

The Hoosier Humanist Herald

FreeThought Fort Wayne, Inc. Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 4

Message from the President

This will be my last President's letter. I'm pushing 80 years, so I've decided to make room on the Board for more energetic and talented folks. I would like to welcome Victoria Gipson back to the Board. I wish her great success in whatever capacity she will serve. Also, my thanks to Chris Rex for signing on for another term. He has contributed greatly to our accomplishments over the past year.

It has been an honor to serve our group and the mission of Secular Humanism. I won't be going away. I will continue to help with the mundane tasks of assisting with events, baking for Pi day, making pulled chicken for the picnic, making giant bubbles, and freezing in the wind and rain at Graveyard of the Gods. Well, maybe not that last one. I hope that by relieving the Board members of those tasks that they will have more time for developing strategy and plan for growing our group and spreading our message.

My thanks to all for your support and kindness.

Robert Brandt, President of FTFW

Welcome New Board Members!

Thanks to your votes, I would like you to welcome the new/revised FTFW board members:

Karen Mizner, President

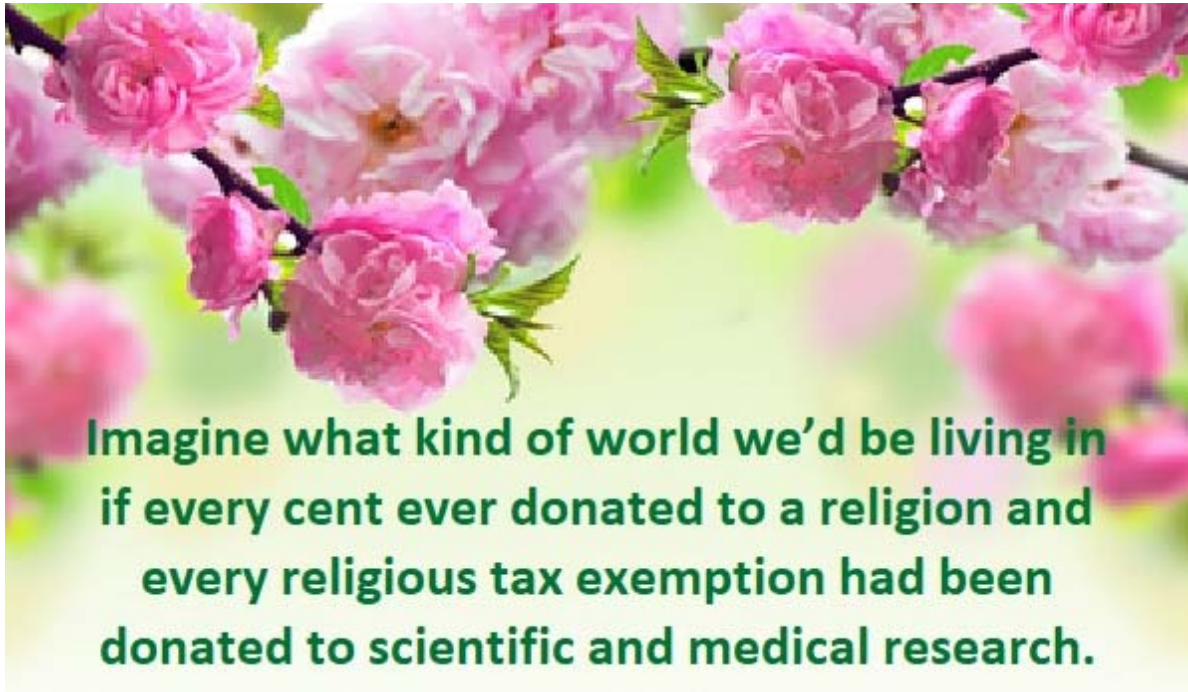
Chris Rex, Vice President

Chris Woods, Secretary

V., Treasurer

Victoria Gipson, Director

Karen's Corner



Karen Mizner, Treasurer of FTFW

From Calcutta to the Taj Mahal

My wife, Jackie, and I took a three-week Road Scholar excursion to India last year between Thanksgiving and Xmas. It was, quite simply, the trip of a lifetime, and will take a long time to absorb. Road Scholar (formerly Elder Hostel) offers trips around the world. We previously took a trip with them to China, which we still recall with pleasure, but the Indian venture was markedly different, and is more difficult to sum up easily. A cautionary note to begin with: volumes of information on India are available in print and on line. Nothing I can offer here can begin to unpack it and I'm not going to attempt that. This short note simply encapsulates some preliminary impressions gained on the trip, nothing more.

Our trip ranged across northern India, beginning in the East at Calcutta (now Kolkata), then cruising up the lower Ganges River to the border with Bangladesh,

followed by short flights West to Patna, Varanasi, New Delhi and Agra, where we toured the Taj Mahal. Along the way we visited a bewildering variety of cultural, historical and religious sites dating back three millennia and more.

Our secular Western culture divides major religious beliefs fairly clearly into relatively distinct groupings. Christian orthodoxies are basically either Catholic or Protestant, for example. Judaism and Islam are the two other major Abrahamic/monotheistic religions. Within each of these orthodoxies, of course, are numerous sects and cults. Beyond them are outliers of religious, philosophical and secular thought, many of which, including humanism, have emerged only relatively recently.

