

Manitoba Humanist



Secular funerals are becoming commonplace.
Learn more about them at our October meeting.

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



HAAM

www.mbhumanistsatheists.ca

DEATH-A-PALOOZA!

CanadInns Polo Park, 1405 St Matthews Ave
Saturday, 18 October, 2014

Just in time for Halloween, we will cover a multitude of topics related to death and the non-believer, including:

- advance care planning
- end of life options and issues
- secular funerals/life celebrations
- disposal options other than burial

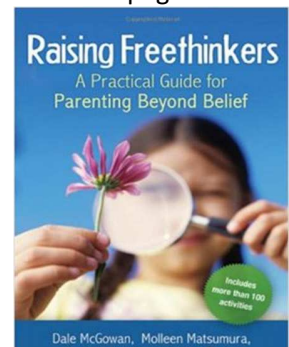
Don't forget to wear your Halloween costumes to the meeting!

Social time is from 5:30 to 6:30. Come for dinner, drinks, or just chit-chat. Our meeting follows at 6:30 and the main presentation will be 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.

Remember HAAM meetings are always open to the public. If it's your first time out, grab a chair and join us! Feel free to participate in the discussion, or just kick back and listen. Memberships are available at the door at all our events. Annual fees are affordable and help support community outreach as well as our own activities. Contact and membership info is on page 6.

We have lots more upcoming events and activities starting on page 2!

HAAM has 4 more
new library books!
See what they are
on page 3.



If we don't, who will?
See page 3.

COMING UP!

October:

Saturday 4th. Dying With Dignity presents Death and Dainties. St James-Assiniboia Public Library, 10:30 AM - noon.



Death – it won't kill you to talk about it! This will be an informal gathering in a relaxed setting to talk about death and dying. Increase your awareness of the issues and understand your rights, no matter what your values on the subject. Note that this is not a counselling session. For more info, email the Winnipeg Chapter of Dying With Dignity - infowinnipeg@dyingwithdignity.ca or call 1-800-495-6156.

Sunday 5th. Harmonizing Humanists. 30 West Avenue (off Rouge Road in Westwood), 11 AM.



Several HAAM members have been reminiscing over how we miss singing some of the church music we grew up with. There is enough musical talent in HAAM to be able to put together a well-rounded group, sing, and have some fun! Let's come up with a variety of music ideas, and get something started!

Do you have any favorite hymns or other choral music that you'd like to sing? We can have fun with the lyrics, and change them however we want. Bring music with you if you have some favorites.

This inaugural meeting will mainly be to see who we have and what we would like to sing. If you cannot make it but want to join us for subsequent rehearsals, please let us know by either posting in our Facebook group or by emailing HAAM. This will give us a better idea of numbers of people and voice parts.

Find our closed group on Facebook and ask to join. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/614155245372898/>

Thursday 9th. Round Table on Secular Parenting, St James-Assiniboia Public Library, 6:30 PM.

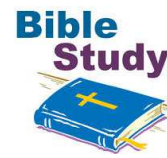


We're hearing a lot about this topic lately, as non-belief becomes more common and clashes of worldviews make headlines. Dale McGowan and Dan Arel have written self-help books about it. It's one of the most frequent subjects discussed and asked about by our members.

Calling all parents, would-be or expectant parents, and experienced empty-nesters. How did you/should you/would you handle religious education? Religious media? Peer pressure? Is there something you wish you

had done differently? Come share your experiences (both successes and failures) so that we can sympathize, strategize, and generally support each other.

Wednesday 29th. Atheist Bible Study get-together. San Vito Coffee House, 2293 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg.



This is for everyone who's participating in or interested in the bible study group, even if you're only reading once in a while or checking the Facebook posts. It's a great opportunity to meet each other just for fun! We can discuss the bible readings - or not. Whatever. No scholarship or reading requirements - if you've done any reading at all, or are merely curious, you're welcome to join us. No pretests or exams - promise!

November:

Saturday 8th. A conversation with Winnipeg Police Chief Devon Clunis:

Details to follow. In the meantime, start thinking about what questions you would like to ask him.



December:

Saturday 20th. Solstice party. Save the Date – details TBA.

