

# Manitoba Humanist



HAAM's Harmonizing Humanists entertained at the Solstice Party with a mix of traditional tunes, secular parodies of familiar Christmas Carols, and other Yuletide fare. L to R, standing: Dorothy Stephens, Gloria Froese, Rollin Penner, Lawrence, Adrienne Winfield, and Laura Stephens. Seated at piano, Janine Guinn. A great turnout and scrumptious goodies made for a wonderful evening!

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



# HAAM

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

Please join HAAM  
for our  
Annual General  
Meeting



Followed by an evening with  
special guest speaker



**August Berkshire  
from Minnesota Atheists**

**Saturday January 31<sup>st</sup>, CanadInns Polo Park**

4:30 Meet and greet

5:00 AGM

6:00 Dinner

6:45 Speaker: **"The Illusion of Free Will and its Impact on Moral Responsibility"**

**Turn to page 2 for all the details  
(and lots more upcoming events!)**



Does the Bible support human rights? Is it a good source of morality? One university student is finding out otherwise. See page 3.

Wow! It's been quite a year for HAAM. Turn to page 5 to see what our members have been up to!

# 2014

## COMING UP!

### January:

**Thursday January 15<sup>th</sup>, Secular Parenting group**, 6:30 PM, St James-Assiniboia Public Library.



**Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> and Friday 16<sup>th</sup>, Information and Outreach table at U of M**, 9 AM to 5 PM. Our volunteers will be at the University of Manitoba letting fellow nonbelievers know they're not alone and talking to people about what they believe and why they believe it. So drop by to say hello, or if you're a HAAM member, join us! We'll be on the second floor of University



Centre in the first alcove (the one closest to Tim Horton's).

**Saturday 31<sup>st</sup>, AGM** followed by our monthly meeting.

Please plan to attend the **AGM** to support YOUR association and hear about what's going on and being planned. We will have nominees lined up ahead of time for the executive, so you don't have to worry about being 'roped into something' if you show up. (However, if you would *like* to volunteer or join the exec, we welcome that, too.) We need and appreciate contributions and input from all of our members.

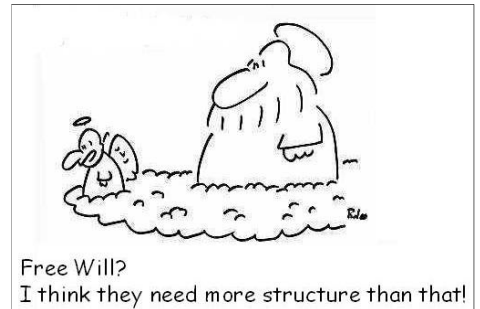
Our guest speaker will be **August Berkshire** of the Minnesota Atheists (weather and roads permitting). August is a well-known and respected figure in the atheist community. In addition to his own group in the Twin Cities, he has also served with or been a member of Atheist Alliance International, Camp Quest, the Freedom From Religion Foundation, the Secular Student Alliance, the Center for Inquiry, American Atheists, and the Humanists of Minnesota.

August has been an atheist activist since 1984. He is the author of numerous pamphlets and articles about atheism and related topics, which can be found on his website <http://augustberkshire.com/>. He is the owner of the "ATHEIST" license plate for Minnesota and is proud to be included in the reference book *Who's Who in Hell*.

August will be speaking on "**The Illusion of Free Will and its Impact on Moral Responsibility**". The question of whether or not we have free will has been debated for thousands of years. How do we define free will? What effects do determinism and indeterminism have on free will? What are the obstacles to perceiving free will as an illusion? If free will is an illusion, what does this say about praise, blame, responsibility, ethics, justice, revenge, punishment, rehabilitation,

cooperation, and altruism? Is life worth living? Should we be optimistic or pessimistic about the future? August will discuss the ramifications of a natural universe without gods or free will, in which evolution shapes our thoughts and actions.

He will conclude that it's a good thing that we don't have free will!



If you can't make it for the whole meeting, come when you can and don't worry about it. You can still eat if you're late - the buffet is open till 8:00.

