

# FIRST COAST FREETHOUGHT SOCIETY, INC.

*An organization of freethinkers and secular humanists supporting free inquiry, education, and community in the Northeast Florida area*

**Our Motto: “To Question is the Answer.”**

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### **The First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.**

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First Coast

# FreeThinker



The Newsletter of the First Coast Freethought Society

December 2009

Volume 7, Issue 12

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**Earl Coggins**

**W**hen I hear Leonard Cohen sing the song "Hallelujah," I cry. Every time—no questions asked. Most of the time I can grit my teeth, swallow hard, wipe away the tears, and no

sobbing like a kid who just dropped his candy bar in the toilet. And no, I don't like torture.

So why do you suppose an atheist would listen to an overtly religious song? And why would it have such an emotional impact on that atheist?

gious song has a place in the heart of a non-religious person.



You see, my sweet, beautiful, dear mother expressed a fondness

*"...religion and its associated rituals, holidays, music, etc., have a personal and particularly individual meaning to many people — something completely different than the caustic, fire and brimstone religion of the Pat Robertsons of the world."*

for that song. Actually she liked a couple of Cohen's songs, but she liked that one

the most. I hear the

*(Continued on page 3)*

*"In those parts of the world where learning and science have prevailed, miracles have ceased; but in those parts of it as are barbarous and ignorant, miracles are still in vogue."*

—Ethan Allen

one knows what was going on. Sound bizarre? It gets even worse. Sometimes I listen to the song over and over several times, weeping and

It just so happens that the song has a very special meaning for me. Imagine that. A reli-



### December 2009 Meeting - Party - No Lecture **Sixth Annual Human Light Celebration**

Bring a dish to share • Bring a beverage of choice

Monday, December 21, from 6:00 to 9:30 p.m.

Social Hour at 6 p.m. • Dine at 7 p.m. • Ceremonies at 8 p.m.

Unitarian Universalist Church • 7405 Arlington Expressway • Jacksonville, FL

(Downstairs in the Social Hall - Doors open at 6:00)

## Humanist Book Discussion Group



**When:** 2:00 p.m., the first Sunday of each month.  
**Where:** Borders Books, 8801 Southside Blvd. • 519-6500  
**What:** Books/magazines planned for discussion.

- January 3, 2010 - *Night*, by Elie Wiesel and *God on Trial*, a Masterpiece Theater presentation of a play written by Elie Wiesel - **at the home of Fred W. Hill - at 1:00 p.m.**
- February 7, 2010 - Book or article of your choice (back at Borders, back at 2:00 p.m.).

Books may be found in the library, purchased from local book stores, or purchased online. The First Coast Freethought Society will receive a small remuneration from your purchase (at no additional cost to you) if you first go to <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/> and then click the link to Amazon.com for your purchase.

Something special in January! Sociology adjunct professor and long-time FCFS member Lance Stoll will be facilitating discussion of the human desire to believe, the power of belief, and the dangers associated with religious certitude. To that end, he suggests participants read the short work of 1986 Nobel Peace Prize winner and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, *Night*; and watch the PBS presentation, *God on Trial*.

The January book group will be held at the home of Fred W. Hill on Sunday, January 3, 2010, at 1:00 p.m. Bring a folding chair and a snack or finger food to share. Coffee will be provided. The presentation will begin at 2:00. Fred's address is 1817 Egner Street, about three miles north of the Alltel Stadium, near the intersection of 8th Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway. Please use Mapquest.com or Google Maps for detailed directions, or contact Fred by phone at 904-358-3610 or email at [Frednotfaith2@aol.com](mailto:Frednotfaith2@aol.com)

For more info, contact Jewell Kross at [JKross@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:JKross@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org) or call 904-996-1553.

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### First Coast FreeThinker

The *First Coast FreeThinker* is published for FCFS members, other freethinkers, and potential freethinkers. Nonmembers may receive three issues free of charge, after which they must join the FCFS to continue to receive hard copy.

Readers are invited and encouraged to reprint our original materials provided they give credit to this publication. The officials of the FCFS are not responsible for opinions or other statements expressed in this newsletter. The *FreeThinker* is intended to convey ideas that stimulate thought and promote discussion on a variety of subjects.

We welcome submissions. The deadline is the **FOURTH SATURDAY** of each month for the

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following month's issue. Submit contributions to the newsletter by e-mail to Hugo (see above), or by U.S. mail to Hugo Borresen, 8831 Taurus Circle South, Jacksonville, FL 32222.

