

THE MINNESOTA ATHEIST

March Public Meeting: The Satanic Panic, Atheism and Games

Gaming holds a huge share of today's entertainment market. A substantial part of that market is dedicated to fantasy role-playing games. What does this have to do with atheism? Well, if conservative Christians had their way in the 1980s, we wouldn't have fantasy role-playing games.

Why? Because, according to many Christians, Dungeons and Dragons (a popular fantasy role-playing game) is satanic. Dungeons & Dragons, D&D for short, involves the ideas of magic, monsters, and imagination. Many in the religious community thought this game could teach children how to do spells and how to summon demons. No, really. They even made a movie about it.

Members of The Unholy Ghost Busters Show on Atheists Talk (Minnesota Atheists' radio program on AM 950 KTNF, airing every Sunday at 9:00 a.m.) will bring to life this time in history and discuss its effects at the March public meeting.



Baphomet

March 19, 2017

**Southdale Library
7001 York Ave S, Edina, MN**

**1:00-1:15 p.m. - Social Time
1:15-1:45 p.m. - Business Meeting
1:45-2:00 p.m. - Break
2:00-3:30 p.m. - Presentation
4:00p.m. - Dinner at Q.Cumbers**

7465 France Ave S
Edina, MN

Inside this issue:	Cable Report 7
President's Column 2	Treasury Report 8
News and Notes 3	Member Submission 10
February Mtg Review 4	
Atheists in Action 5	
Member Submission 6	

President's Column

By Alyssa Ehni



Volunteering. What does volunteering have to do with atheism? On the surface, they may not seem related. However, the way in which we see the world is affected by our personal circumstances, beliefs, and experiences. To me, focusing my efforts on improving my community is inherently connected to my atheism.

As an atheist, I lack a belief in any deities. Two things I take away from this are that 1) this is the only life any of us have, and 2) there is no god that is going to improve my life or the life of anyone else. If my actions hurt someone, it is up to me to apologize and work to make things right. There is no absolution from a deity, only forgiveness from the person harmed.

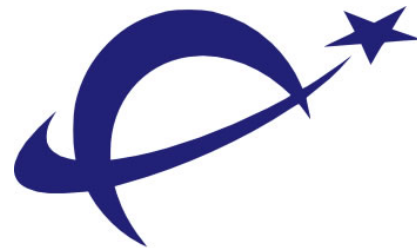
In a similar vein, when community members fall on hard times, there is no deity that is going to magically make things better. We can only rely on ourselves, on our support systems, and potentially on services like those provided by non-profits. Minnesota Atheists has established monthly volunteering opportunities to pool resources from our atheist community to help support local secular non-profits. I am proud of and thankful for all of the time, effort, and money our volunteers invest into making these recurring opportunities successful.

Minnesota Atheists hosts one shift each month at both the Family Place, which is a daytime homeless shelter; and The Food Group, a hunger relief network organization. Both organizations have told us that we are their only recurring group that shows up on a monthly basis. They have no other group that volunteers as frequently as we do.

Another compliment Minnesota Atheists has received on multiple occasions from the staff at the Family Place is that the residents look forward to the Saturdays when we volunteer. Where many groups serve sandwiches, pasta with plain red sauce, or frozen pizza, our volunteers make sure to create protein- and vegetable-heavy meals that appeal to children. In creating our menus we nearly always overestimate the amount of food needed and leave plenty of leftovers for the chef to incorporate into the upcoming week's meals.

Sure, it is great that we are seen doing good for the community openly, as atheists, but we are not volunteering strictly for organizational recognition. Those of our group who volunteer their time, efforts, and money, have done so for years and will continue to do so as they also genuinely care about helping the families and children in our broader community.

There are too many people to thank them all individually for their contributions. There are countless people who have donated their time, brought ingredients, or handed me cash to help cover the cost of meal ingredients and I am grateful to each one of them. Specifically, I would like to thank Eric Jayne for getting our organization's volunteerism started, Steve Peterson and Shirley Moll for organizing our time and hosting at The Food Group, and Nancy Bradshaw, Matthew Hertz, Caroline Brunner, Art Kallenbach, Joe Carriere, and Mahad Muhammad for their efforts in meal planning and hosting at the Family Place.



Cryptogram By George Francis Kane

Rfa Wvljr Snabtnabr fsj alaxrat s isee hariaab xfklyf sbt
jrstra. Rfsr isee nkjr ha macr fvdf sbt vncladbshea. Ia xgket
bgr scclgza rfa jevdfrajr hlasxf.

Fkdg E. Hesxm, K.J. Jkclana Xgklr Pkjrva, nspglvro
gcvbvgb vb *Azaljgb z. Hgslt gw Atkxsrvgb*

(Answer on page 9)



News and Notes

By George Francis Kane

In the opening days of Donald Trump's presidency, he issued a ban on travel to the United States by residents of seven predominantly Muslim nations – Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, and Somalia. Several states, including Minnesota, went to court to stop the implementation of this travel ban. Infuriated that television and print news sources were covering these attempts to block his executive order, Trump labeled the press “the opposition party.” He accused “the very dishonest press” of ignoring terrorist attacks, adding “they have their reasons, and you understand that,” without saying what those reasons were.