NOW LET'S HOLD OUR OWN CONFERENCE!

In September some of us traveled down to Fargo to attend **Zeteticon**, a conference hosted by the Great Plains Atheists. It's not too often that you're going to find the likes of Matt Dillahunty, Aron Ra, and Dave Silverman in the same sleepy prairie town, so it was well worth the four hour drive to see some of these well-known voices in the atheist movement.

The conference had a line-up of speakers who shared some great stories of coming out atheist. Beth Presswood, of the Godless Bitches podcast, shared her story of growing up in the "prong of the buckle of the bible belt", losing her faith, being disowned and vilified by her loved ones, and finding a new community in the atheist movement. Her story ended on the hopeful note of reconciliation with her family and the message that sometimes love wins.

Dave Silverman, president of American Atheists, (here with **Donna Harris**) demonstrated his phenomenal ability as the



public face of atheism with a rousing talk about where the movement is headed, backed up with statistics that demonstrate that non-believers are on the rise. With over 30% of the 18-29 year old demographic professing no religion, it won't be long until we are a significant portion of the population.

We also had a sneak peak at the topic which August Berkshire, former president of Minnesota Atheists, will share with us early next year when he comes to Winnipeg. (Hint: You'll have no choice but to agree with him at the end of the talk.) We look forward to his visit. The speakers joined together for a panel discussion with questions from the audience on a variety of subjects, including free will and problems in the atheist movement with sexism and lack of diversity. All of the speakers were respectful and contributed to the conversation, demonstrating their commitment to making this a movement for all atheists.

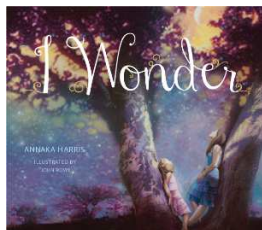
Overall the conference was well organized, the hosts welcoming and the topics diverse and interesting. Not bad for a city about a quarter of the size of Winnipeg. Which gets to the next question - **What's stopping HAAM from hosting our own conference?** Well nothing, if the response from the members at our September meeting is any indication. When I introduced the possibility of planning a conference next year, people were very enthusiastic. Almost 20 signed up to volunteer to organize a conference in Winnipeg. So, let's get going on putting together our own celebration of inquiry and discovery! Contact us to volunteer. Donate to help with expenses. Suggest a fundraising idea or a favourite speaker. **We can do this!**

-Diana Goods

WE HAVE MORE NEW BOOKS!

Drunk with Blood: God's Killings in the Bible, by Steve Wells (author of the Skeptics' Annotated Bible). If you've read any of the Old Testament, you'll know what this is about. If not, then you'll want to borrow this book to find out.

I Wonder, by Annaka Harris. A lovely picture book which encourages children to question and teaches them that it's OK to say "I don't know". Probably best suited for 3-8 year olds.



Raising Freethinkers: A Practical Guide for Parenting Beyond Belief, by Dale McGowan. This book offers solutions to the unique challenges secular parents face and provides specific answers to common questions, as well

as over 100 activities for both parents and their children.

Beyond Belief: The Secret Lives of Women in Extreme Religions, by Cami Ostman and Susan Tive. A compilation of stories by women who have walked away from wide range of religious communities-including Evangelical, Catholic, Jewish, Mormon, Muslim, Calvinist, Moonie, and Jehovah's Witness.

Lots of us read a book once and then set it on a shelf to gather dust. Have you got any great books at home that HAAM members might be interested in? We will accept gladly accept gently used books for our library. Just bring them to any meeting or event.

END THE WAR ON SCIENCE IN CANADA!

Generally speaking, to be a humanist is to place a high value on science, both as a way to understand the world around us, and to guide our decision making. Well, for me, a recent town hall on "Ending the War on Science" was a stark reminder of the negative impact that our current federal government has had on Canadian science and scientists.