(November 2009 President's Message  
Continued from page 1)

song and it's as if she's alive again. I can close my eyes and see her smiling.

It's a very weird feeling—a nonreligious person listening to a religious song in order to conjure up memories of his deceased mother. It's funny too. If I were to walk into a church and hear the song, I would no doubt start crying, looking as if I had just been saved, when in fact something entirely different would be taking place.

I remember visiting my mother one year at Christmas. I helped her put her Christmas lights on every bush growing around her home. Then I had to put Santa and his sleigh, along with the reindeer, in the center of the front yard. Then we went inside and listened to Christmas carols while I put up the tree, the ornaments, and my mom baked Christmas cookies—all this with a mother who WAS NOT A CHRISTIAN and did not go to church.

By now I'm sure more than a few of you are wondering what the heck is going on here. Well, there's a point, which is that religion and its associated

rituals, holidays, music, etc., have a personal and particularly individual meaning to many people—something completely different than the caustic, fire and brimstone religion of the Pat Robertsons of the world. There are people who need religion for personal rea-



sons. At various times in the lives of most FCFS members, religion has had a place.

We, and by that I mean most of our members, have moved on and away from god, religion, spirituality, the supernatural, whatever you choose to call it. My mom never did. She

was talking about the “man upstairs” all the way up until her death. When I pressed her about the meaning behind that expression, “the man upstairs,” she would never get specific. I could tell that it was something that for her was more private than anything else.

There must be millions, perhaps billions, of people out there like my mom, with a benign sense of religion and spirituality that could not and would never hurt anyone—a world view that certainly isn't a factor in the “what are we going to do about religious fundamentalists?” equation presented by Sam Harris in his book *The End of Faith*.

So while we drift toward the end of the year, let's remember that not all people who blurt out Merry Christmas this month are trying to do anything other than be nice. Give them a gift that needs no wrapping paper, no fancy ornaments, and no special holiday to justify its existence—give them a smile.

But if you happen to see them later at a City Council meeting, remind them that prayers to open the meeting are an explicit violation of both our state and federal Constitutions.

Happy Winter Solstice!





## I'm No Angel

Ken Hurley

My wild Aunt Felonious once preached to me through her large white-toothed flight attendant smile that George W. Bush is a good man and was a good President because he is a good Christian. She applauded Bush for wanting small government. She highly praised the private sector, and as her ear-to-ear angelic smile turned into an ugly scowl, she lamented the evils of government and dismissively snarled, "What does government do well anyway?"

Let's answer Aunt Felonious beginning with *The Federalist* No. 51 where James Madison wrote:

*But what is government itself, but the greatest of all reflections on human nature? If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself. A dependence on the people is, no doubt, the primary control on the government; but experience*

*has taught mankind the necessity of auxiliary precautions. ([1788] n.d., 337)*

Madison is correct. Men are not angels. (However, by stark omission he leaves open the angelic question regarding women.) His point does refer to the nature of the humans needing organization (government) that may be "the greatest of all reflections on human nature." Because the humans are involved, we probably need "auxiliary precautions" like three branches of government and lots of checks and balances.

***"...We the People, are more than the government. Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, John Adams, and others recognized that even the most well designed institutions are not sufficient. Ultimately, a free society must rely on the knowledge, skills, and virtue of the humans and those they elect to public office."***

It doesn't matter whether a human is religious, deeply religious, religiously apathetic, fanatically atheistic, or works in the public or private sector. Each is capable of great inspirational work or disastrously ruinous work.

It is my view that representative democracy works best with informed, engaged participation. We are the government and the government is us—that is, We the People means you and me.

The complexity of our lives suggests having a solid under-

standing of our government is essential for the government to work effectively. We should stop thinking "government" is something that is *done to us*; that the government is some distant entity over which we can exercise little to no influence.



Government regulates so many of our daily actions: from the air we breathe, to the food we eat, to the water we drink, to safety in the work place, to management of disasters and diseases, to which wars we will engage. Political life is the medium in which we live. Therefore, we should endeavor to understand the process by which our government functions and learn to *enjoy being part of the process* that affects each of our lives daily.

In simple terms our government can be described as the people and groups within a society with the authority to make, carry out and enforce laws, and manage disputes about them.

Consider what life might be like without government. It's quite probable that life without government would be extraordinarily dangerous and unbearably miserable.

