



THE MINNESOTA ATHEIST

April Public Meeting - The Women's March and Activism with Alicia Donahue



On January 21, 2017, thousands of people marched at capitols across the nation, in Washington, D.C., and in cities around the world in recognition that women's rights are human rights. The mission was to send a strong message to our newly elected administration of Trump and Pence, on their first official day in office. Around the world almost 5 million people marched toward equality, justice, and human rights making the Women's March the biggest protest in US History; and with 100,000 participants here in Minnesota it was the biggest protest in Minnesota history.

Alicia Donahue, as part of the leadership team of the Women's March Minnesota, oversaw the engagement and street team efforts. This included social media presence, engagement, merchandise, and coordination of volunteers.

Alicia Donahue has dedicated her career to advocating for those in need and giving back to the community. She graduated from the University of Minnesota in 2012 with her Masters in Social Work. Since then she has worked tenaciously to protect the rights of one of Minnesota's most vulnerable populations, individuals with disabilities.

Join us to hear from Alicia as she shares her experience organizing the Women's March Minnesota. She will talk about what is next for their organization and will answer any questions you have.



April 23, 2017 (the fourth Sunday)

Brookdale Library
6125 Shingle Creek Pkwy
Brooklyn Center, 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
4:00 p.m. – Dinner at Panera
6064 Shingle Creek Parkway
Brooklyn Center, MN

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President's Column

By Alyssa Ehni



This Earth Day, April 22, 2017, the March for Science will take place in many cities around the globe. The march is for those who value education and scientific research, and support the scientific process and evidence-based policy. According to the March for Science's webpage, "The March for Science demonstrates our passion for science and sounds a call to support and safeguard the scientific community. Recent policy changes have caused heightened worry among scientists.... The mischaracterization of science as a partisan issue, which has given policymakers permission to reject overwhelming evidence, is a critical and urgent matter."

Science provides a means for gathering information about the world, and plays a large role in societal progress. Minnesota Atheists, like March for Science, believes that public policies should be based on evidence and address a benefit to society. Our public policy positions are available on our website mnatheists.org. Although we limit our public policy positions to separation of state and church issues, many of them are tied to science and scientific research. Some examples include:

Stem Cell Research

Stem cells have the capability of developing into specialized cells. There are high expectations that they will provide useful treatments for diseases such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, spinal cord injuries, stroke, burns, heart disease and diabetes. Research using fetal stem cells is, however, opposed by many religious groups because they are derived from aborted fetuses or excess fetuses produced for in vitro fertilization.

Minnesota Atheists holds that research with stem cells has the potential to benefit many people, and should not be restricted. We oppose bans and restrictions on this research because laws should be based solely on secular reasons, and not on religious doctrines.

Religion in Public Education Curriculum

In the teaching of science, public schools need to adopt a curriculum that is approved by the scientific community. For example, evolution is a theory that has been accepted by established science. Religious stories of creation by supernatural means have no basis in accepted science and are matters of faith. Intelligent Design is a supernatural claim that cannot be verified empirically, makes no predictions, and is not falsifiable.

In the non-science curriculum, public education should not display any bias toward religion. Schools should teach about the influence of religion on culture and society, but without endorsing religion or religious ideology.

Sex Education in Public School

Public schools should provide a sex education curriculum that is consistent with the research on what is effective and helpful to the health of students. An abstinence-only program that is taught with a religious motivation violates separation. Abstinence may be advocated only in conjunction with instruction in safe prophylactic practices.

Accordingly, our organization has endorsed the March for Science. I encourage members who are able to attend and show your support for the scientific community. Information about March for Science can be found at marchforscience.com and marchforsciencemn.com. A group from Minnesota Atheists will bus to the march together (thanks Nancy!); if you would like to join us, information can be found on our meetup page.



