

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.”

Post Office Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591
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The First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.

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May 2011

Volume 10, Issue 5

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President's Message - May 2011

Earl Coggins

I am fixated on labels. Labels might be abhorred by some of us, but that dislike doesn't change much. Labels are here to stay, and if you don't actively use them to define yourself, chances are you'll not only get left behind in a cloud of categorical dust, you'll get labeled by people or groups that might cause you more harm than good.

Publicly declare that

you are not religious and you will more than likely be labeled an atheist. Never mind the fact that we have other labels with similar definitions, words like agnostic, skeptic, rationalist, humanist, free-

jure up images in many people's minds of immorality, criminality, distrust, and other



negative feelings. You could end up being perceived as a communist, a socialist, or an abortionist.

Atheism should not have negative connotations. It's not a worldview.

It's the absence of a worldview—theism.

How does it happen that people end up with-

(Continued on page 3)

“Atheism should not have negative connotations. It's not a worldview. It's the absence of a worldview—theism.”

thinker, or critical thinker, and a word that I am liking more and more each day, a naturalist. Being perceived as an atheist will con-

May 2011 Meeting

David R. Simon, Ph.D., Research Fellow, Institute of Public and International Policy, University of North Florida

“New Biblical Problems: Pseudepigraphy, Pseudonymity, Contradictions and Failed Prophecies”

Monday, May 16, 2011, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

In the Sanctuary, upper parking lot level • Doors open at 6:00

Unitarian Universalist Church • 7405 Arlington Expressway • Jacksonville, FL

Humanist Book Discussion Group



When: 2:00 p.m., the first Sunday of each month

Where: Books a Million, 9400 Atlantic Boulevard, Jacksonville

What: Books planned for discussion:

- June 5, 2011 - *Deadly Spin*, by Wendell Potter
- July 3, 2011 - *Moral Minority*, by Brooke Allen

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://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org> and then click the link to Amazon.com for your purchase.

The disinformation campaigns with which health insurance companies hide misdeeds and manipulate public policy are laid bare in this searing *j'accuse* by one of their own. Wendell Potter, a former CIGNA public relations “spin-meister” whose whistle-blowing congressional testimony made a splash, takes us into the war rooms where he and his fellow flacks battled bad publicity—their counter-attack against the documentary *Sicko* included employee training in how to weather a Michael Moore ambush—and fought to stymie healthcare legislation. (He helped formulate the rhetoric of socialism and death panels that thundered from Republican podiums.) He exposes the PR pros’ propaganda tricks—fake grass-roots organizations, bogus scientific studies—and recounts his shame-faced repentance. But he also trenchantly critiques the failure of America’s for-profit health-insurance system: the underhanded methods insurers use to “dump the sick;” the skyrocketing premiums and deductibles that put health care beyond the reach of millions; the obscene salaries executives rake in while denying benefits to patients. These criticisms aren’t new, but Potter’s “street cred” and deep knowledge of the industry make his indictment unusually vivid and compelling. (*Publishers Weekly*, November 2010)

For more info, contact Herb Gerson at 904-363-6446, or herbge@bellsouth.net

Ongoing FCFS Activities

Dinners for Doubters: Sign up to attend or to host a dinner yourself. If a dinner is scheduled, sign-up sheets will be found at the back table at the monthly meetings. For details on how this works, **see page 7 of the July 2008 *FreeThinker***, available on the website, or ask a greeter at the back table.

Secular Sunday Morning in the Park: Freethinkers, let’s get acquainted and enjoy intelligent conversation **every 4th Sunday of the month** (unless inclement weather prevails) at 10 a.m. until ? under the pavilion at Losco Park, 10851 Hood Rd., S., Jacksonville 32257, between Shad and Losco Roads. Need directions? Call Beth Perry at 904-733-5489 or Google the address to get a map and directions. We generally provide coffee. Bring a breakfast snack and **a chair or two**. Note, if it’s too hot under the pavilion, we take our chairs to some trees with a nice breeze. Mark your calendar. We hope to see you there!

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 info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org, or leave a notation on a meeting sign-in sheet.

(President's Message -
Continued from page 1)

out a belief in a god or gods?

The answer is simple: we're all born without any concept of theism and therefore are without theism. Theism is a hypothesis. Most humans acquire theism from other humans just as they acquire a piece of knowledge or an idea from another human. Many of the ideas, thoughts, and information we acquire are not original, but passed on from one human to another, one generation to another, one culture to another.

There are two kinds of atheism: explicit and implicit. An explicit atheist makes the declarative statement, "I believe there is no god." Having belief requires evidence. An explicit atheist

will often use a logical fallacy as evidence to support his or her claim that god does not exist. He or she will state that there is a lack of evidence to support a belief in a god—therefore a belief that god does not exist is a rational argument. As I've said before: *Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence*. That is why many atheists are in fact implicit atheists.