To back him up, the White House released a list of 78 terrorist attacks from 2014 that they claimed were underreported. The list was a sloppy hodge-podge, replete with misspellings throughout. It included incidents that dominated news coverage for days, such as the attacks in Brussels, Nice, Paris, San Bernardino, and Orlando. The list also exposed White House bias in the terrorist attacks that were omitted. The only terrorist incidents listed were those for which a claim could be asserted that they were inspired by Islamic religious fervor, as if Muslims were the only terrorists.

Just the day before the release of the list, Alexandre Bissonnette, a white nationalist, self-described Christian Crusader and fan of Donald Trump, fired into a prayer meeting at the Quebec Islamic Cultural Center, killing six and wounding 19. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau quickly condemned this as a “terrorist attack,” but it apparently does not fit President Trump's definition.

White nationalist organizations justify their ideology with a politicized interpretation of Christianity, just as paramilitary organizations like ISIS justify themselves with Islam. Groups like the Ku Klux Klan, the Army of God, the Phineas Priesthood and Sovereign Citizens all profess devotion to the Christian God. The disciples of these groups have committed many terrorist attacks here in the United States. For example, Frazier Glen Miller is a past leader of the Carolina Knights, a paramilitary organization closely allied with the Ku Klux Klan. In 2014 Miller killed three people in a shooting spree at the Jewish Community Center in Overland Park, Kansas. Convicted of the three murders and of the attempted murder of three others, Miller is awaiting execution.

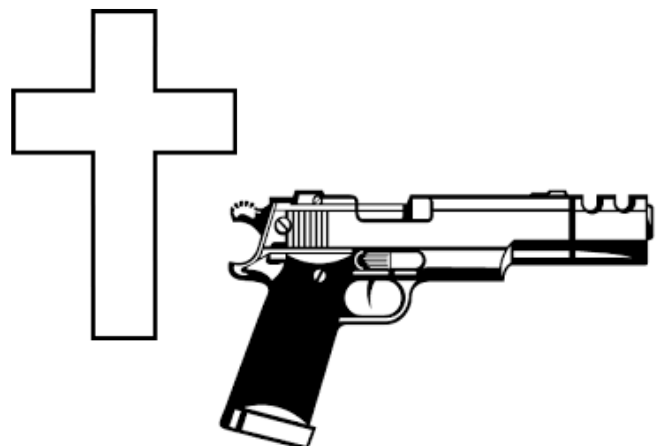
In June 2015, Dylan Roof fired into a prayer service at the Emanuel African Methodist Church in Charleston, South Carolina, killing nine. He later said that he did it in the hope of igniting a race war. In his blog, Roof had praised white

Christian extremists and posed in photos with Nazi paraphernalia.

In November 2015, Robert Lewis Dear attacked the Planned Parenthood Clinic in Colorado Springs, killing three and injuring nine. His wife filed a document in a divorce proceeding that stated “He claims to be a Christian and is extremely evangelistic He says that as long as he believes he will be saved, he can do whatever he pleases. He is obsessed with the world coming to an end.” He posted to an internet discussion board “Turn to JESUS or burn in hell. WAKE UP SINNERS U CANT SAVE YOURSELF U WILL DIE AN WORMS SHALL EAT YOUR FLESH NOW YOUR SOUL IS GOING SOMEWHERE.”

Robert Daggart at least did not succeed in killing anyone. A member of several paramilitary groups, Daggart confided to an FBI informer that he intended to attack a Muslim community in Upstate New York with an M4 carbine with 500 rounds of ammunition. He pleaded guilty to making a “true threat” to commit the massacre. Astonishingly, the judge struck down the plea bargain because the allocution did not contain enough facts to prove a “true threat.” Daggart then ran as an independent candidate for Tennessee's 4th congressional district, and garnered 6.4% of the vote.

Rudy Giuliani, a Trump surrogate during the electoral campaign, related in a television interview that Trump came to him after criticism that his campaign pledge to stop immigration by Muslims violates the separation of church and state. Giuliani bragged that he rewrote Trump's pledge to address threats of terror, disguising the order's intent in order to pass constitutional muster. Clearly a ruse; if its intent is to prevent extremist mass violence in the United States, where is the plan to prevent terrorism by Christian militants?



February Meeting Review

By Ron Lien

Is Human Activity Changing Animal Brains?
Presentation by Dr. Emilie Snell-Rood, Professor in the Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior at the University of Minnesota



Dr. Emilie Snell-Rood

Human-induced environmental change is everywhere: climate change, invasive species, growth in cities, and changing landscapes for agribusiness purposes. Organisms that most successfully cope with rapid and novel environmental changes are species with: pre-adaptation advantages, such as cliff dwelling birds which can adapt to tall structures in cities; evolutionary tracking abilities like antibiotic-resistant bacteria (one example increased its resistance 100x in a mere 11 days); dispersing abilities; the ability to adjust behavior and development (exploit new resources) such as the New Caledonia Crow which learned to create a hooked instrument out of a twig to extract a food source (grub) from a tree and the Great Tit bird that learned in the 1930's to tear the foil from the tops of milk containers left on doorsteps.

