

# HUMANISTS

# of FORT WORTH

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Humanist

September, 2012

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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**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.**

## Meeting

**September 12, 2012 7:00 PM**

**Speaker: Zach Moore, PhD,  
President of DFW Coalition of  
Reason (DFWCoR)**

**Topic: DFW-COR Member  
Profile: "Who We Are and  
What We Want."**

## ! Thanks !

Many 'thank-yous' to the members and friends who assisted in the cleanup and re-arrangement duties after our August meeting. It was much appreciated.

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

## ! Thanks !

A person who asks is a fool for five minutes; a person who never asks is a fool for life.



## 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 . . .



*Sam Baker*

## **The Constitutional Right to Lie in Political Campaigns**

Ahh, campaign season. When lies are as plentiful, noxious and revolting as droppings from migrating grackles.

Perjury, obstruction of justice, defamation and fraud aren't protected by the First Amendment, but lying in political campaigns is a tradition almost as old as the republic itself. Beginning in the election year of 1800 Thomas Jefferson's political rivals and their agents claimed, among many other things, that Jefferson robbed a widow of ten children of ten thousand pounds entrusted to him by her dead father's will. A Supreme Court case in 1964 called *New York Times v. Sullivan* made it impossible for a public official to sue for libel absent proof that the publisher knowingly published a falsehood or did so with reckless disregard for the truth.

According to our national ideology, discerning truth from falsity in political campaigns is the job of the public, informed by a persistent, aggressive, and skeptical press. One measure of how well the press and the public can be relied on to discern truth from falsehood might be the percentage of Americans who in 2003 thought Saddam Hussein was personally involved in the 9/11 attacks: 70%.

In contrast, we don't tolerate lying in the realm of securities transactions. SEC Rule 10b-5 provides as follows:

It shall be unlawful for any person, directly or indirectly, by the use of any means or instrumentality of interstate commerce, or of the mails or of any facility of any national securities exchange,

- (a) To employ any device, scheme, or artifice to defraud,
- (b) To make any untrue statement of a material fact or to omit to state a material fact necessary in order to make the statements made, in the light of the circumstances under which they were made, not misleading, or
- (c) To engage in any act, practice, or course of business which operates or would operate as a fraud or deceit upon any person, in connection with the purchase or sale of any security.

Continued on page 4 . . . .

## The Constitutional Right to Lie in Political Campaigns

. . . Continued from page 3.

According to the U.S. Supreme Court, "an omitted fact is material if there is a substantial likelihood that a reasonable shareholder would consider it important in deciding how to vote."

Now imagine if statements in political campaigns were subject to the same standards. Sen. Cornyn, one of Gov. Romney's surrogates, recently stated in his newsletter, "President Obama recently offered another pearl of economic wisdom: 'If you've got a business, you didn't build that. Somebody else made that happen.'" President Obama did indeed say that, word for word, but Sen. Cornyn omitted the material sentences that preceded it which, when included, completely change the meaning suggested by Sen. Cornyn. This is what President Obama said:

If you were successful, somebody along the line gave you some help. There was a great teacher somewhere in your life. Somebody helped to create this unbelievable system that we have that allowed you to thrive. Somebody invested in roads and bridges. If you've got a business, you didn't build that. Somebody else made that happen.

It is apparent from the entire quotation that when Pres. Obama said, "you didn't build that," the word "that" referred to the roads and bridges, not to the business.

Imagine the squealing on the right if someone proposed a regulatory scheme similar to the SEC for political speech. After the objection that such regulation is prohibited by the First Amendment (and the Supreme Court would no doubt agree), chief among the objections would be who could be trusted to apply the regulations without bias. Well, we trust nine educated people to interpret the Constitution, and that has worked out fairly well.

Would regulation rid the world of political lies? No, but rules like 10b-5 would deter campaigns and their surrogates from stating obvious lies in the first place, and the national debate over issues would be immediately elevated. At least the lies would be better.

The reality is that political lying is rewarded with money and votes because lying works, and it works well. In fact, the bigger the lie, the better it works. Hitler understood all this quite well, and he wasn't embarrassed to discuss it. "If you tell a big enough lie and tell it frequently enough, it will be believed. If you win, you need not have to explain. . . . If you lose, you should not be there to explain!"