By way of contrast, Indian culture confronts outsiders with a fascinating kaleidoscope of mythic deities and beliefs. Indian religions have far deeper roots, going back over three millennia, blending gods of polytheistic Hindu Vedas (circa 1500 BCE) with later arrivals. Contemporary India is over 81% Hindu, but has a large Muslim minority. I was left with the impression that most Indians are pantheists, with nonviolence as their core value. This helped me to understand the multitudes of deities. One example of this is reverence toward non-domesticated animals such as oxen, cattle, sheep and goats, regarded as sacred by Hindus as sources of labor, milk and fertilizer for crops.

Reincarnation is another prevalent Hindu belief. According to Beliefnet, "Hindus believe that the soul reincarnates, evolving through many births until all karmas have been resolved, and ... spiritual knowledge and liberation from the cycle of rebirth, is attained. Not a single soul will be eternally deprived of this destiny". This, obviously, is a more benign and optimistic form of reincarnation than the once-and-done sort espoused by many Christians, who assign eternal life to the winners and eternal damnation to the losers. Another product of Hinduism is the caste system. Officially illegal, it remains more predominant in rural communities than the cities, and is eroding under the pressure of modernization.

Although clearly a generation or two behind China, and even further behind Japan and Korea, India is a working democracy. Drawing on its colonial and cultural roots, and with leadership and support from abroad, it will become a strong economic and social force in Asia.

John Moore, Member of FTFW

Science Corner

In a recent post in “Science Based Medicine,” Dr. Steven Novella discusses an important case against alternative vaccine schedules. Anti-vaccine moods in the US have resulted in 13% of children being on an alternate schedule (including no vaccines). One of the arguments is that vaccines are given too quickly thus overwhelming the baby’s immune system therefore leaving babies susceptible to more disease later in life.

Dr. Novella also commented on another study that was published in “The Journal of the American Medical Association” (JAMA), titled “Association Between Estimated Cumulative Vaccine Antigen Exposure Through the First 23 Months of Life and Non-Vaccine-Targeted Infections From 24 Through 47 Months of Age” which shows that kids exposed to more vaccine antigens were in fact no more susceptible to disease. Antigens, proteins on the outside of viruses, trigger our immune system. Antigens in vaccines are what train our immune system to protect us from disease in the future. Modern vaccines only include the antigens without the whole virus or bacteria. With modern advances in vaccines there are far fewer antigens needed to produce immunity and in fact what in the 80s was achieved with 3000 antigens is achieved today with just over 300 and it provides protection against more diseases.

Some argue that it could be the quantity as opposed to the variety of antigens that is damaging to our immune system, but that is clearly false when considering, for example, that the hepatitis B vaccine contain 69 micrograms of antigens in all 3 shots while the disease produces 1,162 micrograms every hour for weeks while your body clears the infection. So, as Dr. Novella concludes, there is no science based reason to delay vaccines, but such a delay can increase vaccine preventable disease.

V, Executive Director of FTFW

Letter to the Editor

Here’s your chance! Have an idea for our group? Have a question for us? Have you experienced frustrations as a non-believer? Do people question you about what Humanism means? Just want to vent a bit? Have a funny story to share? Have a question for our Celebrant, Victoria Gipson? The Hoosier Humanist Herald

committee will do its best to respond to your concerns. Submit your letter via e-mail to fortwayneaha@gmail.com with the subject line of "Letter to the Editor" or "Ask a Celebrant," then watch for a response in our next month's newsletter! Please note that letters may be edited for clarity and space.

Upcoming Events

National Ask an Atheist Day

April 18, 2018 (Wednesday): 11:00-2:00 pm at IPFW's Science Mall

FTFW will co-sponsor an information booth with Campus Atheists and Agnostics of IPFW. Feel free to come and answer questions that students might have for humanists.

Is religious faith reasonable?

April 18, 2018 (Wednesday): 7:00 pm at Brookville Road Community Church

Brookville Road Community Church will be hosting a debate on question, "Is religious faith reasonable?" BRCC has invited Jim Spiegel to defend the rationality of faith as well as John Loftus to argue the opposition. A Professor of Philosophy and Religion at Taylor University, Spiegel has published over eighty articles and book chapters; his work has primarily explored topics in ethics and philosophy of religion, and includes his books *The Benefits of Providence*, *The Love of Wisdom*, *How to be Good in a World Gone Bad*.

John Loftus (a member of FTFW) is a leading atheist writer and thinker, a former evangelical minister and Christian apologist, and has been a teacher at several Christian and secular colleges; his books include *Why I Became an Atheist*, *The Outsider Test for Faith*, and *Unapologetic*. The debate is free and open to the public, and will be held on April 18th at 7:00 pm in the BRCC main auditorium (7480 W US-52, New Palestine, IN).

Is religious faith reasonable?

April 19, 2018 (Thursday): 6:30-8:30 pm at the main branch of the Allen County Public Library (ACPL), lower level 2 theater

A local variant of the debate on 4/18/18, where Jim Spiegel and John Loftus debate whether religious faith is reasonable.

International Astronomy Day

April 28, 2018 (Saturday): ~9:00 pm at the StarQuest Observatory

We will join the Fort Wayne Astronomical Society at their StarQuest Observatory at 1720 Webster Rd, New Haven, IN 46774 for a stargazing event.



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