according to the Almond Board of California website."

With their raw almond options severely limited, Christian raw foodists are claiming that their right to freedom of religion is being violated. That's right, the pasteurisation of Californian almonds has become a First Amendment issue. Campaigners have even set up a website aimed at reversing the ruling, brilliantly entitled [What Would Jesus Pasteurise?](#) Cut and paste <http://whatwouldjesuspasteurize.com/>

In the meantime the advice is clear: "stock up on your raw almonds... while they are still raw.

From the New Humanist (a British humanist site to which I subscribe) you may too: <http://newhumanist.org.uk/1421>

A tip of the Cowntown Humanist hat to John Hattan for the following:

Kids, please pause for
Muslim Rebecca

who'd like to kneel and pray to Mecca.

Now be
quiet while Hare Krishna Jay

intones his mantra in class
today.

Let us give time to Mormon Rod

who's ready to become a
god.

Catholic kids around the nation

will get their
transubstantiation.

Please pause while little Buddhist
Kate

takes some time to meditate.

Whoops, looks like our own
Shinto Lester

wants to worship his ancestor.

And our little
Hindu Ivana

thanks Ganesh for her Nirvana.

And a Scientologist
named Peter

would like some time on his E-meter.

OK, kids.
You've given voice

to the gods all of your choice.

For the
lesson today, I'm going to tell

about long divis. . .oops, there's the
bell.

Indeed the parents would object

from kids' prayers that
are not "correct".

Because Christian kids will be liable

to find
ideas not in the Bible.

Then we'd see the sour grapes

of those
theocratic apes

who want to loudly voice the prayers

of any
religion, as long as it's theirs.

Calif. Pastor Prays For Demise Of Americans United Staff, Following Watchdog Group's IRS Complaint Wednesday, August 15, 2007

Americans United for Separation of Church and State today denounced the tactics of a political pastor in California who has urged followers to pray for the demise of staff members of the religious liberty watchdog group.

Yesterday, Americans United asked the Internal Revenue Service to investigate the First Southern Baptist Church of Buena Park, Calif., for a potential violation of federal tax law barring electioneering by non-profit groups. Dr. Wiley S. Drake, pastor of the church, issued a press release on church letterhead endorsing Republican presidential candidate Mike Huckabee and subsequently offered the endorsement on a church-affiliated radio show.

Instead of responding to Americans United's concern of illegal activity, Drake issued yesterday afternoon a plea to his supporters to join in "imprecatory prayers" every morning for Americans United and its staff.

The Rev. Barry W. Lynn, Americans United executive director, said it is telling that Drake declined to respond to his group's charges of tax law violations.

"Instead of addressing our concerns of illegally melding religion and partisan politics, Dr. Drake has launched an outlandish attack on us," said Lynn. "Calling for curses on us might distract Drake's supporters, but it won't help him with the IRS. I trust the tax agents will investigate Drake's use of church resources to endorse a candidate for public office."

Drake's attack included some florid rhetoric.

"In light of the recent attack from the enemies (sic) of God I ask the children of God to go into action with Imprecatory Prayer," Drake said, in an Aug. 14 press statement issued from the First Southern Baptist Church of Buena Park. "Especially against Americans United for Separation (sic) of Church and State."

"The righteous have dominion," Drake said, "but only through imprecatory prayer against the ungodly."

Drake singled out two Americans United staff members whose names appeared as contacts on the press release. The pastor's missive said the imprecatory prayers should "specifically target" Americans United Communications Director Joe Conn or Communications Associate Jeremy Leaming. (Continued on Page 6)

“They are those who lead the attack,” Drake said.

In a message left in Lynn’s voice-mail, Drake said he had been urging his supporters to take similar action against Lynn for many years and would continue to do so.

In a section of his press release called “How To Pray,” Drake includes a long list of biblical citations that call on God to smite enemies. For example, the alleged enemies of God “shall be judged,” “condemned,” and “his days be few....

” **Additionally, supporters should pray that the enemy’s “children be fatherless, and his wife a widow,” and “his children be continually vagabonds, and beg; let them seek bread also out of their desolate places.”**

“Let there be none to extend mercy unto him,” Drake quoted, “Neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children.”

Americans United is a religious liberty watchdog group based in Washington, D.C. Founded in 1947, the organization educates Americans about the importance of church-state separation in safeguarding religious freedom.

Rev. Barry Lynn’s letter to the IRS follows, cut and paste:

[http://www.au.org/site/DocServer/
First_Southern_Baptist_Church_of_Buena_Park_8-13-
07_pdf_.pdf?docID=1861](http://www.au.org/site/DocServer/First_Southern_Baptist_Church_of_Buena_Park_8-13-07_pdf_.pdf?docID=1861)

Our spring picnic was such a success it has been suggested we hold another in the fall.

Saturday September 23rd at 1 PM has been chosen as the date and time. (It had to be after the autumnal equinox to qualify as a fall event)

May we suggest you tell your friends and pray to the god(s) of your chose not to allow excessive precipitation to hinder the activity.

Beer, water and soft drinks will be served. You must however, bring your own food.

From the British Humanist site: The following is from a blog posted on Aug 24, 2007

Meg wrote:

The only solution we have to stop gays from recruiting other people is to cut off the source. They need to be taken to specialized containment centers where they will be forced to become straight and accept Jesus as thier (sic) savior and to repent from their disgusting, wicket, hateful (sic), devilish ways. Those that refuse to go can either be forced, or banished from society in other specialized communities where they have no connetion (sic) to the outside world at all. Most would die of AIDS anyway. Anyone who refused any of the answers to make them better would have to be killed or banished. (Shepherd AF Base, Texas)

To which Mike from Amherst NY responded:

Wow, somebody woke up on the wrong side of the swastika this morning.

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