What is an implicit atheist? Implicit atheism is the absence

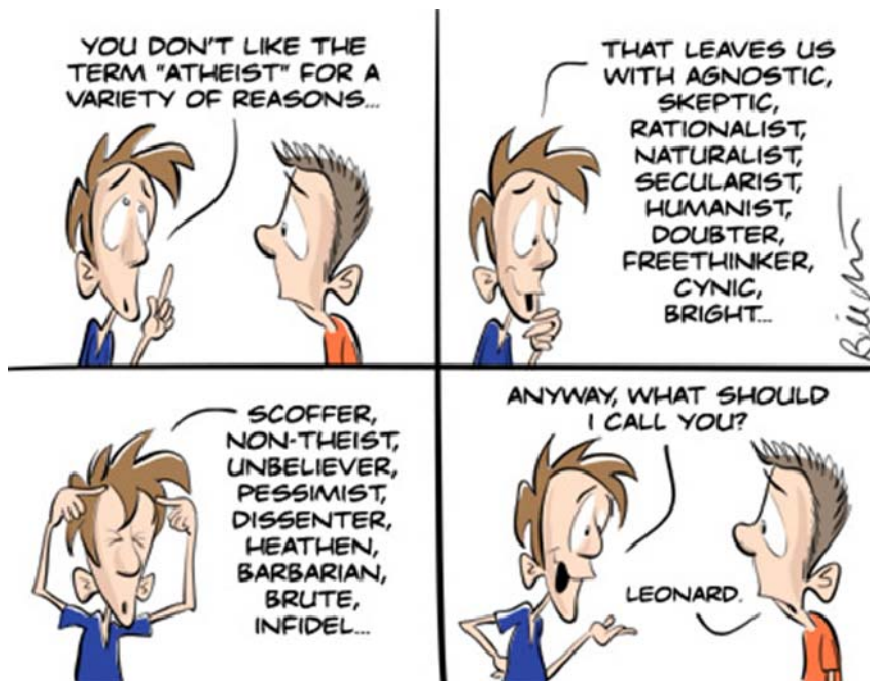
of theistic belief without a conscious rejection of it. That does not mean an implicit atheist is unconscious or unaware of his or her atheism. An implicit atheist makes a distinctively disparate declarative statement, "I believe there is no evidence to support any claims concerning the existence of god—either for or against it." Unlike many of us, a significant number of atheists walk the earth never giving

I would be another example. I have heard the hypothesis of the explicit atheist, and I have heard the hypothesis of the theist. I believe neither has the evidence to support their claims. There is no proof either way. That does not, however, negate the fact that I am without theism. Having no theism (i.e., being without it), what do I call myself? I've already declared my hesitancy to be unequivocally labeled an atheist.

Those of us embracing atheism don't have much to hold onto, given the fact that it technically cannot represent anything positive since it is the negation of a worldview held by others.

Some people would call me an agnostic. They would be correct, but agnosticism is yet another word negating the worldview of others.

Freethinkers find it funny and absurd to believe in myths and primitive concepts. It's time to own up to the fact that we are embracing concepts invented a long time ago that do not define us. I like A.C. Grayling's moniker, *naturalist*, which he defines as someone who believes the universe to be a natural realm, governed by nature's laws. It says what I believe—not what I do not believe.



Atheistcartoons.com, Bill Mutranowski, 2009

much thought to their lack of theistic belief. It's simply not an issue for them, and many try to downplay it. Let's call one of these atheists Person A. This adult, Person A, is a conundrum to the way in which atheism is currently perceived. Most people perceive atheism as a belief—a belief that god does not exist. Person A does not have the explicit atheist's disposition, nor does this person have the necessary disposition to be categorized as a theist.



They Are Back—With Dinosaurs

Sigrun Buckley

In 2008, Tennessee built the Bible Park USA (see FCFS newsletter June 2008). There still seems to be a big demand, a real need for such installations for the broad masses (may I say the “logic-impaired?”) because now it is “The Creation Evidence Museum”—no less—that is being built near Ft. Worth, Texas.

“The state-of-the-art 70,000 square-foot museum brings the pages of the Bible to life, casting its characters and animals in dynamic form and placing them in familiar settings.” Its virtual tour through the exhibits depicts dinosaurs and people roaming the planet at the same time. Truly a miracle! “Welcome and Prepare to Believe,” says its website. Well, believe indeed...! We knew that the Texas school board has a problem with science, is great on believing, and tweaked its history books to the right—right into the diorama of the absurd.

Why are people so gullible to choose myths over facts? Why are fairytales perpetuated and scientific data ignored? These questions puzzled me then and keep puzzling me, now. Why do the majority of Americans (78%) still deny evolution and treat Darwinism as a “hypothesis?” Why do preachers still have such a grip on the perception of reality and

life for your regular Joe Bloke here in the USA? A true *déjà vu* born out of ignorance, I suspect out of choice.

Reality is that international test scores show U.S. eighth graders rank 28 in Math. In fourth grade, American students score in the middle of 26 countries reported and at the finish line, where it really counts, we’re near dead last. The score in Science is slightly better: eighth graders rank 17. (For more info, click

“People need to be skeptical and ask “why” until a reliable source is reached, with an accurate result and explanation. This is true for political, scientific, and religious claims.”

