

# Manitoba Humanist

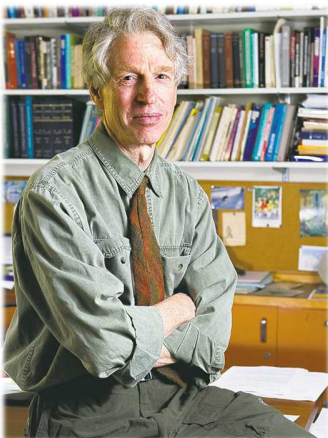
**IS IT  
ETHICAL  
TO TALK  
SOMEONE  
OUT OF  
THEIR  
FAITH?**



**Saturday May 9th, 5:30 PM**

CanadInns Polo Park, 1405 St Matthews Ave

Euthyphro famously asked, "Is it good because god commands it, or does god command it because it's good?" **Dr. Arthur Schafer**, in a recent 2-day course called "How to Do Ethics", explored the answer. For some, the obvious source of ethics is religion; but avoiding bad only to escape punishment from god reduces ethics to mere prudence. So how can we tell what's right and wrong? If religion is someone's only guidepost, is it ethical to talk them out of their belief? If religious belief gives people comfort in a comfortless world, should we try to deny them that benefit? Come find out from Dr. Schafer himself at our May dinner meeting.



Dr. Schafer is a Professor of Philosophy at the U of M, specializing in medical ethics and social issues. He is a renowned and fascinating speaker who has won a number of awards for excellence in teaching during his career, and is the media's "go-to" person for a learned opinion on news stories with ethical considerations. We are thrilled to have him as a guest at both our May meeting and the River City Reasonfest conference in September.

Our social time is from 5:30 to 6:30. Come for dinner, drinks, or just to visit. The meeting follows at 6:30 and then the presentation from 7:00 to 8:00. Late-comers and drop-ins are welcome, so if you can't make it for the start or stay till the end, don't worry about it. And you can still eat during the meeting if you're late - the buffet is open till 8:00.

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



**HAAM**

[www.mbhumanistsatheists.ca](http://www.mbhumanistsatheists.ca)



Planning to sit in the sun and  
read this summer?  
Join our Summer Book Club!  
The book we've chosen is  
bound to generate discussion.  
Details p 2.

Registration is NOW OPEN for  
HAAM's very first conference...  
River City Reasonfest!  
*Early bird rates apply*  
September 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>  
[www.rivercityreasonfest.org](http://www.rivercityreasonfest.org)

**River City**  
**REASONFEST**

## COMING UP!

If you're new to HAAM, welcome! *Our regular monthly meetings are always open to the public, but our other events are intended for members only.* If you would like to check us out, you are welcome to attend one or two events before becoming a member. After that, if you wish to continue to participate, we ask that you support the group by joining. Annual fees are affordable and assist with community outreach as well as our own activities. Memberships are available at the door.

Contact and membership info is on page 6. All events are subject to change, and some details may be TBA. Watch future newsletters, our website, Facebook page, or join us on Meetup for more information.

### June

**Monday June 1<sup>st</sup>, Bible Study Get-together**, 7 pm. This will be an informal, fun evening of conversation and an opportunity to celebrate (i.e. say "good riddance" to) the Old Testament. Do OT prophesies point to Jesus? A lot of people seem to think so. We will also look forward to the New Testament, which we have been assured will be better. It certainly couldn't be any worse!



No preparation is required and there is no test or requirement to have completed all the reading (almost no one has!). Just come if you're interested.

This event will take place at a private home in west Winnipeg unless our numbers become too large, so please RSVP to [mbhumanistsatheists@gmail.com](mailto:mbhumanistsatheists@gmail.com) to be notified of the location.

**Thurs June 11<sup>th</sup>, One Gay City: A History of LGBT Life in Winnipeg**, 6:30 PM, Red River College – The Roblin Centre, 160 Princess St, Room P107. This documentary screening will take viewers on an emotional tour of Winnipeg's LGBT community through personal stories, news headlines and archival images.

Prominent moments in Winnipeg history explored in the documentary include the first attempt of a gay couple to legally marry in Canada in 1974, a bitter struggle for human rights at the Manitoba Legislature in 1987, the election of North America's first openly gay mayor in 1998, and many other powerful stories.

Red River College's LGBT Initiative and University of Winnipeg Students' Association LGBT Centre are delighted to host this joint event during Pride Week.



<http://tinyurl.com/n6nwp7q>

**Sunday June 14<sup>th</sup>, Pride Parade**, Manitoba Legislature grounds. The rally to kick off the celebration begins at 11 AM, and the parade departs at 12 noon. HAAM members will again be meeting up just before the parade and participating as a walking group. We'd love to have more people to help us plan a fun theme. Contact us if you have ideas or can help, or just to let us know you'll be joining us. Stay tuned for more details.

