

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
Website: <http://FirstCoastFreethoughtSociety.org>

Telephone: 904-419-8826
E-mail: CarrieRen@att.net




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The First Coast

FreeThinker



Newsletter of the First Coast Freethought Society

April 2012

Volume 11, Issue 4

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President's Message - April 2012

Earl Coggins

Losing a loved one, whether a parent, sibling, relative, or friend, is likely to be a traumatic, disturbing event filled with lots of turbulent emotions. One of those emotions is grief. When I was going through the grieving process after the loss of a loved one, a friend of mine gave me a book. The book, written by the late Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, is called *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages*

of Loss. The book helped me come to terms with the loss of loved ones. After reading it, I came away feeling more knowledgeable and convinced that the thesis of this book could be applied to more than just the loss of life.

would hear the story of people who had lost their religion and made the transition from theism to a world-view without it. A process was trying to make its presence known to me. Could there actually be a process to losing one's religion?



“If the ex-theist truly believed in all the supernatural amenities associated with his or her faith, the loss of them could be extremely devastating, at least for a short period of time.”

“The greater part of humanity is too much harassed and fatigued by the struggle with want to rally itself for a new and sterner struggle with error.”—Friedrich von Schiller

The religion might not be dead or ever truly die,

I put away that last thought, but it kept coming back whenever I

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April 2012 Meeting

“The Politics of Harry Potter”

David Schwam-Baird, Ph.D., Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of North Florida

Monday, April 16, 2012, 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, FL 32225

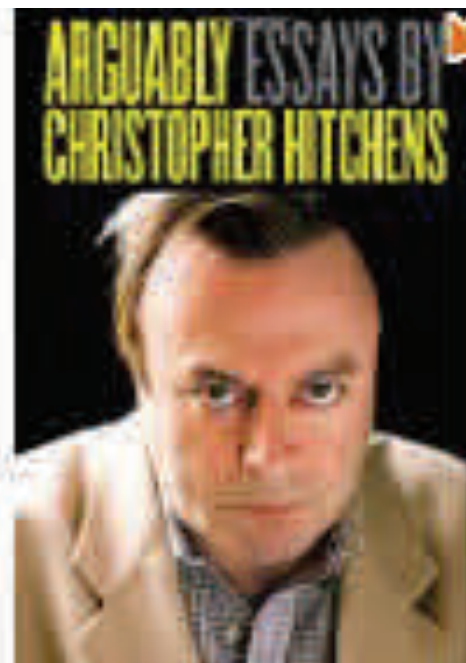
What: Books planned for discussion:

- May 6, 2012 - Any book by Christopher Hitchens
- June 3, 2012 - *The Conscience of a Liberal* by Paul Krugman

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.

May's selection is your choice from any of the numerous books or essays Christopher Hitchens wrote during his 40 years as an author, political journalist, columnist and literary critic. An adherent of the philosophical values of the Enlightenment, Hitchens described himself as an antitheist – “someone who is relieved that there's no evidence” for the existence of god.

Among the periodicals he wrote for regularly prior to his death last December were *The Atlantic*, *Vanity Fair*, *Slate*, *The Nation*, *Free Inquiry* and *World Affairs*. His most recent books include a memoir, *Hitch-22*, and a collection of essays, *Arguably*. Other books include *The Monarchy: A Critique of Britain's Favorite Fetish*; *Blood, Class and Empire: The Enduring Anglo-American Relationship*; *The Missionary Position: Mother Teresa in Theory and Practice*; *The Trial of Henry Kissinger*; *Letters to a Young Contrarian*; *Why Orwell Matters*; *Love, Poverty and War: Journeys and Essays*; *Thomas Jefferson: Author of America*; and *God Is Not Great*. Hitchens also edited or contributed to many other works, including *The Portable Atheist*; *When Borders Bleed: The Struggle of the Kurds*; *Left Hooks, Right Crosses: A Decade of Political Writing*; *Is Christianity Good for the World? -- A Debate*; *Christopher Hitchens and His Critics: Terror, Iraq and the Left*; and *Hitchens vs. Blair: Be It Resolved, Religion Is a Force of Good in the World*.



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

Monthly Social

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

When: **Tuesday April 24, 2012** 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!

(President's Message, continued from page 1)

but to the soon-to-be ex-theist, it might as well be. All the things that initially had this person convinced that his or her religion was an authentic, fact-based worldview have been shattered and are, for all intents and purposes, dead.

Kubler-Ross's book gives us five stages of loss. They are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. I believe the transition from theist to non-theist has similar stages. They are confusion and denial, guilt, anger, depression, and then acceptance. Even people nominally non-theistic most of their lives who suddenly must go public with their non-theism might go through some or all of these stages.