If this is your first meeting, welcome! Feel free to participate in the discussion, or just kick back and listen. Our regular monthly meetings are open to the public, but other events are for members only. If you are new to HAAM, or just checking us out, you are welcome to attend one or two events without 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 always 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 as it becomes available.

### February:

**Thursday February 12<sup>th</sup>, Round Table Discussion on Conflict with Believers**, 6:30 PM, St James-Assiniboia Public Library.

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup>**, monthly meeting, guest speaker to be confirmed.

### March:

**Sunday 1<sup>st</sup>, Film Fest**. 1:00 PM.

**Saturday 14<sup>th</sup>**, monthly meeting, details TBA

**Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup>, Book of Mormon** (musical), Centennial Concert Hall, 1:00 PM. If any HAAM members are attending this performance, it might be fun to get together for lunch or coffee before or after the show. Please contact HAAM and we will arrange a time and place to meet.

### September:

**19 and 20<sup>th</sup>, River City ReasonFest**. Save the date!

## HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Have you made your resolutions yet? Here are some suggestions for non-believers:

- Practice skepticism and critical thinking. Let's not just accept whatever we hear; instead examine claims and



ideas to determine how valid they are.

- Support secular charities. There's no supernatural power to make this world a better place; it's up to us. HAAM makes it easy! Just check out our Charity of the Month.

- Engage in self-reflection and introspection. Let's examine ideas may we have accepted uncritically for a long time. If our own ideas can't stand up to the same criticism which we apply to others' ideas, we're behaving hypocritically.

- Try to avoid getting drawn into petty disputes with others in the atheist community. Let's concentrate on what we agree on, and when we disagree, do it while maintaining respect and dignity.

- Read, study, and learn. We never know enough — there are always new things to investigate.

- Actively promote equality & civil rights. Let's commit ourselves to the pursuit of justice for all.



## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL REMINDER

With the arrival of the New Year, it's membership renewal time. If you plan to attend our AGM in January, dues **MUST** be paid in order to vote.

Please note that HAAM operates on a calendar year, meaning that **all memberships must be renewed in January**. The only exceptions to this are stated on page 6 – “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.” In other words, **FIRST TIME** members who join in November or December pay full fee but their membership includes the upcoming year. This year we gained several new members at our October 18<sup>th</sup>



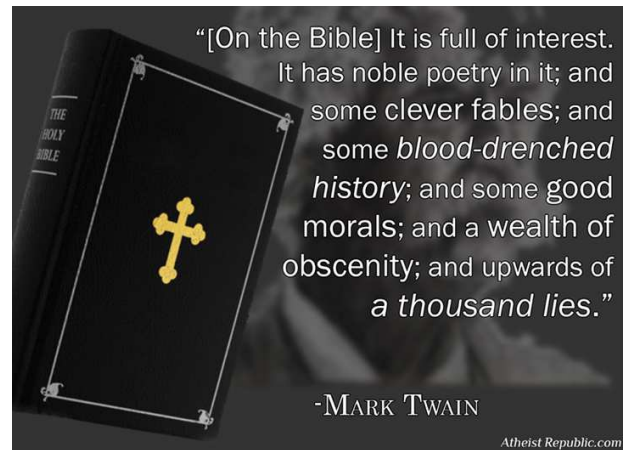
meeting, and we extended this offer to include them. If you are one of those brand new members, this renewal notice does not apply to you. *Everyone else needs to renew.*

We count on our members to support HAAM's continuing work in providing a community and voice for non-believers. Fees are affordable and include a 'limited income' option if applicable. Please continue to support the group that supports you! Memberships can be renewed anytime by credit card using the PayPal link on our website, by cheque in the mail, or by cash or cheque at any event.



## WHY I HAVE A PROBLEM WITH RELIGION

It's okay to be a bully. How do I know? The Bible tells me so.



A very well-known historical document is the Declaration of Independence drafted by Thomas Jefferson in 1776. The most often quoted part of this document is: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness”. Jefferson and most men in his community owned slaves and had indentured servants in their service. They understood that the unalienable Rights clause in this document did not pertain to their slaves, servants, women, Indigenous Americans nor any aliens. Unless a person is familiar with history and especially the history of religions, the above quote may seem like complete hypocrisy, but to the Founding Fathers, in accordance with their religious beliefs, this document was following the accepted and normal beliefs and practices of “us and them”.