Cryptogram By George Francis Kane

Nqhvrkqj hpt cpq'v tqcydfvnqc hpt nvvdkwtvy vp Jpc.
Jpc lpd hpt kf brydy hpt fbyym nbnh nuu vry ohfvdykyf
pl vry bpduc, nuu vry grnuuyqjyf vp ptd kqvyuukjyqgy.
Hpt fkomuh vtdq hptd okqc pll nqc fnh Jpc ckc kv.
Cd. Nddpbnh kq Gndu Fnjnq'f Gpqvngv



News and Notes

By George Francis Kane

In my February column, concerning questions of separation of church and state that are likely to become major issues early in Donald Trump's presidency, I mentioned the repeal of the Johnson Amendment. To recap, this is an amendment to the 1954 law restricting the political activities of 501(c)(3) tax exempt organizations. The amendment was introduced by then-Senate minority Leader Lyndon Baines Johnson, who was facing opposition in his election campaign that was heavily funded by two tax-exempt organizations. Johnson's amendment prohibited tax-exempt organizations to support or oppose any candidate, or to contribute money to any electoral campaign. This amendment has come under heavy criticism in recent years from conservative Christian ministers who have tried to challenge the law with sermons endorsing political candidates, daring the Internal Revenue Service to try to revoke their tax exemption. They claimed that government review of the contents of their sermons is a *prima facie* violation of the first amendment prohibition against "restricting the free exercise" of religion. Organizations supporting secular government have all supported the Johnson Amendment, to prevent tax-exempt contributions from being used to finance political campaigns.

Donald Trump owes a considerable debt to the religious right for his election as president. It was therefore no surprise when, during his address to the National Prayer Breakfast, he promised "I will get rid of and totally destroy the Johnson Amendment and allow our representatives of faith to speak freely and without fear of retribution."

It took no time before action to enact Trump's pledge got underway. Immediately afterward a draft was leaked of an Executive Order purporting to restore religious freedom. Most of its content mirrored state RFRA's, designed to privilege religious objections to laws prohibiting discrimination in public accommodations, but it also prohibits the Department of the Treasury to penalize, to deny tax exempt status or to disallow the charitable tax deduction to any person or religious organization for taking a position on political issues from a religious perspective. This would seem to open the door to churches to support or oppose political candidates. This is only a draft, and Trump has so far not issued this order, but when he does he will want to follow it up in Congress. Any executive order can be rescinded by the president's successor, as Trump has done with several of Obama's.

But bills to end the Johnson Amendment were already introduced in Congress. A month earlier, Rep. Walter B. Jones,

a Republican from North Carolina, introduced H. R. 172, titled "To restore the Free Speech and First Amendment rights of churches and exempt organizations by repealing the 1954 Johnson Amendment." This bill would delete from the statement in Section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code listing the requirements for an organization to be tax exempt the words "and which does not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distributing of statements), any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office". The bill further states that its provisions shall not invalidate or limit any provision of the Federal Election Campaign Act, but is this really true? If churches are permitted to participate in political campaigns, what will stop them from taking money that was donated to the church, which the donors write off from their taxes as charitable gifts, and donating it tax-free to a political campaign fund or a PAC?

A better legislative attempt was revealed the same day that the leaked draft of Trump's executive order was published. This was introduced into the House by Representatives Steve Scalise of Louisiana and Jody B. Hice of Georgia as H. R. 781, titled the "Free Speech Fairness Act." An identical bill was the same day introduced into the Senate by Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma, S. B. 264. Rather than deleting text from section 501(c)(3), as the Jones bill does, it adds text stating that the tax exemption shall be retained if the organization participates in a political campaign solely in the content of statements made in the ordinary course of its customary activities, incurring only *de minimus* costs. This would permit a minister to endorse a candidate in his sermon, but not to print a campaign flyer to insert into the church newsletter, because of printing costs.

But is this enough to preserve the separation of church and state? A priest is free to preach to his congregation, for example, that they are required by the standards of their faith to vote for the candidate opposed to women's right to abortion. They would say that it is only a minor extension of the church's customary moral advocacy. On the other hand, government monitoring the content of sermons is surely an excessive entanglement of government into religion.

The IRS is making no attempt to enforce this, anyway. Our attention should be focused on strengthening safeguards against tax-free donations to churches making their way into political campaigns.

March Meeting Review, D & D and The Satanic Panic

By Matthew Hertz

Our March monthly meeting was a great opportunity for those who have heard about "Dungeons and Dragons", or "The Satanic Panic", but had no idea what they were and how they might be related. "Hertzey Hertz and Daniel Hanson, both avid "D&Ders" gave us a great talk on the history, and the melding of the game and social movement.