An important question is, "What do we need to conserve today for some level of biodiversity for tomorrow?" Biodiversity provides many benefits from pollination, fuels, bio-inspiration, and photonics. Non-human species have solved problems from which we humans have and can learn.

Birds and 10 small mammals, because of the good natural history documentation over many years, were the primary source of research. It appears that several lines of thought have emerged from studying non-human species' response to the human environment. Big brain (in proportion to body size) species tend to adapt better to rapid, novel environmental changes by avoiding cars, by figuring out new ways to feed, and by better avoiding predation. There are significant costs with having a big brain. Metabolically a big brain is more expensive in that it requires more nutrition, time, energy, and trial and error to develop. Furthermore, big brained

species reproduce later, produce fewer offspring and require longer time, energy, and care to fully develop.

A longitudinal study of the brains of small mammals, mice and voles found that urban mammals had 5-10% greater cranial capacity than rural representatives of their species about 90 years ago. However, the brain size of these urban mammals has since been decreasing. The conclusion is that it was an advantage to have a big brain initially to thrive in the new and novel environment, but as the number of feral predators decreased and more food sources became available the big brain was no longer an advantage. Interestingly, the cranial capacity in rural insects is increasing relative to their urban counterparts as agribusiness creates other sources of change to their food source and landscapes.

Nutrition, from both micro- and macro- nutrients, also affects brain growth. The effects of fertilizers, increasing garbage, and road salt are important factors changing animal brains being researched. Salt is a crucial micro-nutrient; 350,000 tons of road salt are applied each year in the Twin Cities. Studies on milkweed have found that road-side milkweed has 11 to 30+ times the sodium as prairie milkweed. This is important for deciding what species should be planted on roadsides, according to the tolerance levels of plants and herbivores.

In the question and answer period it was noted that a group of Shakespeare enthusiasts released starlings, an invasive species, in New York City. Further research showed they posed a threat to airplanes, and costs US agriculture approximately \$1 billion/year. It was pointed out the Norway rats are now thriving well in cities, because the number of predators is declining and abundance of food sources is increasing. The brains of domesticated dogs and cats were discussed. Because of breeding aggression out of dogs, and presumably cats, humans have changed the brains, if not in size, certainly in composition of our 4-legged friends.

Across primates and birds, bigger brained species tend to:

- Reproduce later
- Have longer developmental periods
- Have fewer investment w/ greater care per offspring

Atheists in Action: Belle Plaine Veterans Memorial

This is submitted to address some issues relating to the story on the Belle Plaine Veterans Memorial, published in the Star Tribune on Jan. 20, 2017.

I was taken aback by a supporter of the Christian Cross who said this was not an expression of religion. If that were true, why do Christian churches have a cross adorning the tops of their steeples, and why do Christians wear crosses to express support for their religion? The cross is a specific religious symbol, so let us all agree.

As for the religion of veterans, I went to the VA's page of emblems available for grave markers. There are close to 100 options, including several variations of the Christian cross, such as the Latin Cross. The options include symbols of almost every known religion – Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Humanists, Unitarians and atheists; as well as the option of 'none.' These religious emblems represent all veterans who have served in the U.S. military. To the military's credit, they want to accommodate each honorably discharged veteran in their personal religious or non-religious choice. That is something that is missing from the Belle Plaine memorial. It represents just one religious preference. To the residents and veterans of Belle Plaine, do not be angry. Your intentions are laudable, but take this as an opportunity to honor each veteran in their own religious or non-religious tradition, and leave no soldier who honorably served out of your memorial. It can be done and your community will become an even healthier place.

Steve Petersen

This letter was published in the Star Tribune on January 23.

The following letter was sent by one of our members to the mayor and city council members of Belle Plaine.

Mayor Meyer and Council members Coop, Chard, McDaniel and Stier.

February 14, 2017

Regarding Limited Public Forum and Veteran's Memorial Park

Dear Mayor and Council members,

We all agree that honoring veterans is the correct thing to do. I am a member of The Freedom from Religion Foundation, Minnesota Atheists and the Humanists of Minnesota, and each of these organizations agrees that honoring veterans is laudable. Where and how it is done, however, does matter. The Veteran's Park is public property, so the religious views of all of the fallen soldiers should be respected, not just the majority's preference. The Bill of Rights is a check on the government's ability to suppress minority rights. It is a check on the actions of the Mayor and City Council to endorse government religious preference on public property.

This debates is highly emotional and can bring out the worst in people's discourse and actions. As leaders in your community, I ask you to use your platform to move the conversation to what brings out the best in each of your citizens. Currently, there is a minority viewpoint in Belle Plaine that feels alienated and is being marginalized by a vocal group of citizens who feel they have the right to impose their religious views on others with public resources. The Council's decision to establish a "Limited Pubic Forum" does not resolve any part of this issue and will just further alienate citizens. Whose view gets in and whose views are left out? The Veterans Administration honors almost 100 different religious traditions with grave markers and also non-religious atheists. Not all veterans in Belle Plaine or across the country are Christian or even religious. If Belle Plaine is not ready to accommodate the religious beliefs of all who have served honorably, their memorial does a disservice to all veterans.