**Saturday June 20<sup>th</sup>, Solstice Party and BBQ**, 5 PM, Assiniboine Park. We provide the basics (like hot dogs, hamburgers, and condiments). All you need to add is people, pot luck goodies to complete the meal, and a few lawn chairs, Frisbees, kids, pets, or whatever else will make the evening fun! Further details TBA.

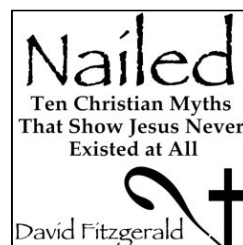
**Saturday June 27<sup>th</sup>, Garage Sale**, 9 AM to 3 PM, 1122 Crestview Park Drive (in St James, off Cavalier). To make it a success, we need all that great stuff you aren't using! So spring clean your closets and basements, and bring your gently used items to the May meeting or the June Solstice Party. If you have a large item, or a lots of things, or cannot make it to either of those events, please contact HAAM and we'll arrange pick-up or drop off.



If you can help out with the sale – either to set up beforehand or during the day, let us know. Otherwise, just show up and check out all the good stuff.

### July

**Wednesday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, Summer Book Club Meeting**, 7 PM, 77 Edmonton St. If you have always been a non-believer, or if you are an ex-Christian, you probably don't accept that Jesus was the son of god. But what do you believe about him? *A* - He was a real person whose powers were exaggerated by his followers. *B* - He was a fictional character created from myth, hope, and



imagination. Or *C* – You've never really thought much about it. Many of us would answer *C*. But the historicity of Jesus is a serious and contentious topic amongst biblical and historical scholars. The majority of experts have traditionally chosen *A*, but a small and increasing number now lean towards *B*.

**David Fitzgerald** is one of them, and he summarizes his position in a book called **Nailed! Ten Christian Myths That Show Jesus Never Existed at All**. As with any other argument, the burden of proof lies with those making

the claim; in other words, those who believe that Jesus was a historical figure ought to produce evidence, and Fitzgerald believes there isn't enough. At only 215 pages of reading (the rest is notes and references), he makes his case succinctly and clearly enough that one does not need a PhD in ancient history to understand it.

Fitzgerald explores and refutes 10 different reasons that Christians (or for that matter, any non-mythicist) offer for belief in a historical Jesus, including "Ancient historian Josephus wrote about Jesus", "Eyewitnesses wrote the Gospels", "Paul and the Epistles corroborate the Gospels", and "Christianity began with Jesus and his apostles". Come to the meeting where we will discuss the arguments for and against the historical Jesus. We will probably not reach a consensus opinion - after all, if the experts can't agree, how can we? But if you read the book before you come, we can have a lively evening sharing opinions and learning together.

There are 2 copies in the Winnipeg Public Library. It can also be ordered from McNally Robinson or in Kindle form from Amazon. **Jeff Olsson** – a former pastor who knows something about this subject – will be our host.

## August

**Friday 21<sup>st</sup> - Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup>, Summer Outreach at the Morden Corn and Apple Festival.** Once again, HAAM members will be out at one of Manitoba's most popular summer festivals. Save the date and plan to join us! Details to follow.

## EXPLOSIVE SCHOOL BOARD MEETING

1976 was the first year that Winnipeg #1 School Division did not open the morning exercises with the Lord's Prayer or Christian Bible readings. It was a big step toward a more secular school system - and we may be on the verge of another one. At the present time Manitoba's Public Schools Act states in section 80(2): "the school board SHALL pass a by-law authorizing instruction in religion in compliance with the (parents') petition." In effect, all that's needed to have your religion (or any other religion) taught in public schools at lunchtime or after class is the signatures of a few of the schools' parents, and your religion is in. No debate, no discussion.



A motion brought forward in April by trustee Lisa Naylor

asks the provincial government to alter a single word - change "SHALL pass a bylaw" to "MAY pass a bylaw". This tiny change in the act would allow school divisions leeway to accept or reject a petition for religious instruction. This motion was much discussed at a very, very long school board meeting attended by several HAAM members on April 20th.

Presenting in favour of the motion (our side) was HAAM's **Tony Governo**. A great deal of his presentation and this meeting was spent commenting on the only religious group on record that as ever taken advantage of the religious petition system - the Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF).

There were four presenters representing CEF at the meeting - two parents, a former volunteer, and the director of CEF Manitoba. They believe that the wording change seeks to undermine religious freedom and restrict parents' freedom to teach their own beliefs to their children. It doesn't, as trustee Naylor explained - the motion simply would give school boards the autonomy to evaluate religious programming being taught in public schools. At home, parents are free to teach their children whatever they choose.

