



The Idaho Humanist

The Humanists of Idaho is a chapter of the American Humanist Association and the Council for Secular Humanism. We are a nonprofit corporation organized to promote ethical, democratic, and naturalistic Humanism in the state of Idaho through public awareness, education and community involvement.

May 2009

<http://HumanistsOfIdaho.org>

Idaho@humanists.net

Humanism is a rational philosophy informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion. It affirms the dignity of each human being and supports individual liberty consonant with social and planetary responsibility. Humanism advocates participatory democracy, the open society, human rights, and social justice. Free of supernaturalism, it recognizes human beings as part of nature and holds that all values—be they religious, ethical, social, or political—have their source in human nature, experience, and culture. Humanism thus derives the goals of life from human need and interest rather than from theological and ideological abstractions, and asserts that humanity must take responsibility for its own destiny.

—*The Humanist*,
Official publication of the
American Humanist
Association

President's Message

Time for Renewal

Spring is here, the sun is out, flowers are blooming, and it's time to move forward on many fronts. Humanists of Idaho continue our monthly dinner meetings with enjoyable fellowship for freethinkers of all stripes. We hear from interesting speakers, most recently on the state of health care in this country, and engage in occasional special activities.

Lloyd Lowe, President of the Boise State Secular Student Alliance, will regale us with stories from his and Andrew Choufrine's attendance in March at the "Darwin @ 200 (& other matters)" conference in Portland, OR. It was presented by the Humanists of Greater Portland and the Northwest Freethought Alliance.

Also on Tuesday, May 26, we will be holding elections. Here is your chance to "make it happen" if you are interested in moving our group forward.

We are planning a booth at Hyde Park Street Fair in September, and are looking for someone to spearhead organizing a Summer Solstice Picnic June 20 or 21. Or should that be combined with our June 22 regular meeting date? Come to our next meeting Tuesday, May 26 to help decide.

Billboard Update

It was great while it lasted: our "Beware of Dogma" billboard went up on March 4 and stayed up, unharmed, for the 2 months we contracted for. Early in May it was replaced by an ad for McDonald's iced Mocha drinks.

**Because Memorial Day falls on the 4th Monday of May, we will
be having our
HOI May Meeting - Tuesday, May 26th
on the Flicks Patio!!!**

The Humanist Perspective on Channel 11 Tuesdays at 6:00 PM

"The Humanist Perspective" now airs each Tuesday from 6:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., and then repeats at 8:00-8:30 Wednesday morning on Boise's local cable access television station, TVTV Channel 11 on CableOne. The Council for Secular Humanism (CSH) produces a weekly half-hour television program exploring issues of interest from a humanist point of view.

Humanists of Idaho Monthly Meetings

From 6:30 PM to 7:30 PM we are now the Humanist Supper Club. We invite everyone to arrive whenever they can for dinner and join the group for informal discussion and socializing. At 7:30 we will start our program.

May Meeting, TUESDAY, May 26th ON THE PATIO AT THE FLICKS!!

This month's program will be a report by Lloyd Lowe and Andrew Choufrine on the Portland conference "Darwin @ 200 (& other matters)".

4th Monday of the month
The Flicks in Boise
646 Fulton, at 6th and Myrtle
6:30 PM Humanist Supper Club
7:30 PM Program

HOI Officer Elections in May

It's that time of year again. May is the time we elect board members and special chairs. These are the people who keep our organization going. Right now there are only four of us holding all the positions. **We all would gladly hand over some of our responsibilities to anyone who would like to help out.**

The board of Humanists of Idaho consists of four officers: a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Our bylaws are online at <http://idaho.humanists.net/meetings.html>. The duties of the officers are as follows:

- The President is the spokesperson for the organization and leads the membership meetings and board meetings.
- The Vice President administers elections and assists the president as needed.
- The Secretary keeps the minutes of business meetings.
- The Treasurer checks the mailbox, writes and deposits checks, and gives financial reports for our operating funds account.

The following positions are non-board positions.

- Webmaster. Maintains and updates the web site and email account for the organization.
- Yahoo Group Administrator. Approves users who request to join the Idaho Humanists Yahoo group, and sends email communications to the Yahoo group.
- Newsletter Editor. Publishes and prints the newsletter
- Database Administrator. Maintains and updates the database of members and prospects used to generate mailing lists. Prints mailing labels for newsletter.
- Building Fund Treasurer. Takes up collection for and deposits checks into our Permanent Building Fund. This fund is a separate account from our operating account. By our rules, this person is not supposed to be a member of the board. 10% of membership dues must go into this fund. This ensures that deposits are made regularly and the fund remains active.
- Charitable Coordinator. Organizing participation in charitable activities such as answering phones for IPTV, sponsoring families for WCA, book drives for the local libraries, etc.
- Publicity Coordinator. Making sure meetings and other events are publicized and get listed in community calendars
- Program Chair – Leads the effort to identify programs for future meetings.

Nominations are open for all offices. If you would like to present yourself for nomination, please contact our Vice President Van Van Curen either by phone (376-5475), by email (CelebrantVan@aol.com), or at the meeting.