The motto of the veterans memorial should be "leave no veteran behind." I think this should be the shared and heartfelt goal of all parties. The Belle Plaine Veterans Memorial Park and the sculpture were without controversy for years until the sculpture with the Latin cross was added. The artist behind the sculpture should be properly honored but on private property where his religious expression can be displayed in context. I urge the Mayor and Council and citizens of Belle Plaine to return the public memorial to the original intent of honoring all veterans.

Religious freedom is well established in Belle Plaine; that is reflected in the diversity of churches. That freedom, however, is threatened when government and religions mix, and government picks a religious favorite. A vote to restore the historical nature of the Veterans Park and untangle religion and government is a vote to protect the First Amendment and the right of each citizen to express their own religious or non-religious preference. Religious freedom works best when the heavy hand of government is kept out of establishing religion or prohibiting the free exercise of religion.

-Steve Petersen

Do Jehovah's Witnesses Vote?

By James Zimmerman

Jehovah's Witnesses are politically neutral. Or, at least, they are supposed to be.

Often, when I've delivered presentations about my former religion, attendees ask about the political bend of Witnesses. I mention that they don't vote. Actually, most members of the religion seem to have little knowledge of political candidates, elections, or parties. For example, as an eighth-grader, I once brought home an assignment from American Government class. Among the questions on the worksheet was: Name one of the Representatives for Minnesota? Neither I nor my parents could think of a single one. We looked in our encyclopedias but weren't sure the information was still current. My dad ultimately called the mother of one of my classmates – also a Witness – and she said her daughter had also struggled with that question. Thankfully, this woman was married to a non-Witness, and he knew the name of our local rep.

But, pressing further, a few people have asked if Witnesses are generally conservative or liberal. This is a frustrating dichotomy regardless, but it's even more difficult to surmise a guess on behalf of an apolitical group.

Primarily, Witnesses view all governments as evil. They understand them as necessary in our present world – but under the Devil's control. Though they appreciate the freedoms afforded them in many of the world's democracies, and though they are swift to take advantage of legal means to protect and advance their causes, they believe that all governments will collectively be dismantled by God in the near future. They pray on behalf of Witnesses living in oppressive regimes and will write to officials in countries where Witnesses are banned. They also celebrate any widening berth a government grants Witnesses, viewing this as fulfillment of bible prophecy.

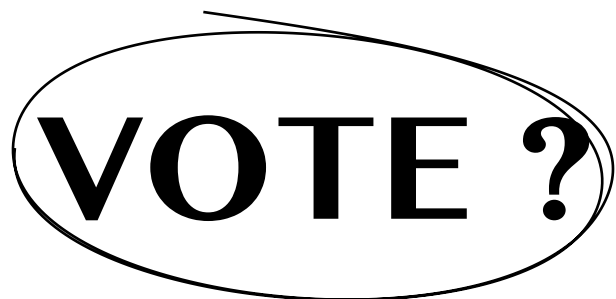
Like most secularists, Witnesses believe in the complete separation of church and state. In fact, they view any appeals to the supernatural in the public sphere as grossly misplaced. When they hear public prayers – such as those often delivered prior to a town hall meeting – they shake their heads in disgust. The frequent mention of God in George W. Bush's first inaugural address made several Witnesses – myself included, as I was still a Witness then – wonder if his words were signaling the onset of the final stage of the End Times. High religiosity in political candidates and office-holders causes nervousness among Witnesses because they know they don't fit in with the nation's dominant religion, and they know that those who push their religion hardest into the public sphere are the ones most likely to restrict the freedoms of religious minorities, Witnesses included.

With their strong stance on church-state separation, their disdain for armed conflict, and their dismay at our current environmental degradation (unlike most fundamentalists, Witnesses not only accept human-made climate change as real, but perceive it as another sign of Armageddon's nearness), it might seem like Witnesses, if they were allowed to vote, would largely vote for liberal candidates. Indeed, that is how most of the former Witnesses that I know do vote. Perhaps, if the thousands of Witness Floridians had been allowed to vote back in 2000, that state's electoral outcome might have been known within hours, instead of devolving into the mess it became. Or perhaps the thousands of Witnesses living in states with close results in our most recent presidential election could have tipped the tally in favor of someone qualified for the office.

However, Witnesses view many of the world's problems as intractable issues that can only be repaired by God and, hence, don't believe that any politician – irrespective of their sincerity or intentions – can make any headway regarding climate change, overpopulation, pollution, or any other pressing problem. Additionally, Witnesses are against abortion (for any reason), gender equality, and LGBT rights. So I'm not surprised that a sizeable minority of the former Witnesses I know have identified more strongly with conservative mores.