[here](http://4brevard.com/choice/international-test-scores.htm) (or type “http://4brevard.com/choice/international-test-scores.htm” into your browser.

A similarly deluded perception of reality prevails when people believe that the USA has the best health care system in the world. My physiotherapist, married to a soldier, claims, “We are the greatest country on the face of the earth!” She chooses to ignore the hard facts of statistics, e.g., that when the World Health Organization assessed the world’s health systems, it ranked USA number 37.

Another example is climate change. It is real and caused largely by human activities, according to an official statement made in 2007 by the American Physical Society (APS), consisting of over 46,000 scientists. Nevertheless, a big percentage of Americans deny its validity. The unfortunate release of private e-mail communications by British scientists was a welcome conspiracy, twisting the facts for the public which, was now uncovered. And aren’t the harsh snow storms and temperature records of the winter of 2010 and 2011 proof enough that Global Warming is a hoax?



Everybody is prone to conceptual errors, even scientists. But science has a set of rules and procedures—the scientific method—based entirely on facts, data, and reproducibility of results and designed to minimize their likelihood of committing conceptual errors that cause belief in myths: myth-busters. So why do irrational myths persist? Because people have a desire for easy answers and quick fixes. Word of mouth has not lost its appeal, and misleading film and media portrayal contribute to a

(Continued from page 4)
perpetuation of belief in myths in spite of an abundance of easily accessible evidence. Science in the classroom has a long way to go but will eventually prevent mumbo-jumbo and let mega-churches shrink. That's my belief.

Media continue to choose to repeat fabricated communications instead of dismissing them. After all, if enough people believe nonsense then it must be newsworthy and be treated with credibility. Remember the infamous death panels created and invoked by Sarah Palin? A forceful rebuttal not only by politicians who knew better but also by the mainstream media should have put to shame anybody who reiterated this nonsense and blindsided the public; instead falsehood and ideological agenda were buttressed, facts ignored, and another myth perpetuated.

People need to be skeptical and ask "why" until a reliable

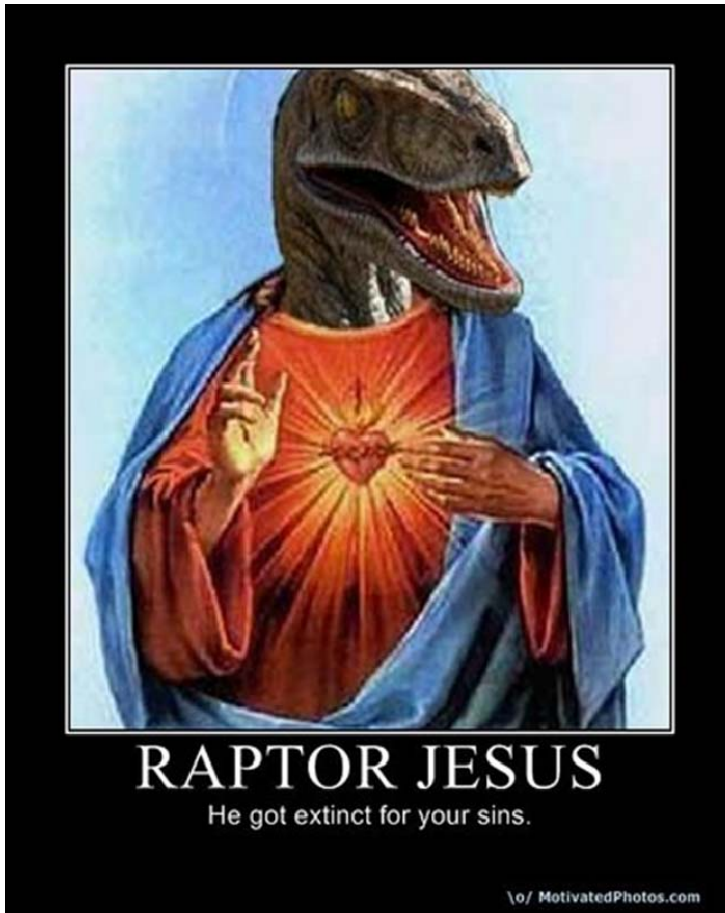
source is reached, with an accurate result and explanation. This is true for political, scientific, and religious claims. We need more science in the classroom, not belief-enhancing

part haven't mastered the mental acrobatics of harmonizing religion with science.

P.S. In the February *Skeptical Inquirer*, Gary M. Bakker wrote: "Thinking scientifically can clearly be achieved through training and so is worth a try. But some will never get it. They are hardwired to believe in the paranormal." (p.54f). Oops!

A study by political scientists Michael B. Berkman and Eric Plutzer of Penn State University was published in *Science Magazine*, January 28, 2011, issue. The study concluded that evolution may win in court but not in the classroom. A survey of teachers revealed that teachers are reluctant to teach evolution because they either do not personally accept it, don't

want to rock the local boat too much, or simply have never taken courses in that field and do not feel confident to teach evolution—thus perpetuating ignorance. Double ouch!!