*(Continued on page 5)*

Vigilantism might be the order of the day. The physically strongest, the biggest and loudest mouths may always prevail. There would be no checks and balances of power. Unchecked discrimination would be rampant. We couldn't feel comfortable about the food we eat or who may come knocking in the night.

Government, when directed toward worthy purposes and conducted effectively in accord with basic principles of justice, can be a powerful force for the protection of the rights of individuals and the promotion of the general welfare of people.

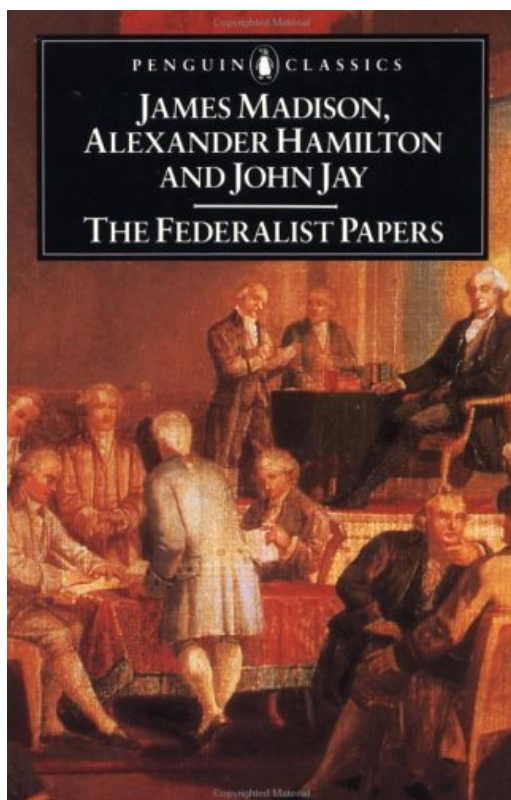
An understanding of the necessity of government and its usefulness in promoting agreed-upon goals that benefit the individual and society is essential for the development of informed, competent, and responsible citizens.

Let's focus on the positive aspects of the humans by citing some of what government does well. Not all of the examples below come from the Federal government. It *is* interesting that nearly each example offered is a result of the private sector failing to respect the general welfare of the people, causing the people to take corrective action through government.

Some useful things our government does:

1. Free public libraries
2. Head Start Program
3. The Federal Aviation Authority
4. Center for Disease Control

5. Medicaid
6. National Park Services
7. Social Security
8. Interstate Highway System
9. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
10. The Food and Drug Administration
11. The Federal Elections Commission



12. Uniform Building Codes
13. National Aeronautics and Space Administration
14. United States Postal Service
15. Occupational Safety and Health Administration
16. Coast Guard
17. State Children's Health Insurance Program
18. School hot lunch programs
19. The Soil Conservation Service
20. The Department of Motor Vehicles

21. Enhanced-911 Calling System
22. State University Systems
23. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
24. Open meetings laws for city, county, and state government office
25. Public health services

There are bound to be other examples that I have unintentionally omitted because they didn't occur to me.

However, We the People are more than the government. Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, John Adams, and others recognized that even the most well designed institutions are not sufficient. Ultimately, a free society must rely on the knowledge, skills, and virtue of the humans and those they elect to public office.

Therefore, it is essential to the preservation and improvement of American constitutional democracy that we learn to enjoy the process of being American. Let's get involved. Let's increase our capacity for effective and responsible participation.

When I offered wild Aunt Felonious the above as evidence of government success, she smiled her beautiful smile and in a slow raspy tar-stained voice said, "Son, you're no angel either."

She does have a beautiful smile.

—Ken Hurley is the Director of Civication, Inc. whose website is [www.civication.org](http://www.civication.org).



## Snowmen, Solstice, and Santa

Jessica Zellers

As the year comes down to a close, we have the annual gauntlet of holidays to run before the New Year. Jump on the snowmen at the office party, dodge the family invitation to Christmas Eve services, roll the packages under the tree... and Winter Solstice... hummm. What are the festive functions for Winter Solstice? If there are any, why not do anything for the Summer Solstice? As with many other items the nonreligious community discusses, there isn't a common agreement on the value or function of the Winter Solstice.

Historically, most if not all of the December holidays can be traced back to the Winter Solstice. But is anyone these days innately joyous at the thought of the sun rising at its southern most point? Today we have wrist watches and supermarkets. We don't rely on the seasons for our food or time any more.

I feel a certain amount of pleasure at the time and effort put into the process of describing our solar system and its motions so that we can understand and reflect on it today. But that alone doesn't motivate me enough for an entire month of celebration.