Another aspect to consider is the person's life prior to becoming a Witness. If they were of a conservative bend prior to joining the Witnesses, they are likely to continue in that mindset if and when they leave. But for many, myself included, membership in the Witness religion came at birth. Thus, the rationale for nearly all of their viewpoints is predicated on the religion. So when I discontinued my life as a Witness, I had to ask myself: Now that I no longer had to abide by Witness-endorsed arguments opposing abortion, was I still opposed to abortion? Now that I no longer saw environmental issues through the lens of bible prophecies, did I still care about the planet? Now that I no longer believed voting was a sin, would I engage in the political process?

This essay originally appeared at Foes of Faith: freethoughthouse.com/foes-of-faith/



Cable Report By Steve Petersen

We were not able to tape a program this past month because of an unexpected illness of our certified studio person with Minneapolis Telecommunications (MTN). That would have been our last taping at MTN as we are moving to Saint Paul Neighborhood Network (SPNN) in the coming months. There are several reasons for the change. MTN has been in decline with aging equipment, poor maintenance and out-of-date media delivery. SPNN has a studio that has upgraded to HD cameras and digital recording, and live streaming coming in the near future. Moving to SPNN will enable us to enhance our programming to adapt to changing media platforms. We will be able to do live programming with audience participation. With the digital media we will be able to upload our podcasts immediately after completion of the program. Additionally, SPNN is open seven days a week.

If you are already a member of SPNN, please contact me or a board member and let us know because we are interested in your assistance.

We are actively looking for people to host and produce programming. If you have ideas on programming or interest in hosting please get involved. Contact Steve Petersen at address@mnatheists.org.

Cable Crew: George Kane, Brett Stembridge, Shirley Moll, Steve Petersen, Les Stordalen, Grant Hermanson and Art Anderson .

Podcasts: MinnesotaAtheists.org. Available via iTunes and YouTube which are made possible by Grant Hermanson. To date, our channel has had over 261,000 downloads.

To whom it may concern,

I am writing on behalf of **March for Science - Minnesota**, a non-partisan, volunteer-based organization focused on mobilizing against the unprecedented efforts to cut support of science, innovation, evidence-based policy making, and the efforts to censor fact in favor of opinion through gag-orders and media blackouts.

Recent policy changes have caused heightened worry among not just scientists, but the public at-large. The incredible and immediate outpouring of support for this cause from people of all walks of life has made clear that these concerns are shared universally and are not merely a matter divided by political lines. It is of great concern that policymakers have a tendency to mischaracterize science as a partisan issue leading to the rejection of scientific evidence in favor of party loyalty rather than truth. It's time for people who support scientific research, education, access to knowledge, and evidence-based policies to publicly take a stand on a level which is impossible to ignore.

This is not a march to promote scientists. The March for Science champions higher education, publicly funded research, and openly communicated science as a driver of collaborative innovation and the basis for answering the complicated questions posed to society.

We unite as a diverse, non-partisan group to call for science that upholds the common good, and for political leaders and policymakers to enact evidence-based policies in the interest of the public whom they represent. We are working to protect and defend science funding, regulatory agencies, and evidence based policy-making in recognition that science plays a vital role in the progress and sustainability of society.

On April 22, 2017, we will join together as scientists and concerned citizens to march on the state capitol in Saint Paul and make our voices heard by our fellow citizens and policy makers. We believe that Minnesota Atheists shares and appreciates these values, and we are hopeful that, together, we can enact positive change for the betterment of Minnesota.

This said, we would like to request official endorsement of our effort by Minnesota Atheists and promotion of the cause both to its members and affiliates.

Sincerely,
Geoffrey A. Rojas, PhD
Outreach Coordinator, March for Science - Minnesota

Minnesota Atheists Reply:

Geoffrey,
Minnesota Atheists would like to officially endorse the March for Science. We are glad to promote the cause to our members and affiliates. Thank you for reaching out to us!

Heather Hegi
Chair, Minnesota Atheists



January Treasury Report

by Chris Matthews

Radio Fund

- \$200 George Kane
- \$100 Mark Nelson
- \$30 Nancy Ruhland
- \$15 Mark Paquette
- \$10 August Berkshire
- \$10 Rachel Wilson
- \$172 cash, 5th Sunday Fundraiser
- \$537 Total Radio Fund**

General/Visibility Fund

- \$100 Jim Mueller
- \$70 Michelle Tjernagel
- \$20 Justine Hartz
- \$10 Nancy Ruhland
- \$5 Edward Lubinski
- \$5 Ana Macias
- \$5 anonymous
- \$215 Total General/Visibility Fund**

Total Income \$752

Current Building Fund \$136,564

Top Expenses

- \$2,500 2017 Baseball Game Sponsorship
- \$1,025 Radio Show

Atheists Talk Radio

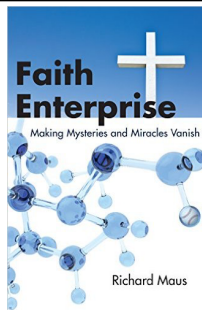
LIVE every Sunday from 9:00 to 10:00 am at

AM950 KTNF studios in Eden Prairie, MN.

Livestreaming is provided by AM950 KTNF at

am950radio.com/listen-live.

AM 950 KTNF



Catholicism Embraces Abortion, an excerpt from Faith Enterprise

By Richard Maus

The following quotes of the Catholic Church define its position on human life.