Kubler-Ross says in her book: "The five stages...are a part of the framework that makes up our learning to live without the one we lost. They are tools to help us frame and identify what we may be feeling. But they are not stops on some linear timeline in grief. Not everyone goes through all of them or goes in a prescribed order."

I think this applies to losing one's religion. Nothing is necessarily set in stone, but many people go through a similar process.

Think about the potential for emotional trauma that losing one's faith in faith can have on

an individual. The typical religious person believes in a higher power, a creator of everything. This creator is a parental figure supposedly always ready to help those suffering or in need of help. This higher power is reachable through prayer and will answer prayers. This higher power guarantees an individual eternal life.



With the loss of a religion comes the loss of all those benefits. The ex-theist no longer has that cosmic shoulder to lean on, that cosmic ear listening for signs of trouble, and most of all, the ex-theist no longer has eternal life. Death is finality. This life is all there is. Add to that the excommunication from the social network of a church, and the new ex-theist has a tremendous amount of loss and potential loneliness. If the ex-theist truly believed in all the supernatural amenities associated with his or her faith, the loss of them could be extremely devastating, at least for a short period of time.

Having a solid, committed belief in eternal life, then suddenly coming to the realization that the end is near, has to be as traumatic as a doctor informing you that you have a terminal

illness with no hope of survival. I have heard atheists joke about life being a terminal illness. It's probably not too funny to many theists attempting to transition into a non-theistic state of mind.

Add to all of the above the stigma associated with that wonderful label (atheist) awaiting the heartbroken, new out-cast of society, fresh from the church pews of America, and you have a person in need of some real help.

I don't think many people make that kind of a jump without problems. I believe there will be a level of confusion when the theist becomes mature enough to compare the tenets of theism with reality: "Wait a minute, this doesn't make sense!" Denial could easily set in: "Wait a minute, too many people believe this for it to be false." Guilt would be next: "Wait a minute, I had better not tell anyone about my doubts; they'll think I'm a lunatic." The guilt would lead to anger: "Why would my parents teach me this at such an impressionable point in my life?" Depression could easily displace the anger: "Why is this happening to me? Am I the only person who thinks this way?" Finally, the person gets to a point where he or she realizes that one can be alone and not be lonely.

I don't know about you, but I want to reach out to these people and let them know, "You're not alone."



Capital Punishment, Part 2

Fred W. Hill

Justitia, the Roman goddess of justice, is represented by statues in courthouses around the world, often blind-folded to represent impartiality and objectivity: that justice will be dispensed without regard for one's social standing, wealth, skin color, ethnicity, religious beliefs, or sexual orientation. That's the modern ideal, in any case; the reality, not so much. Judicial systems, after all, consist of people who, from jurors to chief justices, are capable of mistakes due to biases, lapses of logic, or incomplete information. As there are no angels to assist us, we are dependent on ourselves to do justice and should at least try to reduce the most odious, irreversible errors.

Although progress has been made over the last few decades to reduce outcomes of criminal cases in U.S. courts based more on racial or other prejudices than on objective evaluation of available facts, reports continue to show that black and many other minority defendants are far more likely to be tried, convicted and, in capital cases, sentenced to death than are white defendants. Class and wealth play key roles as having access to the best legal representation certainly often has significant weight on the outcome. Not that money can always buy one's way out of trou-

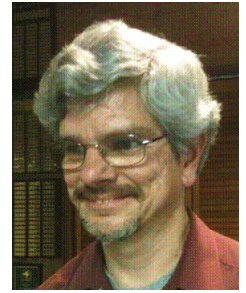
ble, as seen by the recent conviction of millionaire polo tycoon John Goodman for DUI manslaughter and vehicular homicide. However, being poor and particularly also being an ethnic minority and/or mentally incapacitated to any degree, pose significant handicaps for defendants. Moreover, despite reform efforts, outright corruption still plagues our legal system, making a mockery of justice.

“In truth, it would be a mark of advanced civilization to acknowledge that not only are humans imperfect, we are also unguided by any perfectly objective, all-knowing beings. An infallible legal system appears beyond our capacity.”

Since becoming more widely used in the 1980s, DNA testing has been central to overturning over 270 convictions for violent crimes, including 17 with death sentences (<http://www.aclu.org/capital-punishment/dna-testing-and-death-penalty>). In over 70 percent of such cases, the convicts were minorities and eyewitness error was found to be a key factor. The Innocence Project, founded in 1992, was the primary advocate for DNA testing in many of these cases which had already gone through the appeals process; and it often took much effort to convince authorities to re-open cases and allow the test-

ing. Likely, many wrongfully convicted people have been put to death despite all outside efforts to prevent it. One possible example is Troy Davis, a black man executed last September in Georgia for the 1989 murder of an off-duty policeman, despite many inconsistencies in the eyewitness testimony which provided the bulk of the evidence used to convict him. Michael Morton, a white man convicted of murdering his wife in 1986, was more fortunate—sentenced to life in prison, he was freed after 25 years when DNA testing verified his innocence. Further investigation into Morton's case indicates that prosecutor Ken Anderson withheld relevant evidence he was legally required to share with Morton's defense.