Personally, I think of the holidays as a time to show gratitude to family and friends and spend time together. And whatever theme the decorations take, or occasion on the invitation, matters less than sharing with others. Solstice doesn't motivate me any

more than Hanukkah does.

While the true reason for the season is the tilt of the Earth's axis, there are causes for wonder that know no season. One of my favorite images is the Hubble Deep Field exposure. This is an exposure taken of a dark spot of sky near the Big Dipper, an area that is found within the space of a grain of sand held at arm's length.



*A section of the Hubble Deep Field exposure*

There is no massive celestial event dominating the image. Instead there are several hundred pin points of light and a few dozen smudges that are slightly bigger. All the dots are separate galaxies, aside from maybe a half dozen much closer stars. This image is one of farthest we've seen, which makes it among the earliest glimpses of the universe. That in itself is magnificent! And we know this just by looking at it.

However, consider all that was needed for that exposure to happen: von Braun, computers, 400 years of advancement in telescope

optics, NASA, Hubble itself, the space shuttle and crews, the successful correction of the optics, and of course someone to say "let's point this at a dark bit of sky and see what's there." The image is beautiful in itself. However, if you could show

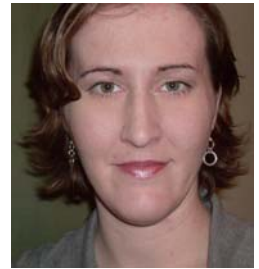
Galileo that image and were not allowed to explain (in brief) the past 400 years of developments in astronomy, he would not share the same wonder and enjoyment as we can today.

That wonder and enjoyment is measured in the progress of scientific research, human exploration, and any time that curiosity and reason breed progress. Remembering those efforts and the results are all the inspiration I think is necessary for whatever festivities occupy us in this last month of the year.

Over the years, I've moved around a bit and now find myself in North Florida, along with an article I've kept and enjoyed over the years. If you remove the specific references to the Solstice, this could well serve as an ode to daily life. And I thought I'd share it with you.

My personal thanks to Howard Thompson for writing it in the first place, I have enjoyed it very much. And thanks to the Atheist Community of Austin in Texas for granting permission to reprint the article in full.

*(Continued on page 7)*





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## JOYOUS WINTER SOLSTICE GREETINGS

By Howard Thompson

**W**inter Solstice helps remind me of my natural humanity and place within reality. It reminds me of my physicality and the nature of the universe from which we descended.

I enjoy the reliability with which our tilted planet moves around the sun. The sun's Winter Solstice predictability confirms an orderly universe of consistent physical forces.

I enjoy feeling my physical processes interact with the seasons. The protein molecules that communicate between my body's cells adjust to the shortened daylight and winter's cold. These seasonal adjustments tell me in unmistakable ways that I resonate with reality. I am at home in the universe because the universe generated my life.

I enjoy thinking about how the Big-Bang produced the physical forces and sub-atomic particles that made me possible. I enjoy thinking about how the gases from the Big-Bang collapsed into galaxies and stars. I enjoy imagining how the nuclear fusion of stars made all the heavier elements necessary for my life. My life was made possible when atoms blasted out from an exploding star to become the material of our sun and humanity's planet.

I enjoy learning how the inevitable chemical interactions of molecules resulted in an in-

creasingly complex chemical evolution that eventually became what we call life. I arose from a natural selection of interacting matter that survived and reproduced across billions of years. I am both unique and related to all the sibling life of our planet.

I enjoy the human good fortune of a brain that thinks. My brain processes perceptions, generates feelings of consciousness, creates ideas of reality, motivates me with emotions, makes choices, and imagines things that have never been. I can think about all that I am, all that I perceive, all that I feel, all that might be, and choose for myself what I do.

I enjoy my naturally evolved instincts and behaviors which let me interact with other humans to create knowledge, cultures, and societies greater than a lone being could ever achieve. I teeter in balance between necessary self-interest and necessary social cooperation, as do we all.

It is the orderly forces of nature that make our planet reliably follow its path of space-time distortion around the sun, which reminds me each year of all that I am and all that is. The Winter Solstice reminds me of why I try to accept and enjoy reality as it is. I am a naturally-selected, self-aware social primate. I am not afraid of, diminished by, nor ashamed to be a natural human animal.

I understand that I have only the few decades of human life to live and enjoy the material reality that created me.

I understand that my self-awareness came into being as the molecules of my mother's ovum translated a DNA template to build my body and brain.

