

Manitoba Humanist



WASN'T THAT a PARTY!

What an excellent turnout for our summer Solstice Party, especially with the unpredictable weather! The rain held off till the last few guests were packing up, and our extra canopy shelter wasn't needed. Praying to the weather gods must have helped!

It was great to socialize, welcome new faces, meet in person some friends we previously knew only from Facebook, and catch up with members who had been away for a while. Gatherings like this are the best way to develop a supportive and friendly Humanist community. People brought kids and dogs, and tons of great food! Thanks to all who contributed, and especially to our expert BBQ cook, Pat Morrow.

Our treasurer, Helen Friesen, supplied the plastic cups and somehow took home more than she brought. Guess that's our atheist version of the miracle of the loaves and fishes!



Should atheists discuss social justice? Page 3.



Todd De Ryck has lots of interesting suggestions! Page 4.



Published by and for the Humanists, Atheists, and Agnostics of Manitoba

HAM

www.mbhumanistsatheists.ca

Plan to join us in Morden this August! Details page 2.



Traveling this summer? Connect with humanists in other cities. See page 2.



COMING SOON!

All events are subject to change. Watch future newsletters, HAAM's website or Facebook page, or join us on Meetup for more information as it becomes available.

Join us! Get involved! Make new friends!

August

Friday 22nd to Sunday 24th. Morden Corn and Apple Festival. Stephen St between 4th and 11th St (south of Highway 3). <http://cornandapple.com/>

Well it's that time of year again everybody! The 2014 Morden Corn and Apple Festival kicks off on Friday August 22nd and goes till Sunday the 24th. We will be out there again asking people what they believe and why they believe it, and letting those who don't believe know that there is a community of people who are just like themselves. Our theme this year is **Science**: What it is, how it works, and why it's the most valuable tool our species has ever devised for understanding the universe. Join us for what will be some really good conversation, guaranteed!

If you are a paid member of HAAM we are always looking for volunteers for our information booth. Don't be shy! We will provide an orientation, and schedule new volunteers with members of our experienced outreach team. Also note that we do not approach or harass festival-goers; we wait for them to come and ask questions. It's fun and a great learning experience!

If you are not a member or cannot volunteer, make sure to stop by and visit us anyway!

We will be there Friday and Saturday 10 AM to 10 PM, and Sunday noon to 6 PM

TRAVELING THIS SUMMER?

Consider sharing experiences with some of your fellow Humanists in other cities. We all know that one of the things religion does well is promote fellowship and community. Visit a church of your own denomination anywhere in the world and you are instantly welcomed and accepted. Why shouldn't Humanists develop social networks and a sense of community, too? HAAM's outreach coordinator, Pat Morrow, may be able to help you find a group or contact person where you're headed, so don't hesitate to ask. You can also find groups on the Secular Directory website <http://www.seculardirectory.org/> or on MeetUp <http://www.meetup.com/>.

Here is a report from one of our members who traveled on business and dropped into a **New York City Atheists Meetup**:

- I got there 45 minutes after the meeting started. Author **Chris Johnson** was talking about the experiences that influenced the writing of his book **A Better Life: 100 Atheists Speak Out on Joy and Meaning in a World Without God**. He was showing video of a free-climber (much like free diving but a very dangerous hobby as you can imagine) - not quite sure how that relates to his book. He then talked about the perceptions of atheists by others, and experiencing or talking about death as an atheist. This book aims to crush common stereotypes about atheism. There is a good interview with the author on the Humanist Hour podcast (episode 96) <http://tinyurl.com/mv6q2ha>



Chris played some video clips of influential people featured in his book. Interestingly, one of the people in the clips was someone who taught for several years in Manitoba! Her name was Pat Churchland - not sure if anyone knew her - she currently lives in San Diego. He talked about a few other things Canadian - most notably Quebec & how the Quiet Revolution turned Quebec from a very Catholic place to the opposite.

There was a Q&A after the author's presentation. People were talking about much the same stuff like we do here. Surprisingly, they made no references to the Deep South or evangelical conservatives or Republicans. Most of the people there were clearly a fair bit older than me, though there were two younger ones including an Iranian who talked about how lack of religion can mean death. I talked to two people - one wanted to know if Canada was not as bad as the U.S., & made reference to how we pronounce the word about as "about", to which I corrected him and said it the way I say it LOL. Another suggested I come back to their future

events whenever I return. I brought back a copy of the newsletter they handed out at the meeting.