Creationist evidence museums. In the meantime, notorious optimist that I am, I go with the FCFS's motto: To question is the answer. Not having the brain of a Newton, I for my

May Social

- Where:** OLIVE GARDEN on Philips Highway, near the Avenues Mall.
- When:** **Tuesday May 24, 2011** 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 (or 268-8826) by **Tues. a.m.**, if you plan to go!

American Struggles towards Religious Freedom, Part 2

Fred W. Hill

According to many modern religious conservatives, the framers of our national constitution were inspired by God, were in accord on every word in that document and intended their clearly expressed intent be adhered to in perpetuity. The truth was much messier. There was great diversity of opinion among the framers on many issues such as slavery, taxes, representation, and religion, and they were no more divinely inspired than are any of our current politicians. Several passages of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights were written in vague language in order to overcome disagreements, leaving future generations to resolve or continue the arguments. Many founders were very religious and wanted the federal Constitution to reflect their worldview—they were not happy that the instrument asserted authority from “We the People,” purposely neglecting any mention of God and failing to define the United States as a Christian nation. However, most of those who gathered in Philadelphia to craft a plan for a better federal government determined that religion was best excluded, left for states, local communities, or even individuals to decide for themselves. These were devout Christians and at least a few skeptical Deists and Unitarians, but they all were fa-

miliar with the history of religious persecution, both in the Old World across the sea and in many of their own communities. None of them wanted someone else telling them what to believe or how to pray. James Madison, popularly referred to as “the Father of the Constitution,” led the struggle for the rights of individuals to choose their own religious path, un-coerced by any external mortal authority. He had to settle for less than he preferred, but so did every other delegate. The U.S. Constitution was a compromise, the best a majority of delegates, 39 out of 55, representing 12 states—

“Civil government and religion, Madison argued, did not require one another for their establishment, and their collusion debased both.”

Rhode Island boycotted the entire process—were willing to sign on to.

Delegates of the more populous states, for example, grudgingly accepted equal representation in the Senate with the less populated states. Pro-slavery and anti-slavery delegates, then still coexisting north and south of the Mason-Dixon line, agreed to the apportionment of representatives and direct taxes based on the whole number of free persons, excluding untaxed Indians, and “three-fifths of all other persons,” a sly reference to slaves, wholly satisfying neither side

but conceded as the price of forming a “more perfect union.”

Delegates of 11 states, however, agreed to the proposal by Charles Pinckney of South Carolina to bar religious tests for public office—religious diversity in the new nation was already extensive enough that “no practitioners could have confidence that religious tests would be to their liking” (*Founding Faith*, Steven Waldman, p. 130). Loathe though they were to let the federal government impose a religious test, such tests prevailed in the states themselves by a wide margin. Massachusetts, for example, sentenced convicted blasphemers who denied or reproached any part of the Holy Trinity or the Bible to being whipped or pilloried. Even Rhode Island, founded as a haven for religious dissidents, barred Jews from citizenship and Catholics from public office. Only New York and Virginia had no religious test for office, in the latter state largely due to the efforts of Thomas Jefferson, George Mason, and James Madison in drafting bills barring the state from compelling anyone to adhere to any religious belief or practice and then convincing the Virginia legislature to enact them as law.



During the revolutionary year of 1776, Mason drafted Virginia’s Declaration of Rights,

which included the passage, “all men should enjoy the fullest toleration in the exercise of religion...” Madison, however, recognized that religious freedom was not something to be merely tolerated by any authority, even an elected one, but was a fundamental right. Thus, he proposed a revision, “all men are equally entitled to the full and free exercise of [religion],” which became part of the version adopted by the Virginia Convention on June 12, 1776. Intent on expanding on that passage and severing the link between church and state, Jefferson drafted the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom, which he considered one his proudest achievements. Introduced to the Virginia General Assembly in 1779, it did not become law until 1786.

Patrick Henry led the opposition to Jefferson’s bill and proposed one of his own to increase taxes to support church and clergy. Henry’s scheme was broad enough to allow voters to designate which church or, in a concession to the unreligious, educational institute their taxes would go to. Madison, however, argued that such taxation would be injurious both to the state and to religion itself. During his youth, Madison had witnessed the tyranny of the Anglican Church in colonial Virginia, where non-Anglican ministers, including those among the growing number of Baptists, were

regularly jailed for preaching without a license, said license requiring a lengthy bureaucratic process dominated by Anglicans who routinely denied the license on any pretext they could come up with. Although raised an Anglican himself, Madison was as appalled by this tyranny of a local majority as he was by that of the distant king and parliament; and from the beginning of his long political career he fought against it, armed only with his keen intellect and power of persuasion. Hence, responding to