BUUF Discussion Group –Sunday, June 14th

Second Sunday of the Month at 11:00 AM

Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Library , 6200 Garrett, Garden City

Everyone is welcome whether you consider yourself a UU or not.

Book Review by Kris Hartung

**God: The Failed Hypothesis. How Science Shows That God Does Not Exist
by Victor Stenger**

This is a superb book, one of the best I have read on the topic. For me, in terms of clarity, conciseness, and presentation of convincing evidence, Stenger's argument rises above *The End of Faith*, *The God Delusion*, and *God is Not Great*, all of which are still great publications from the new era of atheists.

The beauty of "God: The Failed Hypothesis" is in Stenger's application of logic and scientific reasoning to invalidate the hypothesis that the Judeo-Christian-Islamic god exists. I explain it this way. The discipline of Logic provides a rule of inference called "modus tollens", which is a necessarily true rule stating that if the statement "If p, then q" is true, and if you can show that q is false, then you can deduce that p is false. It is an infallible rule of logic, used not just by philosophers and scientists, but in our every day lives where we apply common sense and practical reasoning. What Stenger does is begin by defining the concept of "God", by combining a set of attributes that are common across Judeo-Christian and Islamic theologies. These are attributes of "God" that most ordinary Judeo-Christians and Muslims would assert when asked to define their god. This is the "model" that he constructs from which he extrapolates the "god hypothesis". Stenger then argues that if this god exists and it is also true that it has these key attributes, then we should be able to observe certain events or phenomena in the world around us that validate these attributes. In other words, the existence of such attributes by a god that exists entails or logically imply certain observables. It follows, then, by applying the modus tollens rule of inference that if we can test and falsify these observables, we can deny that such a god with those key attributes exists. And this is exactly what Stenger does, by systematically falsifying the set of observables that are implied by the model, and attributes, of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic god, which he suggests demonstrates conclusively that a god with the defined attributes cannot exist. It is a powerful argument. Stenger does something that I wish all authors would do. In chapter 9, "Possible and Impossible Gods", he summarizes his entire argument in 2 pages and 8 points, all of which falsify one of the key attributes of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic god. For instance, he explains that a god who is supposedly responsible for the complex structure and design of our universe does not agree with the empirical data, and that the universe actually appears just as it should if there were no god.

He explains that there is no empirical evidence to support the assertion that we are endowed with god-given and immortal souls. He explains how there is absolutely no independent, unbiased, and conclusive evidence for any of the miraculous events described in the Bible, which are supposedly a product of divine intervention, and also that empirical data falsify many reported events in the Bible, such as Exodus.

He explains that the claim that God communicates directly with human beings by means of revelation "fails to agree with the fact that no claimed revelation has ever been confirmed empirically, while many have been falsified" and that "No claimed revelation contains information that could not have been already in the head of the person making the claim."

And he also describes how we can falsify the claim that "God" is the source of morality by means of empirical evidence that demonstrates natural origins of morality.

In short, the thrust of Stenger's argument simply demonstrates that the way we observe the world now via the empirical facts we have at our disposal, is exactly as it would be without a god. Yet as any good scientist would admit, Stenger states that as scientists we always have to remain open to the discovery of new empirical evidence. Hence, it is possible that in the future we could discover evidence that confirms the attributes of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic god, but as it stands, no such evidence exists, and all alleged studies that attempt to validate those attributes fail the test of good science.

Kris Hartung recently joined Humanists of Idaho.

Dissecting a Bible

A Critical Analysis of the Holy Scriptures
By D G Van Curen, Celebrant HSCCC

To purchase a copy directly from the
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1506 Rand St
Boise, ID 83709

Parenting Beyond Belief: Glass Houses

COLUMN By DALE MCGOWAN, Ph.D. For HumanistNetworkNews.org May 6, 2009

I've had several parents ask how best to deal with arrogance — especially in pre-teens, it seems — toward religious folks, especially extended family. "How do I keep my 13-year-old from sneering at other people for their beliefs when I frankly think they're pretty darn sneerable myself?" That sort of thing.

It's become such a common question that I included a story of mine in *Raising Freethinkers*—presumptuously inserting it into Jan Devor's otherwise excellent chapter titled "Secular Family, Religious World." (Editorship has its privileges.) In addition to clarifying the two different levels of respect about which I've written before — that ideas themselves have to earn respect, while people, as people, are inherently deserving of it — the best way to approach this is (if you'll excuse the phrase) by inviting him who is without sin to cast the first stone. I watch the odd bit of televangelism now and then. My son Connor (then 11) caught a few minutes of one program in which some outrageous thing was being foisted on a nodding throng

My boy reacted not to the idea itself, but by sneering at the people: "I just don't understand how those stupid people can believe stupid things that make no sense!"

"Hmm, yeah" I thought for a minute, then said, "Hey Con, could you go get me a Coke from the basement?"

"What?"

"A Coke. From the basement."

"I...but..." he stammered. "Why?"

"I'm thirsty. Please."

"But...I can't go into the basement by myself."

"Oh? Why not?"

"I...I just *can't*!"

"Oh," I said gently. "And...does *that* make sense?"