Dungeons and Dragons (D&D for short) is a role-playing game that started in 1974. That is, it is a game that is generally played without a board. Each player controls a character in the game, and each character has special abilities that give them unique powers. The leader of the game, known as the Dungeon Master, makes up a scenario ahead of time for the group of players to 'play in'. All the action in the scenario is "acted out" verbally. Think of it as a group of people getting together to tell a fantastic story. One person knows the overall setting and some details, while other members of the group take on a character in the story, and get to control that character's actions. With a group of 5 – 10 people, the story can go just about anywhere!

The Satanic Panic was a moral panic that started in the late 60's/early 70's that had millions convinced that Satanism was on the rise, and was infiltrating our youth through music, games, care givers and even cartoons. Since D&D centered on fantasy figures, (elves, demons, magic users, orcs, etc.), it became the perfect target for this movements animosity.

And don't think that the satanic panic was unique, don't forget the witch trials of Salem, Comic books in the 50's, music (back masking), and book banning. As far as this latest

surge of panic, we had the Mason Murders, the Zodiac Killer, The Alphabet Killer, and many other strange criminal activities to thank for its rise in popularity.

The connection between D&D and the moral panic, was the case of James Dallas Egbert III, a 16-year-old child prodigy. In 1979 Egbert made news by disappearing from his room at Michigan State University. He was an enthusiastic player of D&D, and a rumor spread that it was the game that drove Egbert to disappear into the steam tunnels of the University, thinking that he was playing a more realistic version of the game.

From there, several well-known conservative religious leaders jumped on the satanic panic bandwagon, and the race was on to see who could come up with the strangest connection between the game and cult groups. It even made it to a major segment on 60 Minutes, the 700 Club, and a 2-part special on Entertainment Tonight, hosted by Geraldo Rivera.

While the panic itself began to fade, especially after many of the leaders and authors of conservative authors were shown to be frauds, the overall premise that D&D is evil, and somehow part of a satanic-like cult, continues to this day, though on a much smaller, and quieter, level.

Overall the talk was excellent, well researched, and truly fascinating. Even old-time D&Ders like myself found some new tidbits to ponder over, and lots of wonderful memories to bring to the forefront, and share with friends and family.

Atheists in Action: The Johnson Amendment

The following letter was published in the Duluth News Tribune on March 25, 2017

Religious conservatives, having contributed significantly to President Donald Trump's election, are leveraging their political capital to change a 1954 section of the IRS code called the "Johnson Amendment," named for then-Sen. Lyndon Johnson. This law prevents tax-exempt 501c3 organizations, including churches, from participating in electoral politics, lest they lose their tax-exempt status.

For over 60 years this law has been accepted as a reasonable application of the constitutional principle of separation of church and state.

Those wishing to change it see it as an infringement upon free speech.

We who oppose changing it contend it has never seriously prevented religious believers from making their moral and political views known. Moreover, we believe changes now being proposed in the House bill would provide yet another avenue for special-interest money to corrupt elections while surreptitiously taking a religious tax exemption.

Christians especially should be aware of those who secretly

could give large sums of money to churches and clergy in exchange for political endorsements from the pulpit. Remember when Jesus said, "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God that which is God's." By encouraging politically tainted contributions, they are in danger of rendering unto Caesar that which is God's.

History, with few exceptions, has shown that when church and state have become politically entwined, the state loses its mind and the church loses its soul. No one should want either to happen.

America must remain a free-speech democracy and not become an authoritarian theocracy. A strict separation of church and state best protects freedom of speech and freedom of religion. Changing the Johnson Amendment threatens both. Tell your members of Congress to vote no on HR 6195.

Larry Johnson and Bill Van Druten

The writers are members of the Lake Superior Freethinkers. Bill van Druten has been a featured speaker at a Minnesota Atheist banquet and interviewed on Atheist Talk Radio.

Atheists in Action: Belle Plaine Veterans Memorial

The following letter was printed in the March 15, 2017 Belle Plaine Herald

In reading Vincent Carraher's Letter to the Editor in the March 8 issue, I was impressed that Mr. Carrher clearly lays out a Belle Plaine resident's concern based on the Constitutional principle that each citizen has the right to stand up and petition their government to not give preference to one religious view over another or no religion.. This case the Veteran's public owned park, where an ad hoc group of citizens put a memorial made by a beloved family member friend and veteran who had recently died in the park without consideration as to how that addition would impact the city.