- Jay Woolston

PRIDE PARADE



There was no shortage of color and excitement at the Pride Parade! It feels great to live in a community where there is so much support for diversity. Among the groups represented: high schools, universities and colleges (Red River and U of W); churches (Unitarian, United, Mennonite, and even a group of Catholics); businesses (TD and Royal banks and lots of small businesses); labor unions (AFCW, CUPE, and MGEU); political parties (NDP and Liberal), the Wpg Police Pipe Band, and of course, HAAM! Above, executive members **Todd De Ryck** and **Donna Harris** carry our banner.

WHO SPEAKS FOR ATHEISM? (And What Can We Talk About?)

Recently, while visiting another online atheist community, I got involved in a heated discussion about the scope of subjects appropriate for discussion among atheists. Someone in the group had posted a link to an article published on AlterNet, entitled "**Hitchens, Dawkins and Harris are Old News: A Totally Different Atheism is on the Rise**". The article, by **Chris Hall**, discussed the changing face of atheism in the past few years. When the four Horsemen came to prominence a decade or so ago, the success of their books helped bring atheism into the mainstream. Each in their own way articulated the atheist perspective and brought our issues to the wider world.

Since then the internet has exploded with this subject and new bloggers entered the scene

almost daily. Atheist, sceptic, and humanist groups started up globally, and existing groups saw their membership expand. People who had previously been isolated in their non-belief found that community was right around the corner or only a mouse click away. It has been a very exciting decade for those of us involved. I am personally grateful to the pioneers who started the whole discussion.

But here's where some changes started to occur. As new voices joined the movement, it became apparent that we're not all on the same page regarding what topics to focus on or where we should put our activism. Different groups have formed, some with specific mandates. For example, The Freedom from Religion Foundation focuses mostly on church state separation, while American Atheists is focused on being bold and bringing atheism into the spotlight with billboard campaigns and frequent media appearances. Other groups might be more into bridge building or interfaith endeavours. Some focus on the evolution/creation debate. There are a lot of voices, all worthy of being heard.



In the article mentioned, the author spoke of people who want to bring social justice issues into the conversation. This particular subject area though seems to be quite controversial. Issues such as racism, poverty, or feminism receive quite a lot of pushback. Immediately, on any article touching on these topics, commenters rush in. Common objections include assertions that these topics have nothing to do with atheism, which is simply a lack of belief in god, no more, no less. Mission drift! Another common refrain is that people don't all agree on an issue, so therefore atheism cannot take a position either way.

My response to this is Bollocks! Although I'm sure dictionary atheists (those who claim that atheism means only non-belief with no other implications for any other aspect of their lives) must exist, I highly doubt they are involved in organized groups. And the groups that I'm aware of are already involved in these issues. For example, the group with whom I was having the

online discussion had participated in a Pride Event and a Habitat for Humanity build. Similarly, our group has hosted speakers on science and human rights, neither of which have anything to do with a strict definition of atheism. And it's not just because we all happen to have an interest in these other subjects. We host these events because humanism flows naturally from atheism, and our members are humanists who want to counteract the harm of religion. In the case of science, we are pushing back against faith based reasoning. We promote critical thinking because it's better. On human rights issues, we recognize that organized religion has been a huge roadblock to having those rights recognized for everyone.

So why the pushback on sexism, poverty, or racism? I don't know how anyone can argue that organized religion doesn't hurt women or the poor. Or that the tribalism and othering (separating people into 'us' and 'them') we see in the Bible or the Koran doesn't contribute to racism. Why is it so easy to want to help the LGBT community fight against religiously motivated harm, but not other groups that are also harmed? In the specific instance I'm discussing here, it was feminism that caused the most difficulty, and that may be worthy of a separate conversation all on its own. But the larger question remains, who speaks for atheism? It may be enough for some people to critically look at the bible, find no evidence for god, and call it a day. But it's not enough for me. There is no god, but there is religion and I want religion itself to lose power over us.