“God-given human life is God’s own property. . . . **Every child, from the moment of conception on, has a right to life**” [bold emphasis added]. (YOUCAT 383)

The zygote is God’s property, not the parent’s property?

“God alone is Lord over life and death. Except in the case of legitimate self-defense of oneself or another, no one may kill another human being.” (YOUCAT 378)

God is in control of life and death, especially for his property — except in self-defense. Which contradicts the Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair, Bishop of Toledo, who said, according to the teaching of the church, “that it is not morally acceptable to destroy one human life, even in its embryonic stage, in order to save another human life.” (July 5, 2011)

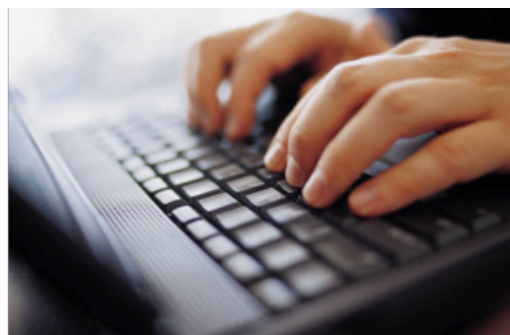
“He created human beings and let them develop according to the internal laws that he gave to each one so they would reach their fulfillment.” (Pope Francis, VIS October 27, 2014)

“In [God’s] hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.” (Job 12:10, CCC 2318) When it comes to life, according to the Church and the Bible, God is the decider.

“Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God and it remains forever in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end.” (CCC 2258)

This bears emphasizing: **Human life is sacred because from its beginning it involves the creative action of God.**

(continued on page 10)



If you would like to respond to something you saw in *The Minnesota Atheist*, please send it to:

editor@mnatheists.org

We value your thoughts. Thank you.

Cryptogram Answer

The First Amendment has erected a wall between church and state. That wall must be kept high and impregnable. We could not approve the slightest breach.

Hugo L. Black, U.S. Supreme Court Justice, majority opinion in *Everson v. Board of Education*



Secretary's Report - February

By Tim Berry

- It was moved, seconded and passed that we write checks for \$175.00 for membership and \$150.00 for training to SPNN to use their studios.

Complete meeting minutes are available to dues paying members by contacting Tim at sec.mnatheists.org.

At the business meeting before the February 19 public meeting, the following unopposed slate of candidates was elected to the board of directors by acclamation.

President	Alyssa Ehni
Associate President	Art Kallenbach
Chair	Heather Hegi
Associate Chair	Georgia Hancock Tsoi
Treasurer	Chris Matthews
Secretary	Hertzey Hertz
Directors-at-Large	August Berkshire Eric Jayne Mike Sasse

Complete meeting minutes are available to dues paying members by contacting Tim at sec@mnatheists.org.

Call for April Articles

We welcome contributions from all readers of The Minnesota Atheist. While we cannot guarantee that your submission will be accepted for publication, we will carefully consider anything that is related to atheism. We would especially like to receive contributions which provide profiles of individual atheists and which report atheist-related events in the wider community.

Because we are a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization, we cannot print articles that support or oppose a specific candidate, but we can print articles that support or oppose specific causes. Article length should ideally be 500-1000 words and no more than 2000 words.

Please send submissions to the editor, Jenny Nolan at editor@mnatheists.org by 11:59 p.m. on March 22. All submissions may be edited for style and length.

We look forward to receiving your submissions. Without readers like you The Minnesota Atheist would be needlessly constrained in its breadth and depth.

Call for Newsletter Editor

Minnesota Atheists is in the search for a new Newsletter Editor for this publication. This is an unpaid volunteer position. We are looking for someone with a little experience who has access to software to produce a quality newsletter. The Newsletter Editor works with the Editorial Board in deciding what is to be included in the newsletter and in proofreading.

Our current Newsletter Editor, Jenny Nolan, has plans to move out of state this year, so we are starting our search ahead of her move. Candidates will have time to discuss with Jenny the details of the position and to join the Editorial Board before transitioning into the position.

If you are interested, please email Heather at chair@mnatheists.org

Catholicism Embraces Abortion, an excerpt from Faith Enterprise

By Richard Maus

(continued from page 8)

“The human being is made in the image and likeness of God. And we all carry within us the breath of life from God, and every human life, the Bible tells us, is under the special protection of God.” (Pope Benedict XVI, Feb. 6, 2013)

Even a birth physical defect or severe mental handicap is made in the image and likeness of God?

“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” (Jeremiah 1:5)

“He created us, He governs us, He nurtured us even in the womb, brought us into the world, and still supplies us with all the necessities of life and maintenance.” (CCT)

Well . . . almost.

“I ask everyone to continue to pay special attention to this most important issue of respect for human life from the moment of conception . . . safeguarding every human being from the very first moment of his or her existence.” (Pope Francis, May 12, 2013)

“Everything that exists depends on God and continues in being only because God wills it to be.” [bold emphasis added] (YOUCAT 44)

Abortion, said Pope Francis, is a “scientific problem because there is a human life there, and it is not lawful to take out a human life to solve a problem.” (Catholic League)

But, we celebrate the crucifixion of Jesus in every Catholic Mass.