I understand that my self-awareness ceases to exist when the body and brain which are me die.

I understand that the most I should expect is to be glad to wake up for a new day of life each sunrise. Each new day gives me another chance to see just how much and how well I can live with nature and what nature has made me.

I do not hope for unreal perfection, redemption or salvation. I hope to be the "best" human being I can be, one day at a time, by the measure of my genetic heritage, cultural learning, and reasoning. I hope to enjoy as much of what human bodies can enjoy without inflicting harm that damages humanity or nature.

The Winter Solstice reminds me of all this because I love to watch nature's movements and I have access to humanity's accumulated knowledge for my musings. I hope this winter's solstice finds you well and full of hope for the future of your years. I hope that the new solar cycle is for you one of discovery, accomplishment and joy.

(Originally published in The Atheist Vol.4 #12 17Dec00.)

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## Trial By Ordeal

Curtis Wolf

I recently watched a Teaching Company lecture on the early Middle Ages. In the lecture, the professor discussed a rather odd custom called trial by ordeal. As imperfect as legal proceedings are today, they are based far more on reason than what apparently passed for rules of evidence in the early Middle Ages.

Trial by ordeal was a practice by which one who was accused of a crime or was pursuing a civil judgment could prove his case by undergoing an often painful, sometimes dangerous, experience. If the accused or litigant completed the ordeal and was healed miraculously by God of his injuries after a period of time, this was a sign that he was innocent or that his case was just. This kind of ordeal could involve walking a short distance holding a red hot iron or plunging one's hand into a boiling pot of water to retrieve a stone.

Another kind of ordeal called ordeal by cold water involves being bound and thrown into a river. If he sank to the bottom, he was considered to be innocent even though that probably would not matter if he drowned in the process (more on that later). If he floated, the water rejected his body due to his guilt.

Ordeals could even involve tests of endurance such as with the ordeal of the cross. The two litigants would hold up their

arms at shoulder height against a cross and the first one who lowered his arms lost the case. It was presumed that God miraculously held up the arms of the righteous man, even though strong shoulder muscles would be a better explanation.

The practice originated in medieval Europe among the Franks and then was widely used in its various forms throughout the Carolingian empire. Other countries in Europe, such as Anglo-Saxon England and Visigoth Spain, made use of this practice. It was expected that this would be used as a last resort after witness testimony and an elaborate oath-taking procedure called compurgation had failed to resolve the case.

***“The problem is that if this cosmic know-it-all is a figment of our imagination or, even worse, if belief in God is used by priests as a source of power over other people, there is the potential for injustice, as judgments that are not supported by the facts are made on the basis of some perceived divine intervention.”***

Even though it enjoyed wide support in the Christian church, not every man of the cloth supported it. The Archbishop of Lyons Agobard opposed trial by ordeal for a number of reasons. First, he believed that the practice was without scriptural basis. Despite the similarity of trial by ordeal to the practice described in Numbers 5:12–27, in which a sus-

pected adulteress drinks dirty water that is supposed to make her abdomen swell and her thighs waste away if she is guilty, Agobard argued that God commanded the Israelites to take their cases before judges far more often than using ordeal by drinking dirty water to decide cases. Agobard also argued that miracles should be expected only with sacraments such as the Eucharist, when the bread and the wine turn into the body and blood of Christ, and not to solve crimes.

Other arguments by Agobard against the practice were more logical. He asked why would you

want to use trial by ordeal as the last resort if it works so well? Why not use it every time right from the start? Also, why would ordeal by cold water prove innocence by sinking the person?

Wouldn't it make more sense that the innocent person would float

so that the risk of drowning an innocent person is eliminated?

Logical absurdities aside, it was not until the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 when priests were ordered by Pope Innocent III not to participate in trials by ordeals. However, remnants of the practice could be found in the

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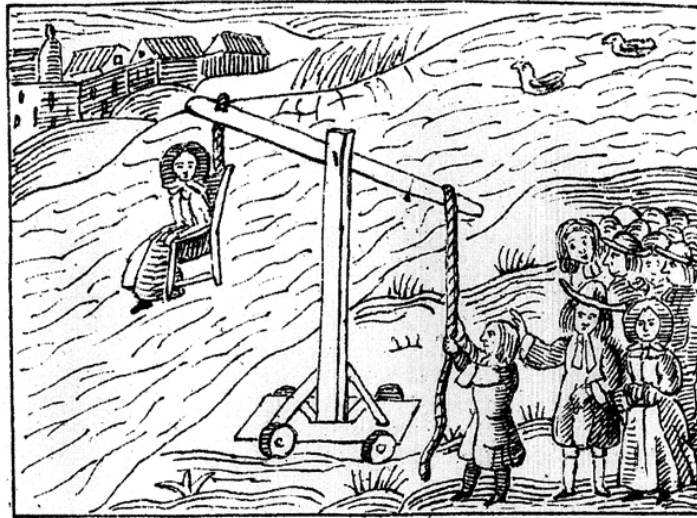
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persecutions of supposed witches in the 16th and 17th centuries in which ordeal by cold water was employed against the outcasts of society.