Why these people would say that the “Creator” would give “us” certain rights but not give these same rights to “them” is answered in their religious text, The King James Version of the Holy Bible. One of many examples of what may seem to be contradiction and hypocrisy in The Bible is as follows: First we have the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13), followed by “Thou

shalt smite [the inhabitants of other nations], and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them” (Deuteronomy 7:2).

There are many such passages in The Holy Bible. These stories can be traced back to the history and writings of Ancient Greece where the largest communities were cities. Male property owners of each city were classified as citizens and enjoyed the same “unalienable Rights” as described in the Declaration of Independence, and each city had similar laws against killing fellow citizens. However, each city also maintained an army, and wars between different cities were common. It was commendable for the army of one city to completely destroy another city and to kill or enslave the citizens of the opposing city. Slaves, along with all women, indentured servants, and aliens, did not have the same “unalienable Rights” enjoyed by each city’s male citizens.

Cities that were successful in conquering other cities were deemed to be blessed by the Gods. Within a Greek city, men who were successful in military pursuits were greatly honoured and rewarded by the citizens of their home cities. Some were deified and declared to be Gods to be prayed to in order to guarantee successful military pursuits in the future. Armies brought home plunder and prisoners to be used as personal slaves, concubines, or boys of pleasure.

As societies became more “civilised”, cities began to occupy conquered lands to form larger states, and eventually countries and empires. Further documents, such as the 15th century Vatican’s “Doctrines of Discovery”, justified destroying foreign societies. These documents legitimized the conquest, enslavement and massacre of many of the peoples in newly discovered lands, who were deemed to be “them” and not “one of us”. In modern society, we have now come to a point where The Holy Bible is in total opposition to our society’s professed values. The Bible not only condones violence, but declares that the killing and enslavement of “them” must be done by God’s order.

In our society we find that this idea of “us and them” is now causing confusion and unrest. Officially all peoples now enjoy the same rights, and except for enemy aliens, there is no longer “us” and “them”. Despite our courts having declared that the conflicts adopted from The Bible are hypocritical and contrary to accepted laws, we continue to refer to The Bible as being Holy. How can we live in this society of hypocrisy? Isn’t it time to choose between the old beliefs of religious alienation and a society of equality? We cannot have it both ways. We must make a choice. Isn’t it time to declare that there is no “us and them”, there is only “us”, and that

every human being in this world has the same unalienable Rights?

- **Wayne Douglas Weedon** is a full time student at the University of Winnipeg taking Philosophy and Religion as well as other courses related to getting a BA.

## CHARITY OF THE MONTH



**KidSport** is a national charity administered by Sport Manitoba, a not for profit organization promoting amateur

sport in Manitoba. KidSport Winnipeg believes that no kid should be left on the sidelines, and all should be given the opportunity to experience the positive benefits of organized sports. KidSport provides support to children in order to remove financial barriers that prevent them from playing organized sport.

Through KidSport, children 18 and under, who are lacking the financial resources to participate in sport, are provided with assistance towards registration or membership fees, and/or necessary equipment. You can help these kids in two ways: **1. Cash donations** help offset the cost of registration fees for community based sport programs. **2. Donations of new or gently used sports equipment** are accepted for distribution to children who cannot afford to purchase their own. Equipment can be brought to the meeting and will be dropped off at the depot by one of our exec afterwards.

Donations to our Charity of the Month may be made at any meeting, or by mail or website if you can’t make it to a meeting (include a message that the donation is for the Charity of the Month). Tax receipts are available from HAAM for donations of \$10 or more.

## ON THE WEB

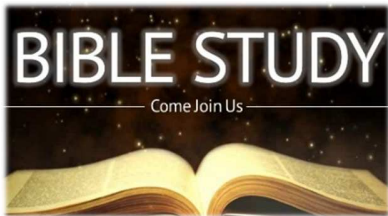
On the latest episode of Winnipeg’s own *Life, the Universe & Everything Else* podcast: **Straight White Christmas**. Our panelists discuss oppression, privilege, and intersectionality, both in society at large and as it relates to the skeptical community, and then cap off the



episode with a game of Name That Holiday Tradition!