The addition of the Latin cross to the sculpture makes it a religious statement. Regardless of how citizens now attempt to remake the cross into something other than the most recognized symbol of Christianity today. There is a reason both the Catholic and Lutheran churches in Belle Plaine have Latin crosses on their steeples. There is a reason Cindy's Diner had a Large Latin Cross on their property for several weeks because it is an expression of their religious beliefs.

When a sculpture with a cross ended up on the public park a complaint was going to happen. When that complaint came and was followed up by a letter from Freedom From Religion Foundation the city knew it needed to take action. The ad hoc group who put the cross on public property in honor of their loved one has unintentionally taken the city and its citizens on an emotional journey into division, countless hurt feelings and worse of all veterans' feel they are not being properly

respected.

I have been traveling through Belle Plaine on Hwy. 169 for about 50 years. I have stopped at several places for meals, fuel, snacks and apples often. When the helicopter was installed at the Veteran's memorial, it would always remind me to think of family members and friends who are veterans. The park was well thought out and placed. Now I will think of it as a place where religious privilege has won out over equal respect.

For those of you who are so accustomed to seeing the cross as part of your everyday life you may not see it as overtly religious because you see it from a majority perspective. To atheists and other minorities we view the cross completely differently. When we see it as overtly Christian and when the cross ends up on public property we see that Christians are welcome but atheists and others are not.

When the sculptor included the cross they were exercising their right to religious freedom when it was moved to public property the cross made the display liable to government establishment of religion. The government and its property belong to every citizen equally.

The Limited Public Forum solves nothing but continues the prolonged agony of division and hurt feelings of citizens and veterans alike.

My mother always told me the sooner you come clean about a bad decision, action or inaction, the easier the healing will be. The citizens of Belle Plaine know that, you just have not come to grips with how to get there yet!

Steve Petersen

Member Well-being Committee Announcement

The Well-being Committee was formed to address the ongoing needs of members who are experiencing short-term life challenges. This committee is requesting volunteers who are looking for opportunities to provide some support to members of Minnesota Atheists in need. If you are interested in volunteering, please call 612-868-2267 or email well-being@mna.org. More information to follow.



Republican Atheists Seek Board Members

Newly launched US-based organization Republican Atheists is seeking board members.

Be a part of a cutting edge organization that is creating a path in the US political realm for Atheist or non-religious individuals who are Republican or are generally supportive of the Republican Party. This is a voluntary position to contribute to the development of Republican Atheists to be an internationally recognized and respected organization.

This is a virtual position that is available to anyone in the world that meets the requirements listed below:

- Be an American citizen
- Identify as Atheist, Agnostic, Humanist or related
- Be a registered Republican or have growing interest to support the Republican Party

For more information about applying to be a board member please email info@republicanatheists.com.

Republican Atheists launched in 2017 and is based in the United States. The organization's mission is to be a voice for registered Republicans who identify as Atheist and non-religious.

Contact: Lauren Ell, president / RepublicanAtheists.com

Email: info@republicanatheists.com

Minnesota Atheists is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization and therefore does not endorse partisan political organizations. We publish the above press release only because it may be of interest to some of our members. – Editor.

Letter From the Editor

To the atheists of Minnesota,

Thank you for the opportunity to volunteer in the capacity of Newsletter Editor for the last three years. Putting the newsletter together was a great way for me to stay involved with an organization that I am proud exists. I have met so many wonderful people and seen so many moments of positive action and forward movement. I really enjoyed my time as editor and I am so excited to see what the new editor does with the newsletter. Milo Grika will take over starting with the May issue. I wish him the best and I know he has a great team on the editorial board.

I also enjoyed my time with Freethought Toastmasters and I am so grateful for the friendship and thoughtful words they gave me in the time I spent with them. They are a wise and wonderful group.