*Sam*

## ***HUMANISM AS A SYSTEM: OPEN OR CLOSED?***

*By John Fisher, Secretary HoFW*

**H**umanism has been defined as a "system or mode of thought in which human interests, values, and dignity predominate." (1) Is the humanist system of thought an open system, or a closed one?

**A**n open system interfaces with its environment by delivering and receiving inputs to and from the outside. Its permeable boundaries permit interaction with the surrounding environment through which new information is readily absorbed, permitting incorporation and diffusion of viable new ideas. In this way an open system adapts more quickly to changes in the external environment in which it operates than would a closed one. The environment influences the system and, simultaneously, the system influences the environment. As it freely interacts with new ideas and information, the open system ultimately sustains growth and serves its parent environment, resulting in a stronger probability for survival. (2)

**C**onversely, a closed system is more prone to resist incorporating new ideas that might be deemed unnecessary to its parent environment. By not adapting to or innovating from that new data, a closed system ceases to properly serve the environment in which it lives. That resistance to new ideas places the closed system at risk of atrophy. (3)

**H**umanism rejects the concept of a supernatural deity/being that has been inferred from a literal reading of texts traditionally held to be sacred. Does that unbelief as to a divine ruler mean that humanists grant no possibility of the existence of forces affecting human experience that are yet to be explained, or even approached, by scientific inquiry? Experience verifies that a rational and empirical approach to living is undoubtedly the wiser course, but a rigid application of rationalism, by itself, to all questions can leave a person at a loss to respond to life on the level of the unexplained. Does not the entrusting of all that is unexplained in our lives exclusively to "future science" constitute a faith, and a blind one at that, placing us at risk of a certain mental and emotional (dare one suggest *spiritual*) atrophy, and the eventual extinction atrophy entails? Does a true humanist categorically reject *intuition* and *the sacred* and *religion* and *God* as irrational notions, or is it possible to re-define those terms to comprehend humanist meanings, to describe different aspects of how we engage the mysteries of life?

**W**hat a person identifies with, pulls closer in consciousness, and spends this one life pursuing and developing, may be predetermined on a genetic level. But even so, the limitless diversity and passion and energy among human beings in reaching out and working for whatever is valued is suggestive of *the sacred* - not in any supernatural sense, not denoting a body of narrow, myth-based dogma imposed on wider humanity, but rather an individualized understanding of *the sacred* that can inspire and fortify and motivate. The furthering of that understanding is a cause for which humanists (and others too) can band together in spite of differences of belief or inclination, to work for a society and a humanity where all forms of responsible and worthy expression are honored and none are marginalized.

**W**hen humanism is understood expansively, and when those with whom humanists differ on various issues are valued in good faith as potential allies rather than suspected as adversaries, then humanism is an open system that freely engages the world of ideas in which we choose our values and live our lives, and sustains the value and dignity and autonomy which humanists believe are innate in every person.

(1) [Httv://dictionary.reference.com/browse/humanism](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/humanism). Definition 1.

(2) [Httv://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Systems\\_Theory/Oven/Closed\\_System\\_Structure](http://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Systems_Theory/Oven/Closed_System_Structure).

(3) *Ibid*.

## Majority of Americans Would Vote For An Atheist For President (POLL)

From Huff Post August 1, 2012

(RNS) For the second time in less than a year, the Gallup poll reports that a majority of Americans would vote for an atheist for president.

The latest survey, from June, found that 54 percent of those asked said they would vote a "well-qualified" atheist into the Oval Office -- the highest percentage since Gallup began asking the question in 1958, when only 18 percent said they would back a nonbeliever.

On the other hand, the survey showed that those who do not believe in God still come in behind every other group polled for, including gays and lesbians (68 percent) and Muslims (58 percent).

Still, an imaginary atheist candidate passed the 50 percent threshold for the first time when Gallup asked the question in August 2011, so the trend is upward.

"We have seen an enormous change over time in the willingness to vote for an atheist," said Karlyn Bowman, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, which reports the numbers in its current newsletter.

"But I think the numbers also remind us that this is a deeply religious country. That doesn't mean we are all going to church on Sunday, but that having religion in your life is valuable to most Americans and I think that explains the resistance."

Indeed, in the current poll, 43 percent said they would not vote for a well-qualified atheist, a percentage that was higher among Republicans than Democrats (58 percent) or independents (56 percent).