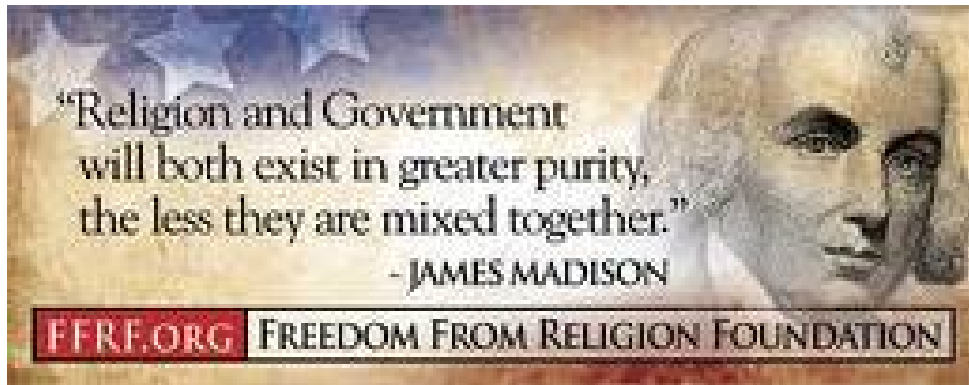
endeavor to the national level at the Constitutional Convention.

Although he initially felt a Bill of Rights was unnecessary and potentially even harmful, Madison was ultimately convinced of the need for amendments to explicitly state prohibitions on government authority. He attempted to include federal authority to veto state laws that violated the federal Constitution but failed, as most slaveholding delegates feared such power might one day be used to deprive them of their human property.

Thus, although the federal government was barred from establishing a religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, the states themselves were not, at

least until the 14th Amendment was passed in 1868, making the Bill of Rights applicable to state and local governments as well as the federal.

Madison, like many of the other political leaders of the first “four score and seven” years of our national history, will be forever tainted by having profited from the scourge of slavery. For all his genius and empathy for some persecuted minorities, Madison was still a man of his time and culture, with many of its racial and sexual prejudices. Yet, he also significantly helped change the broad culture of the new nation for the better through his efforts on behalf of religious freedom.



Henry’s bill, in 1785 Madison wrote a 15 point “Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments.” Civil government and religion, Madison argued, did not require one another for their establishment, and their collusion debased both. Indeed, he asserted in his seventh point, “During almost 15 centuries has the legal establishment been on trial. What have been its fruits? More or less in all places, pride and indolence in the Clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity, in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution” (*Moral Minority*, Brooke Allen, p. 194). Madison succeeded in convincing enough other Virginia legislators to finally pass Jefferson’s statute and reject Henry’s before taking his



Atheists and Other Freethinkers in the Military

Earl Coggins

The *New York Times* recently ran a story (April 27, 2011) regarding an attempt by nonreligious members of various branches of the United States military to include nonreligious chaplains as members of the military chaplaincy which, if successful, would create for the first time in the military the existence of an atheist chaplain. How's that for an oxymoron?

Will this be a great benefit for nonreligious people, or another piece of evidence for groups wishing to portray atheism as just another religion? After all, isn't that the generally accepted definition of faith—something pertaining to a religious order, group, or perspective?

The article alluded to just that — and for a good reason. It's a requirement in the military to be a member of a "faith" in order to be a chaplain. And equally important, could an atheist chaplain provide support to troops of all faiths, another requirement of chaplains?

Former U.S. Army Captain Jason Torpy, now president of the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers, is quoted in the article as saying

"Humanism fills the same role for atheists that Christianity does for Christians and Judaism does for Jews." He went on to say that humanism directs the values of atheists and freethinkers. He has a valid and arguable point, but does it miraculously (pun intended) turn humanism or atheism into a faith?

A quote from an un-named chaplain regarding this controversy says it all: "You're not a faith group—you're a lack-of-faith group."

"We have to change the way people think, which will require letting them in on a secret hiding in plain sight: Not everyone in this country is religious, nor are they all Christians."

The argument can be reduced to a problem with semantics or, defined another way, a problem with labels and their definitions. What exactly is a faith group? Is it a group of people with a common faith? Faith in what? How do you define faith? Does it have to be religious in order to be a faith group? Does the idea of faith have to have mystical overtones? I have faith in the U.S. Constitution. Does that make me a member of the faithful?

The whole concept of faith is a giant can of proverbial worms.

Why does a definition of faith have to restrict itself to religion? Perhaps simply because it has always been that way, which is exactly what opponents to nonreligious chaplains are claiming, i.e. nonreligious groups cannot label themselves as a "faith" because it is a religious realm. If that is the case, why do religious chaplains

frequently counsel their flocks on social, emotional, political, and philosophical issues? The answer is simple. In actuality, "faith" is about much more than just religion or religious issues.

If faith is synonymous with religion and spirituality,

which in turn is synonymous with matters outside of nature's laws, why do religious leaders continually try to tell us how to behave, what books we can read, what television shows to watch, what clothes we can wear, what food we can eat, when we can eat it, when to speak, when not to speak—all outside the realm of spirituality and clearly within the realm of human nature.