Was he not the Son of man (human) and was not the crucifixion intended to solve a problem?

“He not only gives them being and existence, but also, and at every moment, upholds and sustains them in being, enables them to act and brings them to their final end.” (CCC 301)

The Bible, the Catholic League, two Popes, and three different Catholic catechisms all agree: God creates life at conception and then owns it, nurtures it, is responsible for it and is responsible for ending it.

“Every child, from the moment of conception on, has a right to life.” [bold emphasis added] (YOUCAT 383)

Let’s see how God does. Let’s examine some scientific data regarding pregnancy in God’s natural world. In nature, 50 percent of all fertilized eggs are lost before a woman’s missed menses. (UCSF Medical Center) Studies reveal that anywhere from 10 to 25 percent of all clinically recognized pregnancies end in miscarriage. Miscarriage is a term used for a pregnancy that ends on its own within the first 20 weeks of gestation. (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists)

This means nearly 62¹ percent of conceptions are lost or miscarry before the twentieth week. God is batting about .375¹ here. “At no point in time does something that he [God] has created fall out of his hands.” (YOUCAT 49) But, if conditions regarding the pregnancy are not suitable, and since the pregnancy is still in the hands of God, God ends it. God aborts it.

Science has even identified some of the ways that God misses: fertilized eggs that harbor chromosome abnormalities

(most common cause), fertilized eggs that don’t implant, blighted ovum, hormone problems, mom’s health, infections, trauma to uterus, diabetes, age of mother and father. In all these cases and even in the cases where the mother might be somewhat responsible (e.g., the mother avoids available pre-natal medical care), we don’t label the miscarriage as a murder. It happens. Again, for God, the end justifies the means.

Couldn’t God simply have skipped the conceptions in the first place as a way of avoiding his acts of abortion? God certainly foresaw what was going to happen. He could have made it look natural, since not every sperm/egg encounter results in a fertilization. Some theologian needs to explain why God would allow a conception followed by a natural, thus God-driven, abortion.

What if external conditions are not suitable, such as rape, incest, accident, or a pregnancy not wanted for a myriad of social, economic, and physical reasons? Why should a baby be born into an environment where it is not wanted or its chance of a happy survival is nil? Shouldn’t the mother have something to say here? Shouldn’t she at least be allowed the option of following God’s example? After all, God also had no trouble killing innocent embryos in Noah’s flood (Genesis 7,8) and in Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:25) and at the Passover slaughter (Exodus 12:29), the Midianite attack (Numbers 31:17), or when Joshua leveled Jericho (Joshua 6:21). And, it might be easy to assume there may be many pregnant unsaved mothers at the end of the world.

“The mother Church, like Jesus, teaches by example. . . .” (Pope Francis, September 10, 2014)

“God’s action is the model for human action.” (CCC 2172)

In *Roe v. Wade* (January 22, 1973), the Supreme Court of the United States deemed abortion a fundamental right under the United States Constitution. Again, the people, via the court, have decided, and this time agree with the de facto Catholic position: Humans need to follow God’s example. Thus, if things are not going correctly, abort.

Note the following reference (superscript) abbreviations:

1. Corrected from original text – See God Typos
- CCC - Catechism of the Catholic Church
CCT- Catechism of the Council of Trent
VIS – Vatican Information Service
YOUCAT - Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church

The above is excerpted and printed with permission from Part V “Catholicism” of the recently released book, *Faith Enterprise: Making Mysteries and Miracles Vanish*. While making the case for science, *Faith Enterprise* answers the question: What is it about Christianity and Catholicism that makes atheism so attractive? Visit: faithenterprise.info

© Copyright 2016 Richard Maus - All rights reserved

Upcoming Events

Craft Beer Series: Flat Earth Edition Saturday, March 11, 4:30 p.m., Flat Earth Brewing, 688 Minnehaha Ave E, St Paul

Secular Family Night Saturday, March 18, 6:30-9:00 p.m., Dakota Unitarian Universalist Church, 13001 County Road 5, Burnsville

March for Science Saturday April 22, 11:00 a.m., Minnesota State Capitol, 75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., St Paul. See Meetup to join us on a chartered bus we are taking to the march so we don't have to find parking at the capitol.

Atheist Night with the St Paul Saints Saturday, August 12, CHS Field, 310 5th St E, St Paul MN. The only professional sports team in the country to hold an atheist night.

Atheists Talk Community Brunch 1st Sunday of every month at 10:30 a.m., Q. Cumbers, 7465 France Ave S, Edina.

Godless Gamers Every Sunday at 2:00 p.m. and Thursday at 6:00 p.m., Fantasy Flight Games Center, 1975 County Rd B2, Roseville.

Atheist/Agnostic Alcoholics Anonymous Every Sunday from 6:00-7:00 p.m. and Wednesday from 7:00-8:00 p.m., Health Recovery Center building, lower floor, 3249 Hennepin Ave, Minneapolis. Based on A.A., minus beliefs in any form of a God.