What trial by ordeals attempted to resolve was uncertainty. Before the law can be applied to a case, the facts of the case have to be determined, and that is not always easy. And it is not just in legal proceedings that uncertainty is found.

All human endeavors have some degree of uncertainty. This is one reason why religion is so popular in human society. It

helps to reduce, if not eliminate, the uncertainty in our lives.

know-it-all in the sky to answer all of our questions!



**Waterboarding, Medieval Version**

Whenever there is doubt in our lives, we can turn to the cosmic

when you consider the alternative.

The problem is that if this cosmic know-it-all is a figment of our imagination or, even worse, if belief in God is used by priests as a source of power over other people, there is the potential for injustice, as judgments that are not supported by the facts are made on the basis of some perceived divine intervention. It is far better to make peace with the uncertainty of life. To say "I don't know" is not such a bad thing



## Ongoing FCFS Activities

### Dinners for Doubters

Sign up to attend or to host a dinner yourself. Sign-up sheets will be at the back table at the monthly meetings. For details on how this works, see **page 7 of the August 2008 FreeThinker** (available on website) or ask a greeter at the back table.

### Secular Sunday Morning in the Park (or Atheist Sunday Morning)

Freethinkers... let's get acquainted and enjoy intelligent conversation **every 4th Sunday of the month** (unless inclement weather prevails) at 10 a.m. until ? at the pavilion at Losco Park, 10851 Hood Rd., S., Jacksonville 32257, between Shad and Losco Roads. Need directions? Call Beth Perry at 733-5489 or Google the address to get a map and directions. We generally provide coffee. Bring a breakfast snack and **a chair**. Mark your calendar. We hope to see you there!

### No Atheist Left Behind (or Are You Going My Way?)

If you are seeking a ride to an FCFS event, contact **Hugo Borresen** at [HBorresen@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:HBorresen@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org) or call 904-779-6883.

### Caring Tree

If a telephone call to a member is in order, or if a sympathy card, flowers, or some form of support is needed, please contact **Judy Hankins** at 904-724-8188, or e-mail her at [JHankins@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:JHankins@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org), or leave a notation on a meeting sign-in sheet.

## Northeast Florida Coalition of Reason Formed

### Stephen Peek

On Friday, November 20, 2009, a new affiliate of the United Coalition of Reason (U-CoR) was formed, the Northeast Florida Coalition of Reason (NeFCoR). The First Coast Freethought Society, the Jacksonville Atheist Meetup Group (JAM), and the Ancient City Freethinkers and Humanists (ACFH), a new meetup group in St. Augustine, have joined together to form this local coalition to raise the visibility of nontheists in our area and to promote cooperation among the individual groups.

Fred Edwards, media director of the United Coalition of Reason, came to Jacksonville and met with Carrie Renwick, representing the FCFS; Dr. Sharon Fair, representing the ACFH; and

Stephen Peek, representing JAM. Mark and Carrie Renwick graciously hosted dinner and the media training seminar in their home.



*Left to right: Stephen Peek, Fred Edwards, Dr. Sharon Fair, Carrie Renwick, and Mark Renwick*

The United Coalition of Reason will fully fund the placement of a billboard in the Jacksonville/St. Augustine area, without cost to the Northeast Florida CoR. The billboard will have a message such as “Don’t Believe in God? You are not alone” and the web

address of NeFCoR. The NeFCoR website will contain links to each of the member groups’ websites. This is an exciting event for all of us and an opportunity to reach

out to nontheists in our area who have not yet found a support group. It will be very interesting to see the public’s reaction to this cam-

paign. This is another step toward nontheists obtaining recognition and acceptance by the general public. We all look forward to the day when being a nontheist is as accepted as is being a Christian.