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A faith is actually a worldview, and a worldview is composed of many elements, including those related to the spiritual, social, emotional, psychological, philosophical, and political aspirations, and needs of being human. That puts the religious aspects of a chaplain's counseling at well below 20% of what he or she must discuss when ministering to his or her flock. It's time for a change in how we look at the word "faith."

Defining human attitudes and feelings regarding the origin and nature of the cosmos as a "faith" is an old-world concept. It is non-inclusive, restrictive, and brain-washing. It should be replaced with a label advocating plurality and inclusion. The term "worldview" accomplishes more than that. It also opens the doors for giving a large population group equal representation.

The military decision makers in the few faiths within the military chaplaincy know their chaplains are counseling personnel on matters outside of the scope and parameters of religion in general and Christianity



"In memory of ATHEISTS IN FOXHOLES and the countless FREETHINKERS who have served in this country with honor and distinction. / "Presented by the National Freedom From Religion Foundation with hopes that in the future humankind may learn to avoid all war."
(Inscription on the monument erected at Lake Hypatia, Alabama, in 1999)

in particular. How convenient to have mostly protestant chaplains discussing and advising members of the military on all matters of life and any number of religious views, when many of those members are not protestant and many of the chaplains are not sufficiently qualified to do it.

If we don't first change the rules, change will only occur at a glacial pace, if it occurs at all. Blending in with the status quo is not change. We have to change the way people think, which will require letting them in on a secret hiding in plain sight: Not everyone in this country is religious, nor are they all Christians.

In order for African-Americans to have a chance at enjoying basic human rights, they first had to be recognized as being five-fifths human. Military faith leaders need to recognize that one-fifth or more of this country's population are without a faith in a god, but that doesn't make them one-fifth human and undeserving of equality, recognition, and representation.



Freethought Community Outreach Opportunities for You!

Patrice Bennett

The FCFS Board has formed a new committee called Community Outreach, chaired by me. It is another wonderful opportunity for our members for fellowship and to participate together in activities which benefit us as well as our community at large. The core goals are:

- Foster fellowship among members through shared activities;
- Assist the community through activities which better the lives of others; and
- Promote conversation and education of others about freethought,

I know many of you are already active volunteers in different areas, so let's put on our

First Coast Freethought Society T-shirts and get out in the community together and change some minds about who we really are and what we stand for. (Yes, we now have official FCFS Polo shirts and T-shirts available! See article below and order form elsewhere in this newsletter.)

ested in participating in, or which you think would be most effective to educate and inform folks in the community about free-thinkers, humanists, atheists, agnostics, etc.



We have created the enclosed "Community Outreach Survey" in order to identify three or four activities which YOU are inter-

We are pretty excited about this wonderful new facet of our organization, and we hope you are, too. We have had overwhelming support from everyone so far, so let's keep the ball rolling! If you are interested in helping coordinate events, just let me know.

Please return the Community Outreach Survey by fax to 904-352-7924, or by e-mail to

Patrice@freethinkinme.com, mail to the FCFS, PO Box 550591, Jax, 32255, or bring it to the next meeting, Losco Park, or Olive Garden.



Official FCFS T-Shirts and Polo Shirts Now Available

Patrice Bennett

We now have an official First Coast Freethought Society T-shirt designed and produced by the board as a fundraiser for the FCFS, as well as to be a provocative, wearable billboard to start conversations, promote our group, and give each of us an opportunity to do good PR for all types of nonreligious persons.

Do you suffer from that awkward pause when you are deciding how to refer to your particular cate-

gory of nonbelief to the theistic world? On the back of your T-shirt you can have printed a handy dandy "nontheist checklist!" With an indelible marker, you can check the applicable category, or categories, or "fill in the blank" with your label of choice, if so desired.

You will find the order form in the newsletter with assorted colors, sizes and configurations from which to choose. Please clearly indicate which configuration you prefer.

The suggested minimum dona-

tion is \$15 for T-shirts and \$20 for Polo shirts. Proceeds, less production cost, will benefit the FCFS. These also make great gifts!

Please return your completed order form to Patrice by e-mail at

- Patrice@freethinkinme.com
- Mail to the FCFS, PO Box 550591, Jax, 32255
- Fax to Patrice, 904-352-7924
- Bring it to a meeting, Losco Park, or Olive Garden.

NPR Corporate Sponsorship Fund Drive Is Underway!

Carrie Renwick

The time has come when nonreligious people everywhere are speaking out saying, “We are not religious, we are here among you, we mean you no harm, and we are not going to go away!” One of the most effective ways the First Coast Freethought Society gets this message across is through our NPR announcements.

Since 2007, the FCFS has been purchasing a very powerful tool to broadcast our freethought message over Florida’s First Coast: announcements on NPR (National Public Radio) member-station WJCT 89.9 FM, in Jacksonville. Our freethought messages reach 1.5 million people in WJCT’s listening area.

In addition to generic messages about the FCFS, in the

days preceding our monthly meeting, we have been airing a “special event spot” announcing the speaker and topic of the meeting that month.