- Diana Goods

CHALLENGE YOUR MIND THIS SUMMER!

Looking for some summer reading? Want to expand your horizons with some fresh perspectives? Dawkins, Hitchens, Dennett, Harris are great writers, but there are many up-and-coming young minds out there to explore. Here is a great list of "next-gen" writers, bloggers, podcasters, etc. who are bound and determined that all people of their generation should become free, independent and critical thinkers who challenge religion at every turn.

David G. McAfee - We had a great conversation with him over Skype at our March meeting. Very active on Facebook and twitter, he is respectful and really inspires all who follow him to practice critical thinking and positive skepticism. He wrote "Disproving Christianity" and "Mom, Dad, I'm an

Atheist". Find him on Facebook at

<https://www.facebook.com/AuthorDavidGMcAfee>

CJ Werleman - An "in your face" type of writer, CJ is currently leaning a little more toward political writing mixed with atheism. For example, his upcoming book, to be released in June 2014, is entitled "Atheists Can't Be Republicans" (if facts and evidence matter)". He has essentially, with this book, in my opinion, called out any atheists who are libertarian-ish, and has named David Silverman (president of American Atheists) and Michael Shermer (Skeptic magazine) among them. Werleman is the author of four other books (Crucifying America; Koran Curious; Jesus Lied; and God Hates You, Hate Him Back) and a regular writer on AlterNet and Salon. His website is <http://www.cjwerleman.com/>

Michael Sherlock - Like Werleman, Sherlock is an Aussie with a "no holds barred" style. He does very extensive and detailed research. Sherlock wrote the "I Am Christ" trilogy, writes for Atheist Republic, and started the recent change.org human rights petition to abolish blasphemy laws. His Facebook page is <https://www.facebook.com/MICHAELSHERLOCK.AUTHOR>

JT Eberhard - mainly a blogger, he writes the blog "WWJTD (What Would JT Do?): Fighting Religion Tooth and Claw". (He's also a gamer, so there's some writing about that).

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/wwjtd/>

Joshua Kelly - Author of "Oh, Your God!: The Evil That is Religion". "From the New Atheist arguments of Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins to the material observations of Lucretius, Epicurus, and Democritus, the discussion of what religion is and the role it plays in our lives is the single greatest dialogue we can have" (book description). Find him on twitter

@JoshuaKelly116, or on his blog An Unbelieving Voice <http://neverstopthequestions.blogspot.ca/>

JD Brucker - author of "Improbable - Is There Any Reason to Believe in God?"

<http://jdbrucker.com/>

Christopher Krzeminski - author of "What Are You Without God?: How to Discredit Religious Thought and Rebuild Your Identity" and writer at io9.com. He was a guest on the No God Cast podcast, episode 10

<http://nogodcast.com/episode-archives-player/>

James Lindsay, PhD (mathematics) and author of Dot, Dot, Dot: Infinity Plus God Equals Folly and God Doesn't; We Do: Only Humans Can Solve Human Challenges. His blog (God Doesn't; We Do) covers extensive detailed discussions

with Christian apologists; he is relentless.

<http://goddoesnt.blogspot.ca/>

Dan Arel - Dan writes Op-Ed pieces for AlterNet and The Huffington Post. He is also a Special Correspondent for American Atheists, has a column in American Atheists Magazine, and is a contributing writer and editor for The Richard Dawkins Foundation <http://www.danarel.com/> I'm sure I've missed some that I should have included, but here's a great list of all kinds of resources, book, podcasts, Facebook pages, twitter handles, YouTube channels, etc.: *Atheist and Secular Debate*

<http://atheismdebate.freeforums.net/>

- Todd De Ryck

ON THE WEB

Recent episodes of Winnipeg's own **Life, the Universe & Everything Else** podcast that you won't want to miss:



Book Reviews: *Coming Out Atheist* (includes a great interview with the author, Greta Christina); *Mapping the Ocean Floor*; *Bad Pharma*; and the *Hungry Scientist Handbook*.

What have you changed your mind about?

Topics discussed include chiropractors, eating meat, feminism, and needle exchange programs.

Live from the Calgary Secular Church Minister Korey Peters preaches on the difference between the concepts of 'right' and 'good'.