And there is more discouraging news for nonbelievers. In his analysis of the recent data, Gallup's managing editor Jeffrey M. Jones writes that for groups whose approval ratings hover within a narrow range of percentage points for more than 10 years -- which might be happening for atheists -- it can take more than fronting an appealing atheist candidate to reach more universal numbers, like those enjoyed by women (95 percent), blacks (96 percent) and Catholics (94 percent).

"It may be that there is an inherent bias that isn't going to change" for some groups, like atheists, whose numbers have leveled off, Jones said. "It is, in many cases, a long process and some of these groups have a way to go."

Herb Silverman, president of the Secular Coalition for America, knows that first-hand. In 1990, he ran for governor of South Carolina where an old law banned atheists like him from holding public office. Silverman lost -- by a landslide -- though his candidacy did lead to the repeal of the law by the state's supreme court.

Silverman, who tells the story of his run for office in his book "Candidate Without a Prayer," says that to push their approval numbers higher, more atheists need to "come out," just as gays and lesbians have done. "I think prejudices will always be with us, so I am not optimistic enough to think (atheists' approval rating) will be near unanimous," he said. "But I think the more role models we have the better things will be." Tom Flynn, editor of *Free Inquiry* magazine, an atheist publication, agrees.

"When you think you don't know any atheists then they seem horrible, but when the person at the desk across from you is an atheist then those stereotypes don't hold," Flynn said.

But he's a glass-is-half-empty guy, too.

"We have to keep in mind that we atheists are still the group that the smallest number would vote for," he said. "We are riding that train into the sunlight of equality, but we are still sitting in the caboose."

*Editorial . . . Know Your Bible? 1**Don Ruhs*

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

*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*

*2. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*

*3. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.*

*4. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.*

*5. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. Gen. 1: 1-5.*

Commentary:

If a God did, in fact, create the heaven and the earth it must necessarily have some sort of form or some sort of shape;

*14. And God said, let there lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:*

*15. And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.*

*16. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.*

*17. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,*

*18. And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.*

*19. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day. Gen. 1: 14–19.*

Commentary:

How is it possible for us to have a day, or a morning, or an evening, without the existence of our sun? Science tells us that our minutes, days,

weeks, months, years, etc., are all resultants of the existence of our sun and the fact that our planet, our world, spins on its axis as the sun shines on it.

One would think that today, in the twenty-first century, we would be well aware of those characteristics that determine those factors that we daily use to tell time.

But, unfortunately, not so. There are many fundamentalist religionists, of various persuasions, who insist that we accept their non-scientific beliefs regarding the understanding of time and the planet we inhabit.

One can forgive the ancients for having ancient beliefs, but not those of us who have access to modern knowledge!

And, what about the sun?

Joshua 10: 12-14

*12. Then spake Joshua to the Lord in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou Moon, in the valley of Ajalon.*

*13. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is this not written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day.*

*14. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the LORD fought for Israel.*

Commentary:

Fact: The sun did not stand still for a whole day! If it had, even for a minute, we would not be here today to tell about it. Earth spins on its axis and for the sun to have stood still the Earth would have had to *stop spinning*. The centrifugal forces caused by the Earth's rotation would have stopped, and stopped abruptly!

And, if the Earth had ever stopped spinning what would have re-started it again? A miracle maybe?

## PRESENTATION FOR SEPTEMBER 12 MEETING

**Speaker:** Zach Moore, Coordinator of the DFW Coalition of Reason (DFWCoR).

**Topic:** DFWCoR Member Profile: Who We Are and What We Want.

Dr. Moore has estimated that there are about 2,000 to 3,000 free-thinkers across all member groups in the DFWCoR. He briefly reviewed DFWCoR's prior projects including the Fort Worth bus signs and the attempt to advertise at some movie theaters in Arlington (the ad agency backed out at the last minute). Plans are being made for the meeting of the Texas Freethought Convention in mid October.

Visit and Join Our Meetup Site!

*The Humanists of Fort Worth* has a Meetup site here:

<http://www.meetup.com/Humanists-of-Fort-Worth/>

Being a member of the HOFW does not automatically make you a member of the Meetup site. By joining the Meetup site you will automatically be notified of meetings and special events. In addition, you can post comments and videos in the Discussions area that you think will be of interest to the group, and you can read and respond to the comments of others there as well. Quite a few of our visitors found us on our Meetup site, and it is probably the best advertising vehicle we have.