The impacts can generally be classified as:

- *Preventing scientists from communicating outside of their department without approval.* They have essentially been "muzzled", even when talking to other scientists. In 2012, Canadian scientists attending the International Polar Year conference were shadowed by "media relations contacts".
- *Cuts to programs and entire departments.* Funding has been slashed, and good jobs have been lost. The country's largest union representing scientists and professional public employees now estimates that between 2013 and 2016, \$2.6 billion and 5,064 jobs will be cut from 10 science-based federal departments. Of course, one local example of program cuts involved the Experimental Lakes Area.
- *Abandoning the collection of scientific information, and closing science libraries.*
- *Government policy decisions that fly in the face of evidence.* This point, especially, places us all at risk, should policies not prove to be the best decision, as they're not backed up by the facts.

This treatment of science by our own government has got to stop. But what can we do? Obviously, first, vote for a party that is willing to make science a priority. I

would also encourage everyone to contact your elected representatives, and encourage them to use their power to vote yes to science-related initiatives, meaning no more cuts and the restoration of badly needed funding and jobs. You can also join an organization such as evidencefordemocracy.ca, to learn more about the issue, and lastly, spread the word to your friends and others. Now is the time to act.

-Donna Harris

CHARITY OF THE MONTH

HAAM's charity for October 2014 the **Manitoba Shoe-box Project**, and it is exciting! Here are some details on how it works. The project collects shoe boxes filled with gifts to be given to women in shelters. Their website <http://tinyurl.com/nefzwf5> provides instructions on how to create the shoe boxes and suggestions for what to put in them.



Boxes are collected during the month of November, and drop-off locations are listed on the website. However, you may bring your boxes to the October HAAM meeting and we'll make

sure they're delivered. In fact it would be great if we could deliver all of them at the same time and let them know that they come from HAAM members.

If you're not crazy about going to the effort of shopping and creating the shoe box, and would rather give a cash donation, that works too. You'll receive a tax receipt from HAAM for a donation over \$10 and we'll do the shopping and creating of shoe boxes for you.

If you're going to get busy and create a box, please make sure to read the instructions on the website first. The Project needs to ensure that each woman gets a comparable gift. The boxes must be similar sizes, (which means don't use a boot box, for example), and each box should be filled with approximately \$50 worth of items. (See gift suggestions on the website.) Again, if that amount is a more than you are prepared to give, you can donate the cash for a tax receipt, as described above, and we'll add your donation to others to make the \$50 boxes. You could also simply purchase wrapping paper to donate. They always need wrapping paper for boxes that are donated without being wrapped.

One more thing, *please don't seal the boxes*. Each box has to be inspected before being distributed, and so the lids need to be removable.

THINK BEFORE YOU DONATE

How much attention do you pay which charities our public institutions are supporting and endorsing? It was brought to HAAM's attention by a member last holiday season that a number of public schools in Manitoba were collecting for **Operation Christmas Child**. This is a charity project in which school children fill shoe boxes with small toys and gifts to be shipped to children in third world countries. Then paramedics (in Winnipeg, our city ambulances <http://tinyurl.com/lherqwh>) drive in a caravan parade format to schools to pick up the shoe boxes. Children and staff form a human chain and pass the boxes from the designated collection schools to the ambulances outside. The toys and items are then delivered to a central depot for sorting and shipping. Sounds like harmless, well-intentioned fun!



However, **Samaritan's Purse**, which runs Operation Christmas Child, is a self-described "non-denominational

evangelical Christian organization". Their web site (<http://tinyurl.com/nb3pxv7>) claims that "Since 1970, Samaritan's Purse Canada has helped meet the needs of people who are victims of war, poverty, natural disasters, disease, and famine with the purpose of sharing God's love through His Son, Jesus Christ." Note that the main purpose is NOT to help meet the needs of people, but rather explicitly and proudly to proselytize a particular religion. In their reasons for packing a shoe box, they explain "Operation Christmas Child provides an opportunity for people of all ages to be involved in a simple, hands-on project....that focuses on the true meaning of Christmas - Jesus Christ - God's greatest gift." They continue with "Following the shoebox distributions, local churches and ministry partners are equipped with a 12-lesson Bible study course, titled The Greatest Journey, which introduces interested children to Jesus, shows them how to receive Him and follow Him, and equips them to share their faith with family and friends."

