

Manitoba Humanist

WOULD YOU SWIM IN THIS LAKE?



Did you recognize Lake Winnipeg in the above photo?



Since 2008, **Vicki Burns** has been working on various contracts for different foundations to raise awareness about the growing threats to our freshwater lakes. She has had the opportunity to learn from scientists, academics, conservation professionals and community activists about what is contributing to the problem of growing blue-green algae blooms, but more importantly, she has also learned what we can do to decrease this problem.

Through raising awareness and motivation, [Save Lake Winnipeg](#) can be the catalyst to stopping the degradation of our lakes and protecting them now and for future generations.

HAAM is honoured and excited to have this well-known environmental activist come to our meeting to talk about the threat to our lakes, and what we should know and do to be part of the solution.

Saturday, April 9th

Canad Inns Polo Park, 1405 St Matthews Avenue

Social time and (optional) dinner at 5:30 PM

Meeting and Guest Speakers begin at 6:30 PM

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



HAAM

www.mbhumanistsatheists.ca

MOVIE NIGHT!

Join your fellow Haamsters for a special private showing of the Oscar-winning movie **Spotlight**.

Saturday 23rd April at 7 PM



ACADEMY AWARD WINNER
BEST PICTURE



WITH COURAGE COMES CHANGE.

Seating is limited to 20 people.

Contact HAAM to RSVP
and reserve your 'spot'. Event
will be at a private residence in
central Winnipeg.

UPCOMING EVENTS!

If you're new to HAAM, welcome! Our regular monthly meetings are always open to the public. Come early for dinner, drinks, or just to visit. Late-comers and drop-ins are welcome, so if you can't make it on time or stay till the end, don't worry. You can eat during the meeting if you're late - the buffet is open till 8:00.

Our other events are intended for paid 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. Contact and membership info is on page 6. More information, and past newsletters, are on our website.

All events are subject to change, and some details may be TBA. In the event of inclement weather or unforeseen circumstances, events may be subject to cancellation or details may change. Check future newsletters, our [website](#), [Facebook page](#), or [Meetup](#) for information and updates.

April

Saturday Apr 30th, Shift To Reason Conference in



Regina, Saskatchewan, 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM. A group from HAAM will be attending, and it's not too late to decide to join us! Tickets and more

information are available at the conference [website](#).

May

Saturday 14th, An Open Chat with Dan Arel (via Skype),

5:30 PM. We'll be talking about his recent book Parenting Without God, his perspective on the current US presidential campaign, his investigation into Ken Ham's "Ark Encounter" museum in Kentucky, and any other topics on our minds. You won't want to miss this fascinating and well-informed author and blogger.



June

Sunday 5th, Pride Parade, Manitoba Legislature, 12 noon. Thousands of people are expected to join in the annual parade through downtown Winnipeg, and HAAM loves to be part the festivities. No need to be part of the LGBTQ



community – most of us are just allies who enjoy dressing up in rainbow colors to show our support and solidarity. Let us know if you're planning to attend so that we can plan ahead and do some accessorizing. More info at [Pride Winnipeg](#).

June 17th to June 19th (Friday to Sunday), Outreach at Summer in the City, Steinbach MB (tentative).



After several years of hearing our Steinbach area members ask us to

come out to their festival, we're rearranging our schedules and taking the plunge. We've filled out an application and paid for our spot, and we're just waiting for approval. So with any luck we'll be out there in June. (Cross your fingers and save the date!) We'll be ready to talk to people, and we're sure lots of them will want to talk to us. More on the festival's [website](#) or [Facebook](#).

Saturday June 25th, Summer Solstice Party, 5:00 PM, Assiniboine Park. *Note the date!* Details TBA.

MEET THE HUMANIST

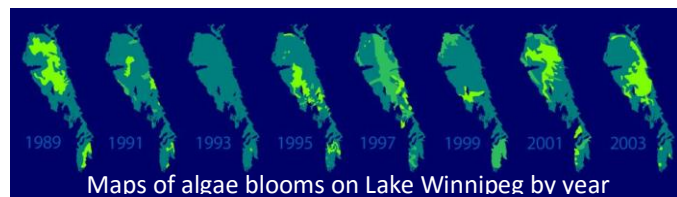
One of our new executive members has added her story to those already on our website. [See who it is!](#)

Humanists come from many backgrounds, and we all have a story. Sharing our stories enables the public to put a personal face to non-believers, strengthens our sense of community, and helps others to realize that they are not alone. Don't be shy – we'd love to read your own story! HAAM will protect your identity if you need to remain anonymous.