## Letter to FCFS from Dr. Sharon Fair, Founder of ACFH

**D**ear FCFS Board and Friends:

On behalf of the Ancient City Freethinkers and Humanists (ACFH), we’re excited to be a member of the newly-formed Northeast Florida United Coalition of Reason (NeFCoR) and thank Steve Peek for his efforts in the coordination of our affiliation with U-CoR.

We support U-CoR’s mission to raise awareness about people who don’t believe in a god.

We’re excited that the U-CoR will fully fund a billboard in the Jacksonville/St. Augustine vicinity, as they’ve already done in numerous cities including but not limited to Boston, Philadelphia, Portland and San Diego; cities across Ohio (Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus); the Dallas-Forth Worth area; the Silicone Valley and the New Jersey Turnpike. This billboard campaign, coupled with other ads such as those in a dozen Man-

hattan subway stations, is significantly enhancing the public awareness of atheists, humanists and like-minded people.

This is an exciting event in the growth of our society and I’ve no doubt in yours as well.

Sharon Fair, PT, PhD

—Sharon is Chair and Founder, Ancient City Freethinkers and Humanists, St. Augustine Beach, FL 32080. She may be reached at: [DrSharonFair@comcast.net](mailto:DrSharonFair@comcast.net)



## Tidbits from Terry Loucks

- Do fanatical nationalists, the ones with two flags in their yard, somehow link their self worth to the imagined stature of their nation? That would explain why they are so loath to hear criticism.
- Is it fair to make improvements in our health or education “cost neutral” while wars gets a free pass? Does the congressional budget office ever calculate the “returns” on military expenditures like Iraq?
- Professor Kevin Padian at Berkeley: “If we spent more time in our textbooks talking about how tetrapods came up on land, how birds evolved from dinosaurs, how whales went back into the oceans, the average American would not be so vulnerable to the claims of creationists.” (Science News, Oct. 24, 2009)
- Fossils reveal a feathered dinosaur that predates birds (*Science News*, Sept. 28, 2009)



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## Announcement of 2010 Board Members

**T**hanks to recent passage of the Bylaws amendment increasing the size of the Board, and thanks to the outstanding efforts of the Nominating Committee, the 2010 FCFS Board has some new faces and renewed energy. We thank these fine folks, both the new faces and the familiar, for agreeing to serve on the FCFS Board. Thank you, and congratulations!

President - Earl Coggins  
Vice President - Carrie Renwick  
Secretary - Patrice Bennett  
Treasurer - Mark Renwick  
At-Large - Richard C. Keene  
At-Large - Alex Mabee  
At-Large - Stephen Peek

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## FCFS Annual Planning Meeting - January 10, 2010

**M**EMBERS! If you have thoughts, suggestions, ideas for programs, any input for the Board at all, mark your calendar for **Sunday, January 10, 2010**, at 1:00 p.m., and plan to attend the **FCFS Annual Planning Meeting**. The meeting is at the home of Mark and Carrie Renwick, in Mandarin. We'll be brainstorming about **meeting ideas, programs, special projects, and future direction**, so plan to join us and bring your ideas. Might you be willing to chair a committee? Serve on a committee? Are there any speakers or topics you would like to hear? We want your input!

Please RSVP to Carrie ([CarrieRen@att.net](mailto:CarrieRen@att.net) or call 268-8826) if you are attending and if you need directions. Every member is welcome! We hope you can make it.



First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.  
P.O. Box 550591  
Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591  
(904) 288-6291  
<http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>

### Statement of Purpose

The First Coast Freethought Society, Inc. is an educational, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization dedicated to supporting nonreligious persons in the Northeast Florida area and promoting a nontheistic approach to everyday life.

### Meetings

The FCFS meets the THIRD Monday of each month at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Jacksonville, upstairs in the sanctuary, 7405 Arlington Expressway, Jacksonville, Florida 32211, (904) 725-8133. Meeting time: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Meetings are free and open to the public. Doors open at 6:00 p.m.