Freethought Toastmasters Meeting 1st and 3rd Monday of every month from 6:30-8:00 p.m., Larpenteur Estates Party Room, 1280 Larpenteur Ave W, St Paul. freethought.toastmastersclubs.org

Freethought Dinner Social 2nd and 4th Monday of every month from 5:00-7:00 p.m., Davanni's, 8605 Lyndale Ave S, Bloomington.

Freethinking Females 2nd Monday of every month at 7:00 p.m., Claddagh Irish Pub, 7890 Main St N, Maple Grove, and 4th Monday of every month at 7:30 p.m., Sweeney's Saloon, 96 North Dale Street, St. Paul (Note, two different locations). Shattering the myth that Atheist groups are male dominated with a female's only event.

Volunteer Food Packing 2nd Thursday of every month at 1:00 p.m., The Food Group, 8501 54th Ave N, New Hope.

Blasphemer's Brunch 2nd Saturday of every month at 10:30 a.m., Pizza Lucé, 800 W 66th St, Richfield.

Minnesota Atheists Board Meeting 3rd Wednesday of every month at 6:30 p.m., Amherst H Wilder Foundation, 451 Lexington Pkwy N, St Paul. All Minnesota Atheists members are welcome.

Bowling for Deities Last Saturday of every month at Noon, Memory Lanes, 2520 26th Ave S, Minneapolis.

For more events, visit www.meetup.com/minnesota-atheists



Minnesota Atheists Membership and Donations

- One-year student membership \$10
- One-year individual membership \$35
- Three-year individual membership \$90
- One-year household membership \$45
- Three-year household membership \$115
- One-year sustaining membership \$75
- Three-year sustaining membership \$200
- Life membership \$600

Donations are tax deductible. Membership fees are deductible for the amount beyond their fair market value.

Student memberships include a subscription to the PDF version of *The Minnesota Atheist* delivered by email. All other memberships include a subscription to the printed version delivered by postal mail. If you would prefer the PDF version delivered by email, please check the box and provide your email address.

Minnesota Atheists
PO Box 120304
New Brighton, MN 55112

Please make checks payable to Minnesota Atheists.
Students, please enclose a copy of your fee statement or school identification.

General Fund \$ _____
 Building Fund \$ _____
 Radio Fund \$ _____

Name: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email (required for student memberships and email subscriptions): _____

Minnesota Atheists

Positive Atheism in action since 1991

Minnesota Atheists is dedicated to building a positive atheist community that actively promotes secular values through educational programs, social activities, and participation in public affairs.

Minnesota Atheist Board of Directors

Board Email
board@mnatheists.org

President
Alyssa Ehni
pres@mnatheists.org

Associate President
Art Kallenbach
apres@mnatheists.org

Chair
Heather Hegi
chair@mnatheists.org

Associate Chair
Georgia Hancock Tsoi
achair@mnatheists.org

Secretary
Hertzey Hertz
sec@mnatheists.org

Treasurer
Chris Matthews
treas@mnatheists.org
763.428.3424

Directors-at-Large
August Berkshire
dir1@mnatheists.org
612.868.2267

Eric Jayne
dir2@mnatheists.org

Michael Sasse
dir3@mnatheists.org

The Minnesota Atheist Newsletter

Editorial Board
editor@mnatheists.org

Editorial Board
George Kane
nup@minn.net
651.488.8225

Heather Hegi
chair@mnatheists.org

Shirley Moll
srmoll@comcast.com

James Zimmerman
zgoatee@gmail.com

Editor
Jenny Nolan
editor@mnatheists.org

Chief Photographer
Richard Trombley

Membership and Change of Address
Steve Petersen
address@mnatheists.org
651.484.9277

Minnesota Atheists Media Public Relations Chair

Emily Matejcek
pr@mnatheists.org

Atheists Weekly Email (AWE)
Chris Matthews
awe@mnatheists.org

Cable TV Chair
Steve Petersen
cable@mnatheists.org

Webmaster
Clint Buhs
Grant Hermanson
web@mnatheists.org

Podcasts Chair
Grant Hermanson
podcasts@mnatheists.org

Minnesota Atheists Goals
Minnesota Atheists practices positive, inclusive, active, friendly, neighborhood atheism in order to provide a community for atheists, educate the public about atheism, and promote separation of state and church.

Minnesota Atheists Affiliations

Minnesota Atheists is affiliated with the Atheist Alliance of America, Atheist Alliance International, American Atheists, The American Humanist Association, the Council for Secular Humanism, The International Humanist and Ethical Union, and the Secular Coalition for America.

Minnesota Atheists Membership

Regular members: 218
Life members: 43
Meetup members: 2,400

Minnesota Atheists Honorary Members

Hector Avalos, PhD
Dan Barker
Gerald Erickson, PhD
Annie Laurie Gaylor
Dick Hewetson
Robert M. Price, PhD



The Minnesota Atheist March 2017
Published by Minnesota Atheists
PO Box 120304
New Brighton, MN 55112
612.588.7031
info@mnatheists.org
Copyright 2017 by Minnesota Atheists.
All rights reserved.