CHARITY OF THE MONTH

The [Lake Winnipeg Foundation](#) is an environmental non-governmental organization seeking solutions to ensure a clean, healthy Lake Winnipeg and watershed now and for future generations. Its goals are to educate citizens, push for science-based policy, and encourage innovation and excellence in water stewardship.



Maps of algae blooms on Lake Winnipeg by year

The foundation assists teachers in exploring curriculum-based water issues that pertain to Lake

Winnipeg and its watershed by subsidizing the cost of class outings to approved field trip venues, including Oak Hammock Marsh, Fort Whyte Alive, the Manitoba Museum's Lake Winnipeg exhibit, and excursions onboard the Lake Winnipeg Research Consortium's research ship, the Namao.

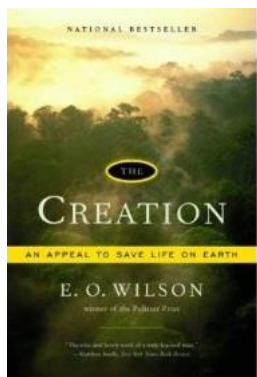
The LWF is backed by a Science Advisory Counsel of 16 experts in the fields of limnology (the study of inland waters), aquatic invertebrate biology, aquatic toxicology, algal taxonomy and ecology, water resource engineering and watershed management, crustacean zoogeography, environmental engineering, and the impact of flooding and land use practices on lakes.

HAAM is proud to support science education and evidence-based decision-making to improve and preserve our environment.

Donations for the Charity of the Month will be collected at the meeting. Tax receipts are available for donations over \$10. If you would like to donate but cannot attend the meeting, you can do so via our [website](#).

IN OUR LIBRARY

We have several books in our library that fit with month's environmental theme. A good example is **The Creation** by **Edward O. Wilson**. Regarded as one of the world's preeminent biologists and naturalists, this Pulitzer-Prize winner grew up in south Alabama and the



Florida Panhandle, where he spent his boyhood exploring the region's forests and swamps, and collecting snakes, butterflies, and ants--the latter to become his lifelong specialty. Raised a Southern Baptist, but now a Humanist, he makes a plea for both believers and non-believers to acknowledge the glory of nature, and work

together to save it. He implores the religious community to abandon the Dominionist principle that the Earth is here to be bent to humankind's will, and to save the biodiversity that makes our lives livable. Wilson's book offers an eloquent defense of nature, insight into the resistance to environmental preservation, and praise for scientific inquiry as a means for solving environmental challenges.

All HAAM members are welcome to borrow books. Browse our collection on the website (under '[Resources](#)'). We also welcome donations of books from members. *Note that in an effort to keep track of our books and prevent loss, borrowing privileges are now limited to paid members only.*

DO YOU KNOW A SECULAR THERAPIST?

HAAM has recently had more requests from people seeking counsellors or psychologists who do not invoke religion or suggest prayer during treatment. A couple of years ago, we compiled a list with the names of a few such professionals who were suggested to our executive. There is no requirement that therapists be non-believers; only that they use evidence-based, secular treatment methods in their professional practice. We do not post their names publicly due to professional regulations and ethics.

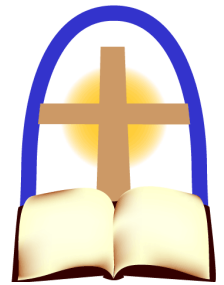


If you are aware of a secular therapist whose name we can add to this list, please [Contact Us](#). All correspondence will be kept strictly confidential. Note that

providing a name cannot be construed as an endorsement or recommendation by HAAM.

SHOULD TAXPAYERS FUND CHAPELS?

Retired Winnipeg Police Service Sergeant **Bob Russell** is dead against the creep of evangelical Christianity into the Winnipeg police service, and he has the temerity to be passionate and vocal about it. His (and HAAM's) efforts last year resulted in [changes](#) to long-standing practices, but the religious are determined not to lose their privilege, and we recently learned that there is an official chapel planned for the new HQ. Read what Bob has to say about that(!) on our [website](#).

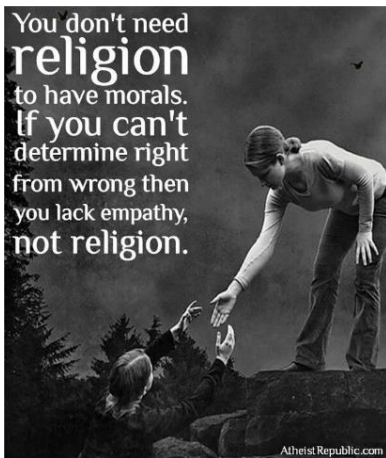


OUTREACH REPORT

One of the best things about being Outreach Coordinator is just getting out and talking to people. The last day of February took **Tony Governo** and myself to Green Valley School in Grunthal, Manitoba, where we spoke to a class of grade 11 students. The particular course is called **Life Issues**, with the subheading "*Christian Ethics*". **Michael Zwaagstra** is the educator for the class.