HAAM VP **Pat Morrow** noted a common theme among the CEF speakers - their ability to punch gaping holes in their own arguments. The presentations included an innovative definition of the word 'recruitment', an ethnocentric attitude that allowed them to view others' beliefs (but not their own) as harmful, and an amazing display of prevarication, obfuscation, and utter frustration by the group's leader when he was faced with direct questions about CEF's position on sexual orientation, hell, and how their volunteers handle bullying.

It's unfortunate that all the highly religious presenters that night couldn't see what the real issue was; they are all victims of their own ignorance and religious indoctrination. They equate a loss of privilege with a loss of rights. It's up to us, the people of Manitoba, to change our Public Schools Act... The vote on this motion will take place May 4<sup>th</sup>. We'll keep you posted.

*This article is an excerpt from Pat's entertaining exposé of the night's events. For the complete play-by-play of all the shenanigans, read the full story on our website.*



At our **April meeting**, we learned how electricity is generated throughout the world, its impact on climate change, which sources are most dominant and growing fastest, and what the future of electricity generation might be.



There are approx. 4 billion people in the world without access to sufficient electricity to own a washing machine, refrigerator or stove. Two billion others might have access to some or all of these machines, while the other one billion have access to sufficient electricity (with some using too much). As a result, countries with large, and rapidly growing, populations are putting the highest priority on eradicating energy poverty. The cheapest, quickest to deploy, longest lasting and most



reliable electricity generation machines are powered by fossil fuels. This is the major reason why coal and natural gas are dominant globally and the fastest growing.

The details of how significant countries generate electricity were shown. Notably, France emits significantly less CO2 than Germany, largely because Germany has been decommissioning nuclear power plants and building coal, biomass, wind and solar (although wind and solar energy together account for only 17%), while in France, electricity has been dominated by nuclear power since the late 80's.

For the future, we must find ways to generate reliable, near-zero carbon emitting electricity. Canada's latest model of CANDU nuclear reactor will burn "waste" from old nuclear reactors, generate reliable, near-zero carbon emitting electricity and thus have the ability to replace coal and natural gas plants. (Canadian Geographic magazine June 2014) <http://tinyurl.com/olqsswf>

Climate change is a serious threat to the habitability of much of this planet (and life on it). This warrants taking risks, and investing in research, development and innovation. The human population is expected to be at around 9 billion by 2050, and live more densely within cities. Humanity took great risks to put a man on the moon, but we did it. This "man on the moon" approach must now be undertaken to address climate change.

*(Note: The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily represent all members of HAAM.)*

- Todd De Ryck

## HUMANIST CEREMONIES



Humanist celebrant and HAAM member Catherine Kreindler is offering 25% off her services to paid HAAM members. Catherine is a licensed marriage commissioner who performs marriages, commitment

ceremonies, funerals, baby namings, and more. Visit her site at <http://manitobacelebrant.weebly.com>.

*Those who attend the May 9th meeting will learn about a special event related to the last section on the Services page of the website.*

## CHARITY OF THE MONTH

Donations made at our May meeting will go to support the 'Send a Kid to Camp' program at the YMCA this summer. The Y offers a variety of day camps and overnight camps for kids of all ages. Their day camp program consists of a series of 1-week sessions, including a classic program of arts & crafts, games, singing, recreational swimming, outdoor activities and gym time; as well as special camps with a particular emphasis on arts, sports, swimming, or leadership. Week-long overnight programs are offered at Camp Stephens in Whiteshell Provincial Park, and Camp Douglas, just north of the city.



As a non-profit, charitable organization, the YMCA strives to make their programs available to everyone, including families who cannot afford the full camping fees. Those who request financial assistance must complete an application form, and if they qualify, their child receives a subsidy from the 'Send a Kid to Camp' fund proportional to their level of need. Our donations will go to this fund to help children at the four Winnipeg branches – Downtown, West Portage, Elmwood-Kildonan, and South (St Vital area).

As always, if you cannot attend the meeting, donations may be made via PayPal on our website, or by mail (send a check payable to HAAM and we will forward the donation). Tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$10 or more.

## 'RELIGION IN THE WORKPLACE' UPDATE

In our February 2015 newsletter, we reported that a HAAM member had asked about workplaces which allow their employees paid time off for religious observances, and wondered why Humanists should not be entitled to these days, too. HAAM provided the member with a letter for her employer outlining three annual days celebrated by Humanists (Darwin Day in February; World Humanist Day in June, and International Human Rights Day in December).

We now have an update on this situation. Unfortunately, the employee's request was denied unless s/he was willing to take the day off without pay, because it was not a day that 'required' the employee to be absent. (Some religions 'require' their adherents to refrain from working on their holy days, and provide signed documents from clergy that members can submit to employers.)