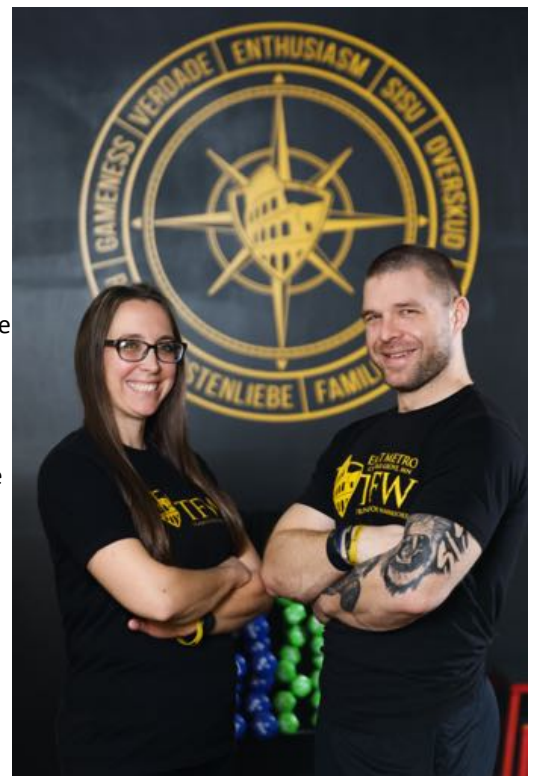
My family and I are moving to my home state of Wisconsin, in or around the Madison area, to open our own health and wellness center. We are very excited for the new adventure and hope that the Wisconsin atheist community is half as wonderful as the community here in Minnesota.

Special thanks to George Kane, Heather Hegi, Chris Matthews, James Zimmerman, Shirley Moll, and Steve Petersen for helping so much with the production of the newsletter.

Thanks again. Keep up the good fight.

Much love and peace,

Jenny Nolan



Should You Pay to Teach Catholicism?

An excerpt from *Faith Enterprise: Making Mysteries and Miracles Vanish*

by Richard Maus

In a 1787 letter to James Madison, Thomas Jefferson urged his protégé to “educate and inform the whole mass of the people. . . . They are the only sure reliance for the preservation of our liberty.” (FFRF)

The people of Minnesota felt similarly and signaled that clearly in 1857 in the state’s constitution, which not only supported public education but also prohibited aid to sectarian schools.

“Section 1. Uniform system of public schools. The stability of a republican form of government depending mainly upon the intelligence of the people, it is the duty of the legislature to establish a general and uniform system of public schools. The legislature shall make such provisions by taxation or otherwise as will secure a thorough and efficient system of public schools throughout the state.

Section 2. Prohibition as to aiding sectarian school. In no case shall any public money or property be appropriated or used for the support of schools wherein the distinctive doctrines, creeds or tenets of any particular Christian or other religious sect are promulgated or taught.” (Article XIII, Minnesota State Constitution, adopted on October 13, 1857, and generally revised on November 5, 1974)

Pope Pius XI felt otherwise about education. In 1939 he condemned public schools. He was not the first nor, unfortunately, the last to do so.

“I imagine every Christian would agree that we need to remove humanism from the public schools. There is only one way to accomplish this: Abolish the public schools.” (Robert L. Thoburn, 1986)

“The Church’s very mission is to defend and spread the truth. For this reason the Pope [Benedict XVI] has asked government leaders to continue to permit the Church freely to attend to the education of *young people for the common good*.” (L’Osservatore Romano, December 14, 2012)

“And, in the end, do not forget that the greatest legacy you can *give your children is faith*.” (Pope Francis, VIS, 10 January 2016)

“In fact, there is a determined effort by secularists to force Catholic Schools to tailor their strictures to the wisdom of civil law.” (Bill Donohue, November 19, 2014)

Yes!

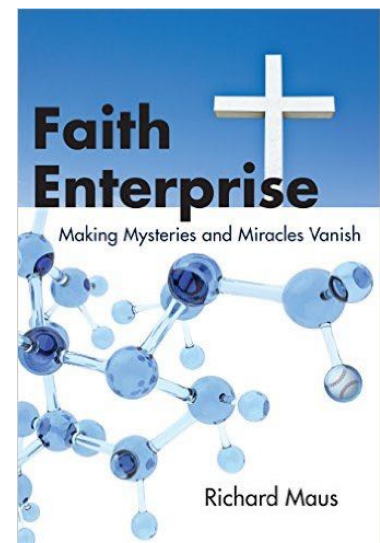
Sunday School should really not be called *school*. In a school one should learn real things. In school one should learn about reality, about rational thought and science.

Contrast this with Catholic parochial schools and religiously based *voucher* schools that are not supervised by the state, but are funded by state taxpayers’ money. They can teach anything—including religion, such as a “Qur’an-guided journey toward active global citizenship” (IRS) or instruction *presented from God’s point of view*—and they don’t require licensed teachers.