### Committees and Chairs

**Program** Carrie Renwick 268-8826  
[CRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:CRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

**Audit** Roger Wenner 288-6291  
[RWenner@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:RWenner@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

**Editorial** Hugo Borresen 779-6883  
[HBorresen@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:HBorresen@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

**Membership** Judy Hankins 724-8188  
[JHankins@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:JHankins@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

**Telephone** Judy Hankins 724-8188  
[JHankins@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:JHankins@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

### FCFS Officers

**President** Earl Coggins 519-1809  
[ECoggins@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:ECoggins@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

**Vice President** Carrie Renwick 268-8826  
[CRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:CRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

**Secretary** June Applen 762-0627  
[JApplen@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:JApplen@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

**Treasurer** Mark Renwick 268-8826  
[MRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:MRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

**At-Large** Steve Peek 742-5390  
[S.Peek@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:S.Peek@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

### Other FCFS Appointments

**Parliamentarian** Fred W. Hill 358-3610  
[FHill@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:FHill@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

**E-mail Secretary** Carrie Renwick 268-8826  
[CRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:CRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

**Finance** Mark Renwick 268-8826  
[MRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:MRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

**Publicity** Carrie Renwick 268-8826  
[CRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:CRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

**Website** Mark Renwick 268-8826  
[MRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:MRenwick@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

**Welcome** Judy Hankins 724-8188  
[JHankins@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:JHankins@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

**Long-Range Planning** Curtis Wolf 573-3847  
[CWolf@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org](mailto:CWolf@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org)

## December Social

**Where:** OLIVE GARDEN on Philips Highway, near the Avenues Mall.

**When:** **Tuesday December 29, 2009** at 6:00 p.m. Proceed directly to our room. **Drinks at 6:00. Dinner at 7:00.** (Order from the menu.)

**RSVP:** [CarrieRen@att.net](mailto:CarrieRen@att.net) (or 268-8826) by **Tues. a.m.**, if you plan to go!

First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.

P.O. Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591 • (904) 288-6291

2010 Membership Application



Name	Date		
Home address	City	State	Zip Code
E-mail address	Home phone	Business phone	
Occupation	Areas of interest and/or expertise		
How did you hear about us? Comments? _____			

Membership level (please select one):

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regular (\$30/yr.)      | <input type="checkbox"/> Carl Sagan (\$50/yr.)       | <input type="checkbox"/> Charles Darwin (\$200/yr.)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student (\$15/yr.)      | <input type="checkbox"/> Bertrand Russell (\$75/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Robert Ingersoll (\$500/yr.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior - 65+ (\$15/yr.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Thomas Paine (\$100/yr.)    | <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime (\$1,000)           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family (\$45/yr.)       |  |   |

Do you object to your name appearing on our membership list, distributed to other members?  Yes  No

I'm interested in getting involved in the FCFS as a(n):

- General member  Committee member  Officer  Financial supporter

- Annual dues cover the period of **January 1 through December 31**.
- The initial dues for new members joining in **July through September** are half the regular rates. Membership extends to the end of the current calendar year.
- The initial dues for new members joining in **October through December** are the full, regular rates. Membership extends to the end of the following calendar year.

*You can make a lasting impact on the future of  
freethought and secular humanism in this community  
...if you provide for the First Coast Freethought Society in your Will.*

Your bequest will ensure that the FCFS continues to be a beacon for freethinkers on the First Coast and to remain a vital Voice of Reason in the Northeast Florida area. Several options are available for establishing a bequest (specific, percentage, residual, or contingent). We will be happy to provide the appropriate wording to you and your attorney, depending upon your wishes.

For further information, contact  
Carrie Renwick, P.O. Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591 or  
904-288-6291 • [CarrieRen@att.net](mailto:CarrieRen@att.net) • <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/>  
All inquiries are held in the strictest confidence.



## FCFS December 2009 Activities

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6 Book Club	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21 Human Light Party	22	23	24	25	26 Newsletter Deadline
27 Secular Sunday	28	29 Olive Garden	30	31		

Visit our website at <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/>.

In the Adobe version, the links are *LIVE!* One click takes you there. If the two-line links do not work, copy and paste into your browser window.

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### 2010 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME!

Yes, it's that joyous time of year when the FCFS receives the financial injection that allows it to function for another year. Membership dues are essential as they cover the general, ongoing operating expenses of the organization. Quite simply, the First Coast Freethought Society would not exist without the support of its members.

The membership year extends from **January through December**, and all membership renewals are due in January. Note, if you have joined during the last quarter of 2009, your membership is good through **December 2010**. We will send out reminders, but if you renew while you are thinking about it, you will be saving trees and postage!

Please consider the higher levels of membership that we offer. Note that any amount over that of one of the basic membership levels is tax deductible, and you will receive a letter for IRS tax purposes to that effect. A big thank you to those of you who have already renewed!

Visit the FCFS website, <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/> and click "**Renew your Membership Now!**" to renew on line using a credit card or PayPal. Or, **mail a check** to the FCFS, P.O. Box 550591, Jax, FL 32255-0591. If any of your contact information has changed, please let us know.