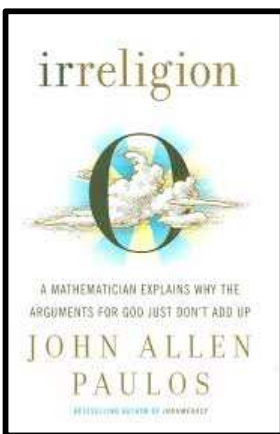
The employee involved has indicated an intent to appeal this decision, based on the

premise that time off for "Religious and Holy Days" should be inclusive of all beliefs and faiths, including those of Humanists. We may not believe in the supernatural, but we have holidays which celebrate science, culture and the acquisition of knowledge.

HAAM is happy to provide support and advice to members dealing with these types of issues. Part of our mandate as an organization is to "give a voice to humanists, atheists and agnostics through... constructive activism" (see the Mission Statement on our website), and to strive towards a community in which "... no religion should receive preferential treatment over another religion, or the lack of religion" (from our Position Statements). Stay tuned for further updates.

## ON THE BOOKSHELF

**Chad and Gloria Froese** are the new custodians of HAAM's library of almost 200 books, and are currently looking through them. When asked to select a book to recommend to our readers, Chad suggested **Irreligion: A Mathematician Explains Why the Arguments for God Just Don't Add Up**, by **John Allen Paulos**. The author asserts that there are no logical reasons to believe in



god, and proceeds to refute the twelve arguments most often put forward for by believers. These include the First Cause, the Argument from Design, the Anthropic Principle, the Ontological Argument, Pascal's Wager, and more. If you're not familiar with these arguments by name, then this book will provide you with a great overview of them. Potential

readers will likely be pleased to know that it contains no mathematics, that reviewers have remarked on it for wit and style, and that at 176 pages, it's a relatively quick and easy read. It will be available to borrow at our next meeting (May 9) - first come, first serve. And make sure to browse the other books on the table as well - we always have a variety to choose from.

We invite readers to submit their suggestions for books to feature here in the coming months. If you have read a book that we have in our library, and would like to tell others about it, please let us know. (You can remain anonymous if you like.)



The readings this month look miserable, so you're forewarned. We'll finish up Jeremiah, then start the Book of Lamentations, a

collection of poetic laments for the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. It's as bleak as its title. The book is partly a lament mourning the desertion of the city by its god, and its destruction; and partly a funeral dirge in which the bereaved bewails and addresses the dead. Authorship is traditionally attributed to Jeremiah, but you know how that goes.... Modern scholars doubt it.

The Book of Ezekiel supposedly records seven visions of the prophet Ezekiel ben-Buzi, a priest exiled in Babylon, during the 22 years from 593 to 571 BCE. The visions, and the book, are structured around three themes: (1) judgment on Israel (chapters 1–24); judgment on the nations (chapters 25–32); and future blessings for Israel (chapters 33–48). And surprise, surprise, modern scholars believe that although much of the book was originally written by Ezekiel, there has been a lot of editing and adding by later authors. It's nasty – highlights include god telling Ezekiel to eat bread baked using fuel made from human dung, and threatening to kill everyone with plagues, famines, and wars. Enjoy!

### Readings for the week of:

**May 3:** Jer 26-29; 30-31; 32-34; 35-37; 38-41

**May 10:** Jer 42-45; 46-48; 49-50; 51-52; Lam 1-3:36

**May 17:** Lam 3:37-5; Ezek 1-4; 5-8; 9-12; 13-15

**May 24:** Ezek 16-17; 18-20; 21-22; 23-24; 25-27

**May 31:** Ezek 28-30; 31-33; 34-36; 37-39; 40-42

Please share your comments or questions on our Atheist Bible Study Facebook group page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/234461256751696/>

**HAAM's Executive:**

President Donna Harris  
Vice President Pat Morrow  
Treasurer Helen Friesen  
Secretary Cheri Frazer

**Members at Large:**

Todd De Ryck  
Norm Goertzen  
Tony Governo  
Dorothy Stephens – Newsletter



Contact us at:

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or Phone 204-612-0601



Humanists, Atheists, and Agnostics of Manitoba



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@MBHumanists



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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Province: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

Registered Charity # 85080 5326 RR0001

New Member       Renewal

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 1<sup>st</sup>, pay just ½ the yearly fee for the rest of the year. After October 31<sup>st</sup>, pay full fee and get the entire next year.

**DONATION** (Tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$10 or more)

I would like to make a donation to HA<sup>2</sup>M of:

- \$10    \$20    \$30    \$50    \$100
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Please DO NOT send cash in the mail. Make cheque payable to: **Humanist Association of Manitoba** and mail to: Humanist Association of Manitoba, 112 - 230 Barkman Avenue, Steinbach, MB R5G 0Y5.

Memberships are also available by credit card on our website, or by cash or cheque at any HA<sup>2</sup>M meeting or HA<sup>2</sup>M event.