Think about what that teaching might include. As you do so, recall that at various points in its history the Catholic Church officially has not wanted people to:

- believe in the heliocentric solar system
- read the Bible in their own languages
- learn scientifically valid sex education
- know of Voltaire, Hume, Descartes, Pascal, Kant, Locke, Copernicus, and Kepler
- read Edward Gibbons’ *History of the Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*
- accept the Violence Against Women Act without *Conscience Protection* provisions
- speak in church if they are female
- accept reason independent of faith
- report the crimes of rape and torture of children to civil legal authorities
- obey civil authorities if they do not agree with the church
- stop oppressing women
- live without fear
- continue with democracy
- tolerate nonbelievers
- prefer secular education
- use birth control
- have an abortion even if their lives depended on it
- accept Jews (until 1964, at least)
- know it is saving them from sins it invented
- divorce

(continued on page 10)



Save The Dates!

2017 Freethought Potluck Picnics

Sundays, Noon-3:00 pm

Columbia Park, Northeast Minneapolis

June 11 – Sponsored by Camp Quest Minnesota

July 16 – Sponsored by the Humanists of Minnesota

August 13 – Sponsored by Minnesota Atheists

(August 12 is the date of the Minnesota Atheists-sponsored St. Paul Saints game, so plan for a great weekend!)



Cable Report By Steve Petersen

Our cable program is going through a transition. We have not produced any new programming for the past two months, and may not for another month. Our crew is in the process of being trained at the Saint Paul Neighborhood Network (SPNN.) SPNN has an updated studio, with HD cameras and digital recording capabilities. With the changeover we will end bicycling disk copies of our programs to cable outlets that are not able to take internet uploads. This will reduce costs and simplify logistics issues. We also will be able to upload to YouTube and iTunes and social media soon after taping our programs. After we become more accustomed to the studio we will be able to have live audience programming and the flexibility to schedule the studio any day of the week.

If you are or have been a member of SPNN we would be more than interested in connecting with you. If you have an interest in helping to produce programs or to

interview guests, or if you want to be interviewed on Atheists Talk cable and podcast programs, please contact Steve Petersen at cable@mnatheists.org, or let a board member know. We are interested in you if you are interested in us.

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.

February Treasury Report

by Chris Matthews

Radio Fund

\$50	Thomas Bauch
\$30	Nancy Ruhland
\$20	Jim Barrie
\$20	Jim Wright
\$15	Mark Paquette
\$10	August Berkshire
\$145	Total Radio Fund

General/Visibility Fund

\$10	Nancy Ruhland
\$6	anonymous
\$16	Total General/Visibility Fund

Total Income **\$161**

Current Building Fund **\$136,889**

Top Expenses

\$820	Radio Show
\$398	Newsletter Printing
\$325	Cable TV studio and training

Secretary's Report - March

By Chris Matthews on behalf of Hertzey Hertz

The board approved expenditures for additional SPNN training, and for fees for this year's May Day and Pride festivals and parades. In addition, the board discussed these topics:

- We will add a double-issue of the newsletter for May/June, in addition to the existing double-issues for July/August and November/December.
- The 2017 Saints game planning is proceeding smoothly.
- The Day of Reason event planning for May 4 is proceeding smoothly. The theme this year is "Protect the Wall".
- Public meeting planning for April (on the fourth Sunday) at Brookdale Library and May at Southdale Library.
- This year's T-Shirt will be red with white lettering. The back will relate to the "Protect the Wall" theme.

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

Call for May 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 April 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.

Cryptogram Answer

Anything you don't understand you attribute to God. God for you is where you sweep away all the mysteries of the world, all the challenges to our intelligence. You simply turn your mind off and say God did it.

Dr. Arroway in Carl Sagan's *Contact*

Atheists Talk Radio

AM 950 KTNF

Should You Pay to Teach Catholicism?