To keep our messages alive, we need your help. Our membership dues fund the first half of the year, but for the second half of the year, we depend on your generosity. For 13 spots a month, at \$52.50 per prime driving-time slot (mornings during *Morning Edition* and evenings during *All Things Considered*), for six months, the cost is \$4,095.

Our goal for the annual summer fundraising campaign is \$4,095 to renew our contract for July through December, 2011. All it takes is for 100 people to give \$41 each (or 41 people to give \$100)! But of course, any amount helps and is gratefully

appreciated.

Our campaign is underway now, our goal being to raise \$4095 by June 30, 2011.

To donate via the FCFS website, click [here](#) or visit the website directly and click on “Join, Renew, Donate.” You are NOT required to have a PayPal account. Scroll down on the PayPal page, and you will find where you can use any major credit card.

If you prefer to send a check, please mail it to the FCFS, Post Office Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591.

All donations are TAX DEDUCTIBLE under IRS Code 501(c)(3), and you will receive a letter to that effect for your income tax records.



Building Bridges Beyond Belief: Dialogue with a Bridge Building Hospital Chaplain



Fortunate is the agnostic, atheist, or freethinker who is admitted to Baptist Medical Center South in Jacksonville! “Fortunate?” you say, “to be admitted to the hospital?” Yes, in a way. And in a way that could be significant to the well-being of a nonreligious patient. You will not want to miss the June 20, 2011 meeting of the First Coast Freethought Society! It is another in President Earl Coggins’ “Building Bridges Beyond Belief” series.

Earl will be welcoming Ed Wilder, Senior Chaplain, Baptist Medical Center South, who has developed a “Multi-faith Educational Program” dedicated to bringing awareness to Baptist South employees of the many diverse world-views practiced by Baptist South patients, and how to accommodate them. Ed will explain the program, and Earl and Ed will focus especially on the needs of the nonreligious patient who finds himself at a large Baptist healthcare facility.



First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.
 P.O. Box 550591
 Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591
 904-419-8826
<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.

For other activities besides monthly meetings, please see the website, brochure, or newsletter!

FCFS 2011 Board Members

President	Earl Coggins	521-5039
Vice President	Carrie Renwick	268-8826
Secretary	Patrice Bennett	352-7005
Treasurer	Stephen Peek	742-5390
At-Large	Fred Hill	358-3610
At-Large	Richard Keene	386-1121
At Large	Alex Mabee	864-6198

Other Appointments

Parliamentarian	Mark Renwick	616-2896
E-mail Secretary	Carrie Renwick	268-8826

Committees and Chairs

Audit	Roger Wenner	419-8826
Editorial	Fred Hill	358-3610
Membership	Judy Hankins	724-8188
Finance	Mark Renwick	616-2896
Publicity	Carrie Renwick	268-8826
Website	Mark Renwick	616-2896

All FCFS personnel may be reached via e-mail at info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

**First Coast
FreeThinker**

The *First Coast FreeThinker* is published for all freethinkers and potential freethinkers. Nonmembers may receive the e-mail version indefinitely. Nonmembers may receive three hard-copy issues free, 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.

Information for Contributors

We welcome submissions. Articles for consideration should be submitted via e-mail to the e-mail address shown below. Contributors who cannot submit manuscripts electronically may send them to Fred

Hill, 1817 Egner St., Jacksonville, FL 32206. The deadline for time-sensitive material is the FOURTH SATURDAY of each month for the following month's issue.

We prefer articles no longer than 1,000 words. Longer articles will be evaluated in terms of whether their importance and degree of interest to our readers warrant publication.

All accepted manuscripts are subject to editorial modification. Our style guide is *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Manuscript submissions cannot be returned. Authors are responsible for the accuracy of all quotations and for supplying complete references where applicable.

E-mail Address for Submissions
Editor@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

ADVERTISING RATES: Eighth-page (business card size) \$25.00, quarter-page \$50.00, half-page \$75.00, and whole page \$100.

To advertise, contact Patrice Bennett, 904-352-7005, or info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org

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P.O. Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255-0591 • (904) 419-8826

2011 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 interesting 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
904-419-8826 • CarrieRen@att.net • <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/>
All inquiries are held in the strictest confidence.

Upcoming Freethought Events of Interest on the First Coast

Monday	May 16	FCFS Monthly Meeting - 6:30 p.m.
Sunday	May 22	FCFS Secular Sunday in the Park, Jacksonville - 10:00 a.m.
Tuesday	May 24	FCFS Monthly Social at Olive Garden, Jacksonville - 6:00 p.m.
Saturday	May 28	FCFS Deadline to submit articles for May 2011 <i>FreeThinker</i>
Sunday	June 5	FCFS Humanist Book Discussion Group, Jacksonville - 2:00 p.m.
Monday	June 13	JAM Meetup at European Street Café in San Marco - 6:30 p.m.
Monday	June 20	FCFS Monthly Meeting, Jax - 6:30 p.m.