We were there to talk about Humanism, atheism, and how nonbelievers determine what is moral and ethical. It's always interesting talking to the students there, for the class is pretty well exclusively Christian, and by and large they believe the Bible to be inerrant. For most of

them, this is their first introduction to Humanism and possibly the first time they've met any atheists - or at least atheists who are unabashed and vocal about it. It's also their first exposure to the consequentialist /utilitarian moral theory of Humanism.



As part of my talk I wanted to demonstrate how religion can affect morals. I gave the students two stories. In the first story I posit that I enter a nice family home, kill the children, torture the father, drown the mother, shoot the dog, and then

destroy the house. Afterward, I take the father outside so I can torture him some more. When the police come and ask me "Why did you do it?", I say "No reason; the devil made me do it." After telling that story I asked the class by show of hands if I, for doing that, would be considered a moral monster. To my surprise only 2/3 of the students put their hands up. (I'm hoping the other third didn't understand the question.)

Then I told the biblical story of Job, where God wagers with the devil, allowing Satan to murder the children, destroy the home, torture the father with festering boils (amongst other things,) and of course kill all the pets and livestock. I finished by quoting Job 2:3 -



And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason."

So essentially, if the police had asked God why he gave permission to Satan to do that to Job, God's answer would have been "No reason; the devil made me do it".

These were morally equivalent stories with the same outcome, but I got two very different reactions from the class. After the second story, when I asked if God was a moral monster, not a single student raised a hand. I

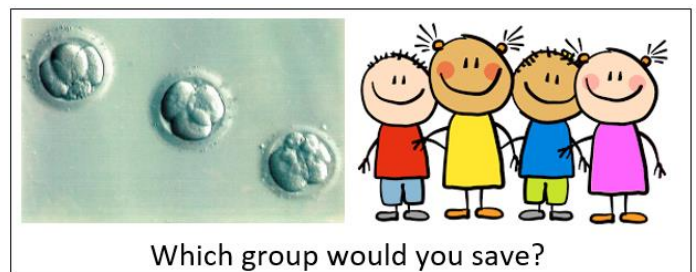
tried to explain the similarities in the two stories; how acts that would be morally abhorrent to all of us can be considered OK with the introduction of religious ideas or supernatural entities. Christianity and other monotheistic beliefs are not moral systems, but just proclamations on what is moral. This is the problem when one tries to shape one's morals to fit divine command theory. Unfortunately, with some students I didn't get very far with that explanation, while several others went straight to their smart phones. One asked "What bible did you get that verse from?" "NIV", I answered. I suppose the truth of the word of God is directly dependant upon which version of the word of God one reads from.

We spoke to the students about a variety of moral issues, and how we all make ethical decisions based on our own value judgements. One student believed (and I'm sure others have been taught), that life starts at conception. The conversation revealed that many of the students believe fetuses (or "babies") in the womb should have the same rights as toddlers. So I presented the burning clinic scenario*, which prompted one decidedly anti-choice / pro-life student to proclaim she would save the toddlers because the embryos weren't alive!

I must thank Mr. Zwaagstra for the opportunity to talk to his class. In the three or four years we've been making this presentation, his students never fail to challenge us, and I hope we challenge them. HAAM is looking forward to more of this kind of outreach in the future.

*The burning clinic scenario is a hypothetical moral dilemma for people who believe all human life is sacred and starts at conception. It's designed to demonstrate the value we put on actual life as opposed to potential life. Very briefly, it goes like this:

Suppose there is a fire in a building. In one wing of the building there is an IVF clinic housing dozens upon dozens of human embryos. In the other wing there is a daycare with 15 or so toddlers inside. You're the only one who can save anybody. Do you first race into the daycare to save the toddlers? Or do you rush into the IVF clinic to save a tank of embryos?



Every time I've used, or heard, this hypothetical dilemma, the listener chooses the actual life (toddler) over the potential life (frozen embryo,) thus demonstrating the value judgements we all make, and that abortion is not a black and white issue.