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>.



The book of Esther is the last book of the history section of the Christian Old Testament, and part of the Ketuvim (Writings) of the

Tanakh (the Hebrew Bible). It relates the story of a Jewish girl who becomes queen of Persia and thwarts a genocide of her people. The story forms the core of the festival of Purim, and dates to around the 3rd or 4th century BCE. Its two main messages are that a woman's main duty is to please men, and that Jews are God's special people. Esther is one of only two books in the Bible that does not explicitly mention God (the other being Song of Songs). Perhaps that, along with his extreme anti-Semitism, contributed to Martin Luther's attempt to have it banished from the Bible.

Job is one of the Writings of the Hebrew Bible, and the first poetical book in the Christian Old Testament. It dates to around the 6th century BCE. Job, Ecclesiastes and Proverbs belong to the genre of wisdom literature. The story of Job investigates the problem of divine justice, commonly phrased as a question: "Why do the righteous suffer?" The book has long been the subject of much debate over its historicity, and although some apologists may still claim that it is a true story, most scholars now regard it as a parable.

#### Readings for the week of:

**Jan 4:** Nehemiah 7; 8-9; 10-11; 12-13; Esther 1-5

**Jan 11:** Est 6-10; Job 1-4; 5-7; 8-10; 11-13

**Jan 18:** Job 14-16; 17-20; 21-23; 24-28; 29-31

**Jan 25:** Job 32-34; 35-37; 38-39; 40-42; Psalms 1-8

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

<http://tinyurl.com/qf88xho>



## WHAT A YEAR WE'VE HAD!

It's time to celebrate and review another busy year at HAAM! In 2014 our members participated in a Multi-faith Forum on Hope for the Future; Outreach efforts at the U of M, a high school in Grunthal, and the Morden Corn and Apple Festival; the Pride Parade; a fossil dig; a community cleanup and a garage sale.

Some of us attended public lectures by Neil DeGrasse Tyson, Steven Pinker, and Germaine Greer; a conference in Fargo; and a play at the Fringe Fest. Our executive was able to link up members with other non-believers in the Bible Belt, other secular families in Winnipeg, and secular mental health professionals.

We gained a quite a few new books for our lending library. Some of our members wrote or began their own blogs, and some reviewed books, podcasts, and blogs by others. One of our members became a Secular Celebrant, available to officiate at weddings or funerals.

We held a Film Festival; Round Table Discussions on coming out as a non-believer, defending non-belief, and secular parenting (which spawned an ongoing group); and Book Club Meetings reviewing *The God Argument* (A.C. Grayling), *A Manual for Creating Atheists* (Pete



Boghossian), and *Mortality* (Christopher Hitchens).

HAAM began a Bible Study and a choral group. At our meetings and events, we celebrated Darwin Day (see cake in

photo), the Summer and Winter Solstices, and Halloween, and we talked about interpersonal conflict, religion in the workplace, and death and dying. We hosted special guests as diverse as David G. McAfee, Nemo the Owl, and Winnipeg Police Chief Devon Clunis.

#### Pamela Kat Johnson

beautifully hand-painted "Russell's Teapot" for us to use for to take up collections at our meetings.

And last, but certainly not least, HAAM supported a number of local, secular charities, including Secular Organizations for Sobriety, Resource Assistance for Youth, Food Matters



Heather McDonell at the December Solstice party

Manitoba, Winnipeg Harvest, Canadian Fossil Discovery Centre, Manitoba Shoebox Project, and Clinic Community Health Centre.

If you are new to HAAM or missed reading about any of the above events or activities, past newsletters are archived on our website to peruse. Here's looking forward to another amazing year in 2015!

**HAAM's Executive:**

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

**Members at Large:**  
Todd De Ryck  
Chad Froese  
Diana Goods – Librarian  
Pat Morrow – Outreach  
Bob Russell  
Dorothy Stephens – Newsletter



Contact us at:

[mbhumanistsatheists@gmail.com](mailto:mbhumanistsatheists@gmail.com)

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 issued for all 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.