First Coast Freethought Society (FCFS) • <http://www.firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org/>
Jacksonville Atheist, Agnostic, Secular Meetup Group (JAM) • <http://www.jaxatheists.com/>
Northeast Florida Coalition of Reason (NeFCoR) • <http://NorthEastFloridaCoR.org/>

The FCFS is a proud member of the Humanists of Florida Association
and the Northeast Florida Coalition of Reason

FCFS Annual Spring Fling - Come One, Come All!

Patrice Bennett

WHAT: FCFS Spring Fling

WHEN: Saturday, May 21, 2011, 1:00 - 6:00 p.m.

WHERE: The home of Patrice Bennett

BRING: A dish to share, your beverage of choice,
(adult beverages welcome)

RSVP: To Patrice Bennett, at 904-352-7005, or
e-mail Patrice@freethinkinme.com

The time has come for our Annual Spring Fling!
This year, the flinging will be done on Saturday af-
ternoon, May 21st, at the home of Patrice Bennett

located in historic Springfield. Don your May flowers and devise an edible or drinkable contribution and come join in the fun! Please email or call Patrice as indicated above for the address, directions, and other assorted bits of minutia thereunto appertaining. We are certain to have plenty of pontification, libation, oration and other “-tions” for your amusement and personal edification. Plan to attend what will be a delightful party!! (Note, Carrie will be sending e-mail reminders, as well.)



Community Outreach Survey

First Coast Freethought Society, Inc.

Please indicate which items you would participate in.

Please return survey to FCFS, PO Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255

G = Group program 5+ persons needed

I = Individual program, set your own schedule

* = Involves volunteers spending some money

† = Christian organization

Community Charity/Programs

- Dignity U Wear – fold clothes, monthly, 3 hours, 5+ people (G)
- Ronald MacDonald House – cook dinner for 50 people and drop off, quarterly, 10 people (G, *)
- Clara White Mission – serve breakfast 8-10am, quarterly, 10 people (G, †)
- Bake birthday cakes for kids at shelters (I, G, *)
- Guardian ad Litem Program – advocate for kids in foster care (I)
- Other _____

Outdoors

- Adopt a Road – clean up trash along a roadway (FCFS would get signs!), monthly, 10 people (G)
- City/Park/River cleanups – pick up trash on specified days, a few times a year, 5+ people (G)
- Volunteer at Jazz Festival – paid by the hour to volunteer, money goes to charity, annual (G)
- Volunteer at TPC – paid by the hour to volunteer, money goes to charity, annual (G)
- Habijax – building houses for the working poor (G, †)
- Clean It Up Green It Up – cleaning up city parks, annual, 5+ people (G)
- Jacksonville Arboretum – help clean up, beautify, plant, etc. (I, G)
- Other _____

Mentoring

- Teach adults to read (I, G)
- Teach kids to read (I, G)
- Teach immigrants to read (I, G)
- Big Brothers, Big Sisters – mentoring kids, one year commitment, at least one day a month (I, G)
- Art or program presentation to ARC or other groups with disabilities (I, G, *)
- Other _____

Walks/Rides/Runs for Charities or for Fun

- River Run
- MS 150 Bike Ride to Daytona (and back) – to fight Multiple Sclerosis
- Donna Deegan Marathon - for Breast Cancer
- Light the Night Walk – to fight blood cancers
- Hubbard House Walk - to End Domestic Violence
- Other _____

(These sometimes require a team and getting donations for each participant)

Name _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Comments _____

Please return survey to FCFS, PO Box 550591, Jacksonville, FL 32255

First Coast Freethought Society – Official T-Shirt Order Form

7	8	7	8
	<input type="checkbox"/> AGNOSTIC <input type="checkbox"/> ATHEIST <input type="checkbox"/> CRITICAL THINKER <input type="checkbox"/> FREETHINKER <input type="checkbox"/> NONRELIGIOUS <input type="checkbox"/> SECULAR HUMANIST <input type="checkbox"/> SKEPTIC		<input type="checkbox"/> AGNOSTIC <input type="checkbox"/> ATHEIST <input type="checkbox"/> CRITICAL THINKER <input type="checkbox"/> FREETHINKER <input type="checkbox"/> NONRELIGIOUS <input type="checkbox"/> SECULAR HUMANIST <input type="checkbox"/> SKEPTIC
7	8	7	8
7	8	7	8
7	8	<p>PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR CHOICES AND ENTER YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION.</p> <p>COLOR: GREY WHITE OTHER_____</p> <p>STYLE: T-SHIRT POLO OTHER_____</p> <p>SIZE: LADIES MENS S M L XL XXL XXXL</p> <p>NAME: _____</p> <p>PHONE/EMAIL: _____</p>	
7	8		

Suggested donation is \$15 for T-shirts, \$20 for Polo shirts.
 Shirts will be available for viewing and ordering at FCFS meetings.
 Or, you can mail the order form and check to the FCFS, PO Box 550591, Jax, 32255
 Fax your order to Patrice at 904-352-7924
 Or bring form to to a meeting, Losco Park, or Olive Garden.