- Pat Morrow



WINNIPEG CIRCLE OF REASON

March 29 saw the inaugural meeting of Winnipeg's **Circle of Reason**. This group's premise is to have rational discussion between people of very different worldviews in a calm, respective manner. In any other discussion group this would be called an interfaith dialogue; to their credit they have relabelled it an "inter-belief dialogue". At the start of the meeting we were all given sheets explaining how it would go and the guidelines/rules for the meeting, which gave me a bit of a snicker. The topic of the meeting was "Define your God" (capitol G). The first guideline is "ask non-leading questions rather than leading questions", to avoid the "loaded question fallacy". "Define your God" is the mother of all loaded questions for this atheist.



The Circle of Reason practices something called pluralistic rationalism or plurationalism, which is described on their [Wikipedia page](#) as "a commitment to reasoning regardless of one's worldview" - an admirable goal in my opinion. However, I wondered, leading up to the meeting, how this works with individuals who have worldviews that don't get close to what we would call reasonable? I didn't have to wonder for long.

Our hosts used the Talking Stick format, or in this case the Talking Giraffe. Whoever held the little plastic giraffe initially spoke for two minutes and passed it on. First one up was an older gentleman who I can only describe as a fundamentalist or evangelical Christian. He claimed to have nothing in common with atheists, and his only job was to witness the gospel of Jesus Christ to them. A little later on, in the open discussion part of the meeting, he misrepresented atheism, evolution, and scientific enquiry in general. Then he got into a disagreement with a Roman Catholic regarding scripture - not specific verses, but the books in the Bible and who had the right ones. He left shortly after.

There was a good crowd of 18 attendees, a mix of Christians, Catholics (they made the distinction, not me), atheists, agnostics, humanists, "people on

journeys", skeptics, and one who subscribes to a "hypostasis philosophy" (yes, I had to google that one too). I'm hoping that next time members of other faiths will join the discussion.

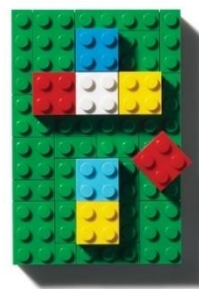
I was joined by our President **Donna Harris** and fellow board member **Tony Governo**. I think I can speak for all of us when I say the hardest part of the evening was keeping our mouths shut. Currently, and rightly so in rational discourse, it's not appropriate to jump up and yell "bullshit!" when you hear it. We found ourselves struggling not to do that on several occasions. For example, one gentleman (several times) claimed he is open-minded but was born Roman Catholic and will die Roman Catholic; a lady said "spirituality is provable but sometimes it's a product of the mind". Another guest claimed that "the problem with religious violence isn't the religion, it's the people", and then she offered us this little gem - "God doesn't kill people, people kill people". Which of course from the atheistic point of view is completely correct!



All in all it was very enjoyable evening of conversation, but I still have reservations. If its goal is to get people of drastically different beliefs in one room together to have a civil conversation, the Circle of Reason will work quite well. However, if the goal is to get individuals to use reason and logic more effectively and then put those new ideas into practice, thus making a better world - well, the jury is still out. But hey, it was the first meeting and I for one will be back.

- Pat Morrow

CALLING ALL PARENTS!



Are you raising children in a secular household? Having issues with believers in your extended family, school, or community about how you're raising your kids? Looking for ways to teach critical thinking, or wondering how to explain religion to them? Would you like to connect with other secular parents for advice and support? Have someone to talk to who can relate to your concerns?

HAAM is currently building a **private online community** for secular parents. Details and contact information will not be made public in order to protect the families involved. If you would like to be part of this growing community, [Contact Us](#).

HAAM's EXECUTIVE

Officers:

President Donna Harris
Vice President Pat Morrow
Treasurer Henry Kreindler
Secretary Rick Dondo

Members at Large:

Tammy Blanchette
Todd De Ryck
Helen Friesen
Norm Goertzen
Tony Governo
Cheri Frazer
Sherry Lyn Marginet
Dorothy Stephens
Jim Taylor



Contact us at:

<http://mbhumanistsatheists.ca/contact-us/>

mbhumanistsatheists@gmail.com

or Phone 204-612-0601



Humanists, Atheists, and
Agnostics of Manitoba



Humanists, Atheists, and
Agnostics of Manitoba



@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

Special Offer for New Members!

If you are a NEW member joining for the FIRST
TIME, and you join after September 1st, your
membership fee will include membership for the
2016 calendar year.

DONATION (Tax receipts will be issued for
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, 181 St. Cross Street, Winnipeg, MB
R2W 3Y4

Memberships are also available by credit card on
our website, or by cash or cheque at any HA²M
meeting or HA²M event.