LUEE podcasts promote secular humanism and scientific skepticism and are co-presented by HAAM and the [Winnipeg Skeptics](#). You can listen to LUEE on your computer or from your mobile device. Just search iTunes or Stitcher for "Life, the Universe & Everything Else", or visit

<http://lueepodcast.wordpress.com>.

OPERATION 'READ THE BIBLE'

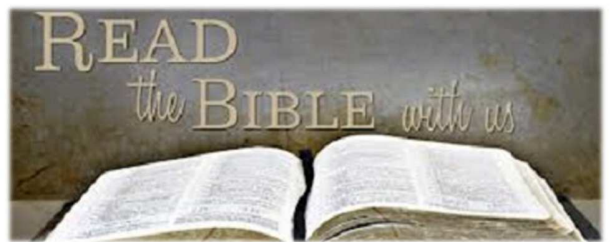
Welcome to HAAM's Bible reading guide! If you didn't start reading with us last month, don't worry about it. Just join now and continue on. Past newsletters, with more information, are on the HAAM website. Here are the July readings.

In the last few chapters of Exodus, God calls Moses up the mountain, where he gives

instructions about the building of the Tabernacle. While he is gone, Aaron makes a golden calf – uh oh! Yahweh doesn't like idol worshippers. We learn that Sabbath breakers and those who worship another god must be killed.

Next we will read Leviticus, the book about the Levites, the tribe from whom the priests were drawn. We will learn about the faithful enactment of God's rituals in detail – the rules for burnt offerings, instructions for priests, the treatment of various types of uncleanness, and prescriptions for holiness with references to sexual behavior, crimes, blasphemy, and sacrifices. A few highlights – bats are unclean birds, baby girls are twice as dirty as baby boys, what to do "if any man's seed of copulation go out from him", homosexuality is an abomination, don't wear garments of mixed fibers, children who curse their parents must be killed, and handicapped people must not approach the altar.

At the end of the month we will start the book of Numbers. In this book, the Israelites are charged with the task of taking up the Promised Land and enumerated for the march. Most of the first few chapters are spent describing the enumeration of the various tribes and the rules for the journey. Detailed instructions include how to deal with an unfaithful wife. But it gets pretty boring as all the tribes are counted.



Readings for the Week of

Jul 6: Ex 25-27; Ex 28-29; Ex 30-32; Ex 33-35; Ex 36-38.

Jul 13: Ex 39-40; Lev 1-4; Lev 5-7; Lev 8-10; Lev 11-13.

July 20: Lev 14-15; Lev 16-18; Lev 19-21; Lev 22-23; Lev 24-25.

July 27: Lev 26-27; Num 1-2; Num 3-4; Num 5-6; Num 7.

Please join the discussion on our Atheist Bible Study Facebook group. You can find it at <http://tinyurl.com/qf88xho>. Head over there, click 'join', and introduce yourself!

HAAM's Executive:

President Donna Harris
Vice President Heather McDonell
Treasurer Helen Friesen
Secretary Cheri Frazer

Members at Large:

Todd De Ryck
Chad Froese
Gloria Froese
Diana Goods – Librarian
Pat Morrow – Outreach
Bob Russell
Dorothy Stephens – Newsletter



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Yes, I would like to **BECOME A MEMBER** of
Humanists, Atheists & Agnostics of Manitoba

Name: _____

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**Household Memberships: Please give the
names of all additional Humanists in your
household 18 years or over:*

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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Membership Category:

- Individual Membership \$30.00
- Individual Limited Income \$10.00
- Household Membership* \$50.00
- Household Limited Income \$15.00
- Lifetime Membership \$1000.00 or more

** After July 1st, pay just ½ the yearly fee for the
rest of the year. After October 31st, pay full fee
and get the entire next year.*

DONATION (Tax receipts issued for all
donations of \$10 or more)

I would like to make a donation to HA²M of:

- \$10 \$20 \$30 \$50 \$100
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*Please DO NOT send cash in the mail. Make
cheque payable to: **Humanist Association of
Manitoba** and mail to: Humanist Association
of Manitoba, 7 Pinehurst Lane, Mitchell, MB,
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*Memberships are also available by credit card
on our website, or by cash or cheque at any
HA²M meeting or HA²M event.*

June 2014