*Sam*



## Humanists of Fort Worth

### Minutes

**August 8, 2012**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. By Chair Sam Baker. There were twenty-four members present and five visitors, who were recognized and welcomed.

Myrtle McMahan gave the Treasurer's Report for Treasurer Dolores Rubs, and it was approved as read.

Secretary John Fisher read the minutes of last month's meeting, and they were approved as read.

The Chair reminded members to please leave their name tags on the table at the back of the room after the meeting. He also shared how to follow the group on Meetup.com, and visitors were encouraged to leave their e-mail addresses so that they can receive the HoFW e-newsletter.

Speaker Dick Trice, former Chair and Board member, spoke on the United States of America's imperialism and military engagements on behalf of global capitalism, in a talk entitled "Lies, Larceny and Lamentations".

After a short break for refreshments, there followed a Q. and A. session. Visitors were especially encouraged to ask questions. The question of whether to stay strictly with humanist topics for our monthly meetings, or to present a wider range of subjects, was discussed; there was general consensus that a wider range of topics was desirable, but some felt we should never stray for long from humanist topics. How to socialize more with other humanist groups in the area was also discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:27  
p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

John Fisher, Secretary

## Humanists of Ft. Worth (HoFW)

### Treasurer's Report

Report Date: 8-Aug-2012

Beginning Balance                      11-Jul-2012                      **\$1,349.65**

| CREDITS              | Date  | Amount                |
|----------------------|-------|-----------------------|
| Dues collected       |       | 0.00                  |
| Donation             | 13.10 |                       |
| Snacks               |       |                       |
| <b>TOTAL CREDITS</b> |       | <b><u>\$13.10</u></b> |

| DEBITS       | Activity   | Ck. # | Amount               |
|--------------|------------|-------|----------------------|
| Suzie Lotven | Snacks     | 483   | 7/11/2012      14.00 |
| Gene Gwin    | Meetup.org | 484   | 7/21/2012      72.00 |

TOTAL DEBITS    **\$86.00**

**-\$72.90**

Ending Balance      8-Aug-12                      **\$1,276.75**

Attest:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 8-Aug-2012

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



**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* July/August 2012, page 22

### **BACKDOOR CREATIONISM BILL FAILS IN ALABAMA**

A bill that would have established a "credit-for-creationism" scheme died in the Alabama legislature on May 16, the final day of the 2012 session, according to the National Center for Science Education.

Rep. Blaine Galliher (R-Rainbow City) sponsored the measure that would have allowed public schools to establish "released-time" programs for high school students. House Bill 133 was intended to give students class credit for courses in creationism taken off-campus.

The *Birmingham News* said Galliher introduced his measure "at the request of one of his constituents, Joseph Kennedy, a member of Southside Baptist Church near Gadsden. Kennedy said he would like to see a non-profit group teach creationism to public school students if Galliher's bill becomes law.

Galliher told WAFF-TV, "Creation has just as much right to be taught in the school system as evolution does, and I think this is simply providing the vehicle to do that."

Americans United Communications Director Joseph L. Conn criticized the scheme

This space is intended to focus attention on books, authors, subjects and articles that may be of interest to

### *The* **REASON DRIVEN** *Life*

What Am I Here on Earth For?

*Robert M. Price*

Prometheus Books 2006 362 pgs.

From the dustcover front flap:

Rick Warren's bestselling *The Purpose-Driven Life* has become the great inspiration book of our decade, and to Robert M. Price that's a complete mystery. Price, now a Humanist and New Testament scholar, spent a dozen years as a member of the American evangelical subculture, and in his witty and poignant rejoinder to Pastor Warren, *The Reason Driven Life*, Price exposes Warrenism as a stale, warmed-over fundamentalism. Among other revelations, Price demonstrates how this popular "personal relationship with Christ" theology actually has no biblical basis whatsoever.

in a "Wall Of Separation" blog post.

"Creationism, no matter how you disguise it, is not science; it's a religious belief," he said. "Call it 'creation science' or 'intelligent design' if you like, but it's still the same old fundamentalist Christian doctrine gussied up as science to try slip it into biology classrooms.

## 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

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### Officers and Board Members:

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