An excerpt from *Faith Enterprise: Making Mysteries and Miracles Vanish*

by Richard Maus (continued from page 7)

Our nation suffers the consequences of religiously set education agendas. Consider this statement in the A.C.E curriculum, a product of Accelerated Christian Education, Inc.:

"The curriculum conveys Biblical values and concepts considered foundational to meaningful interpersonal relationships and productive learning in such a way as to become life-shaping influences. . . . Some may question, 'Isn't evolution just an innocent, harmless little theory?' Absolutely not! It is a lie. . . . It is plainly understood from the Word of God and from the current state of the world that the theory of evolution is extremely damaging to children individually and to society as a whole. This is true for two reasons. First of all, the theory of evolution denies the principle of the individual's accountability to our Almighty and Holy God. It thus erodes the individual's moral foundation. . . . Second, the theory of evolution totally removes the basis for self-worth in our children. . . . Many people today, it appears, think secular professors and doctors know more about educating children than does God! Many parents have become convinced that modern science and intellectualism require them to believe philosophies centered around secular humanism, such as the theory of evolution. . . . We must stand upon what God Himself has proclaimed to be truth! God is truth, and in Him is no deceit." (A.C.E)

Now the above might not seem threatening if it were the theology of a small local congregation. But what if it's the deeply held faith of half the country?

All schools, at all levels, should be teaching critical thinking skills to every student in the state, just as we teach mathematics and English at every level. It would be helpful in understanding mathematics, science, politics, religions and sales pitches of all kinds.

This, unfortunately, is not the policy of the Catholic Church.

"Through the grace of the sacrament of marriage, parents receive the responsibility and privilege of evangelizing their children. Parents should initiate their children at an early age into the mysteries of the faith of which they are the 'first heralds' for their children." (CCC 2225)

Note: the Catholic Church made marriage a sacrament in 1562 at the Council of Trent.

"Catholic parents also have the duty and right of choosing those means and institutions through which they can provide more suitably for the Catholic education of their children, according to local circumstances." (CCL 793.1)

"Parents are to entrust their children to those schools which provide a Catholic education. If they are unable to do this, they are obliged to take care that suitable Catholic education is provided for their children outside the schools." (CCL 798)

Pope Benedict XVI expanded on this during his meeting with Catholic educators in Washington, D.C., in April 2008:

"*Teachers and administrators, whether in universities or schools, have the duty and privilege to ensure that students receive instruction in Catholic doctrine and practice.*" (Pope Benedict XVI)

Unfortunately, a majority of United States Representatives agree with giving foreign-controlled private schools a free rein to indoctrinate students as they wish. In writing about the new Every Student Succeeds Act (signed December 10, 2015), Congressman Kline stated,

". . . and the agreement prevents any federal interference in the *nation's private schools and home schools.*" (Northfield News, December 26, 2015)

"No child should be denied his or her right to an education in faith, which in turn nurtures the soul of a nation. . . . From this perspective one can recognize that the contemporary 'crisis of truth' is rooted in a 'crisis of faith.' Only through faith can we freely give our assent to God's testimony and acknowledge him as the transcendent guarantor of the truth he reveals. . . . A particular responsibility therefore for each of you, and your colleagues, is to evoke among the young the desire for the act of faith, encouraging them to commit themselves to the ecclesial life that follows from this belief. It is here that freedom *reaches the certainty of truth.*" (Pope Benedict XVI)

Who should pay for that Catholic indoctrination? According to Catholic Canon Law:

"Parents also have the right to that assistance, to be furnished by civil society, which they need to secure the Catholic education of *their children.*" (CCL 793.2)

Civil society pays for Catholic education? Remember that article in the Minnesota State Constitution? "In no case shall any public money or property be appropriated or used for the support of schools wherein the distinctive doctrines, creeds or tenets of any particular Christian or other religious sect are promulgated or taught." The First Amendment to the US Constitution offers some obstacles too, specifically the part that "prohibits the making of any law respecting an establishment of religion".

Note the following reference (superscript) abbreviations:

CCC - Catechism of the Catholic Church

CCL - Catholic Canon Law

CCT- Catechism of the Council of Trent

The above is excerpted and printed with permission from Part V "Catholicism" of my 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

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Upcoming Events

- Screening of A Better Life w/filmmaker Chris Johnson** Monday, April 17, 7:00 p.m., First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis, 900 Mount Curve Ave, Minneapolis. The Minnesota Premiere of 'A Better Life: An Exploration of Joy & Meaning in a World Without God'.
 - 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
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Students, please enclose a copy of your fee statement or school identification.

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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.

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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

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