I quickly admitted to several irrational quirks of my own, like my completely over-the-top aversion to dead things (unless grilled), and my steadfast belief that M&Ms melt in your mouth but not in your hands, despite constant evidence to the contrary. There are surely many more quirks and irrationalities I carry around, but **being me, it's hard to see them**. Just ask Becca what they are — then cancel your appointments for the day.

Connor and I then went after the idea in question as we always do, but he was able to do so from a less self-exalted and slightly more empathetic perch — one fallible human thinking hard and well about the errors to which we are *all* prone, not some glowing eminence smirking at the foibles of creatures in the mud beneath his feet. **We all** have irrational beliefs and fears. Jumping at shadows and seeing faces in tortillas is a direct consequence of our deepest wiring — and all the new software in the world will never completely fix that mess. It's a good and great thing to try, to pull yourself as far up out of the muck as you can, but it's delusional to ever think you've completely escaped it, or to sneer too thoroughly at those silly fools you imagine you've left behind.

Now before I get a dozen furious e-mails, let me be absolutely clear. Reasoned critique is a great and essential thing, and I encourage my kids to go after any and all ideas on their merits. But eye-rolling arrogance toward those who support a given idea is *not* reasoned critique — and religious discourse is filled with examples of people on all sides who allow dismissive arrogance to cloud their judgment. Start with arrogance, saying, "I can't believe how stupid they are to believe xyz." and you have one foot on Ray Comfort's banana peel. Start instead with a little humility, saying, "I may be wrong about this, but..." and you have a much better chance of actually getting things right. We all live in glass houses, no matter how thoroughly we think we've attended to our own rationality. And that's not entirely bad. Recognizing that fact can keep us humble and, as a bonus, *increases* our chances of thinking well.

Dale McGowan, Ph.D., holds degrees in the arts and sciences from UC Berkeley, UCLA, and the University of Minnesota. He is the editor of the 2007 book Parenting Beyond Belief: On Raising Ethical, Caring Kids Without Religion.

HOI Membership

To those of you who have received this newsletter complimentary, complimentary subscriptions are for 6 months maximum. I hope you will decide to join our group. Membership in Humanists of Idaho entitles you to voting rights in the organization's elections and the privilege of holding an office. Membership dues go towards the group's charitable works projects, Humanist awareness, sponsoring the Humanist Perspective on TVTV and contributions to community organizations with humanistic interests.

Please fill out the form below and send in the payment for the level of involvement you wish to the address below.

Nancy Rolig, Secretary, Newsletter Editor and Membership Administrator

<p style="text-align: center;">Humanists of Idaho Board</p> <p>President: Paul Rolig377-0535 or roligpd@spro.net Vice President: Doug Van Curen:.....376-5475 or CelebrantVan@aol.com Secretary: Nancy Rolig..... 377-0535 or nrolig@spro.net Treasurer: Jan Rowe376-5475 or janiejolee1@aol.com</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Auxiliary Positions</p> <p>Webmaster/Yahoo Group Administrator:..... Van Van Curen 376-5475 OR CelebrantVan@aol.com Newsletter Editor/membership Administrator:.....Nancy Rolig 377-0535 or nrolig@spro.net 9877 W. Ripley St. Boise 83704 Charitable Giving Coordinator:OPEN Program Chairman:.....OPEN Permanent Building Fund:Paul Rolig 9877 W. Ripley St., Boise 83704</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Organization Information</p> <p>Your support of this local chapter with your membership, donations and ideas is greatly appreciated.</p> <p>Mailing Address: Humanists of Idaho P.O. Box 44913 Boise, ID 83711-0913</p> <p>Website: http://HumanistsOfIdaho.org Yahoo Group: idaho-humanists@yahoogroups.com Email Address: Idaho@humanists.net</p>
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Humanists of Idaho Membership and Donation Form

Name _____

Mailing address _____

City, state, zip code _____

E-mail address and phone _____

- \$25 **Individual** annual membership and Newsletter subscription
- \$45 **Family** annual membership and Newsletter subscription
- \$10 Newsletter subscription only (U.S. Mail or Electronic)
- \$___ donation to help promote public awareness of Humanism
- \$___ Humanists of Idaho Permanent Building Fund Donation
- I would like my newsletter sent electronically.

<p>U. S. Mail: Humanists of Idaho P.O. Box 44913 Boise, ID 83711-0913</p> <p>Newsletter/Membership Email: nrolig@spro.net</p>
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Moments & Milestones

Weddings and other family celebrations Custom designed to suit the needs & preferences of the participants located in Boise, but serving most of Idaho
*Services performed by **D. G. Van Curen***
A Celebrant, Ordained through the Humanist Celebrant Certification Committee

www.angelfire.com/id/vancuren/weddings.html



Humanists of Idaho
P.O. Box 44913
Boise, ID 83711-0913

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6:30 PM Humanist Supper Club, 7:30 PM Program

BUUF Senior Sages
2nd and 4th Thursdays of the Month, 9:30 AM at the Kopper Kitchen (2661 Airport Way)

Sunday, June 14th, 11:00 AM – BUUF Humanist Group
Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, 6200 Garrett, Garden City,