So the boxes of toys are essentially a bribe, expressly used to pressure desperately poor children living in developing countries (including Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Ivory Coast, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Uruguay and Venezuela) to convert to Christianity, and are delivered with prayers, sermons, evangelical tracts and pressure to convert. While a private religious group is

free to pursue such a goal, it is not an appropriate cause for a public school to be involved in. The school is plainly sending the message to young children that the Christianity at the core of Operation Christmas Child is stamped with the school's seal of approval. There are plenty of charities that could use our support which are run by secular and/or religious organizations who do not make religion a primary goal, component and/or requirement of their work.

Before contributing to this or any other charity, be sure to check out its mission statement to make sure that it's something you want to support. Don't hesitate to question whether a particular charity should be supported or otherwise endorsed by a public institution. If brochures about Samaritan's Purse show up in your child's backpack this fall, ask the school why they are promoting it. *The HAAM member who encountered this situation with his child's school last year successfully ended the school's involvement with Operation Christmas Child through a simple letter laying out the above facts.* Not only is change possible, changes are already being made.



At our September meeting, **Dr. Kevin Campbell**, biologist from the U of M, gave a fascinating talk on his work analyzing the DNA of extinct species like the woolly mammoth. The advances in DNA technology as a result of scientific studies in what seem (to many people) odd and seemingly unimportant areas is having major spinoff effects on how we will treat disease in the not too distant future. One of the most interesting and promising advances is "genetic editing"- a cell is taken from a patient, a broken or turned off gene within the cell's DNA is replaced by a gene that works, and then the repaired cell is reinserted into the patient. Great meeting and a great turn-out – almost Standing Room Only (extra tables were needed).

ON THE WEB

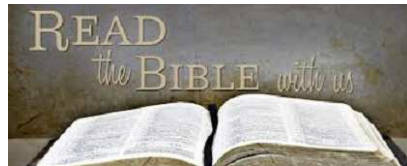


Check out the latest episode of Winnipeg's own Life, the Universe & Everything Else podcast:

Experimenting on Your Thoughts: A discussion about thought experiments that range from the classical to the incomprehensible to the downright bizarre, including the *Prisoner's Dilemma*, the *Ship of Theseus*, and the *Runaway Train*.

LUEE podcasts promote secular humanism and scientific skepticism and are presented by the [Winnipeg Skeptics](#) and the [Humanists, Atheists & Agnostics of Manitoba](#). 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



Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings make up the section of the Hebrew Bible referred to as

the Deuteronomistic history. According to Jewish tradition the book was written mainly by Samuel; modern scholars think that it was composed in the period c.630–540 BCE by combining a number of independent texts of various ages.

The bloodbath continues as we finish up 1 Samuel, but surely we are immune to the violence by now! This is where David buys a wife with 200 foreskins. Then into 2 Samuel, which, if it were made into a movie, would be rated "R". All the elements are there – rape, murder, vengeance, adultery, nudity, pestilence, famine.

Last we get to 1 Kings (1 and 2 Kings were also originally a single book). David dies and Solomon (with his 700 wives and 300 concubines) comes to the throne, but he doesn't seem any more humane than his father. Chapter 20 has the dubious distinction of containing 5 of god's killings, more than any other chapter in the whole bible. And in a departure from the usual forms of violence, Elijah kills 450 prophets of Baal by beating them in a prayer contest.

Readings for the week of:

Oct 5: 1Sam 18-20; 21-24; 25-27; 28-31; 2Sam 1-3

Oct 12: 2Sam 4-7; 8-12; 13-15; 16-18; 19-21

Oct 19: 2Sam 22-24; 1Kings 1-2; 3-5; 6-7; 8-9

Oct 26: 1Kings 10-11; 12-14; 15-17; 18-20; 21-22

Share your comments or questions on our Atheist Bible Study Facebook group page <http://tinyurl.com/qf88xho>

IN MEMORIAM



Lisa Stark, 1970-2014.

"I do not fear death. I had been dead for billions and billions of years before I was born, and had not suffered the slightest inconvenience from it."

- Mark Twain.

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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mbhumanistsatheists@gmail.com

or Phone 204-612-0601



Humanists, Atheists, and
Agnostics of Manitoba



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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 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
- 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 HA²M meeting or HA²M event.

September 2014