The possibility that Anderson, now a judge, will face any penalty for his zealotry to obtain a conviction without regard for genuine justice is fairly remote, in consideration of the Supreme Court *Connick v. Thompson* (2011) decision in which in a 5/4 split, the court determined a prosecutor's office cannot be held liable for a violation of the Brady disclosure rule requiring prosecutors share exculpatory or impeaching informa-



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tion and evidence that is material to the guilt or innocence of a defendant. In a previous 5/4 decision, the court ruled that convicted prisoners have no right to DNA testing, even if they are willing to pay for it themselves (D.A.'s Office v. Osborne (2009)). Chief Justice Roberts opined, "To suddenly constitutionalize this area would short-circuit what looks to be a prompt and considered legislative response." Associate Justice Stevens' dissent noted that "the Constitution's due process clause required allowing Mr. Osborne to have DNA evidence in his case." ("Justices Reject Inmate Right to DNA Tests," Adam Liptak, *New York Times*, 6/18/09)

Evidently, Roberts and his conservative colleagues are less concerned with justice and upholding the Constitutional rights of individuals than with maintaining the illusion of law and order, while trying to keep the legal system running as cheaply and quickly as possible, regardless of whether or not anyone may be wrongly convicted and possibly executed for something they did not do. The death penalty is yet another politically and emotionally charged part of the culture wars and is unlikely to be resolved anytime soon. Conservative politicians play well to their base when they outspokenly oppose abortion but favor the death penalty. Proudly, Catholic presidential

candidate Rick Santorum even came out against birth control due to his religious convictions, but has been fairly mum about the death penalty, despite statements by popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI opposing it and a 1997 Catechism prohibiting it, except in those rare cases where it "is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor." (<http://www.cacp.org/catechism.html>) Apparently the



Troy Davis, left, executed; and Michael Morton, freed after 25 years in prison due to a wrongful conviction

right to life of the pre-conceived, as well as the unborn, is more important to him than that of the post-born.

When anyone is murdered, a rational society should demand that justice be done—that the killer(s) be apprehended, given a fair trial and, if found guilty with no mitigating circumstances, appropriately sentenced. For most of what passes for the civilized history of our species, that sentence has usually been death. As noted in part one of this article, death was, and in many nations still is, meted out for many other offenses too, although to a far

lesser extent in the present than in the past. Within the last 50 years, most nations with liberal democratic forms of government have abolished the death penalty altogether, holding it contrary and anathema to modern civilized society.

In the U.S., the *Furman v. Georgia* (1972) decision held that capital punishment violated the 8th Amendment of the Constitution due to the arbitrary and often racist methods by which sentences were awarded throughout the states. *Gregg v. Georgia* (1976), however, reaffirmed the Supreme Court's acceptance of the death penalty on the basis that it serves the principal social purposes of retribution and deterrence and that previously-held constitutional issues had been resolved.

While that finding is questionable, the decision appears unlikely to be reversed anytime soon; and in many parts of the country, it is politically suicidal for candidates for state or national elective office to openly oppose the death penalty.

I don't find it difficult to understand public support for the death penalty. Rage and fear are natural responses to heinous violent crimes. Moreover, despite the best precautions, violent incarcerated felons do escape and commit more crimes. Serial rapist and murderer Ted Bundy managed to break out of prison twice and killed many more times prior to his final recapture and eventual execution. Personally, while I was angered and

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Should Churches Be Allowed to Break the Law?

Susan Ert-Ker

I wrote this in reaction to Curtis Wolf's article titled, "Why Do We Fight Unnecessary Culture War Battles?" that appeared on page 6 of the March 2012 *FreeThinker*. You can find more information about this news item at these links:

<http://www.tampabay.com/blogs/the-buzz-florida-politics/content/rubio-calls-failure-blunt-amendment-setback-religious-freedoms> and http://www.cnn.com/2012/03/13/opinion/fluke-contraception/index.html?eref=mrss_igoogle_cnn.

A quote from *Brain-trust: What Neuroscience Tells Us about Morality* by Pat Churchland: "Jurists, and those in government, as well as ordinary people, may struggle long and hard over the right way to handle moral problems involving inheritance laws, charging interest on loans, taxation, organ donation, eminent domain, 'mainstreaming' mentally handicapped children in school, euthanasia for the terminally ill, immigration policy, war, removing children from parents, and capital punishment. **On these topics, instant intuitions may give answers that backfire, and fair-minded disagreement can persist for decades.**"

The following can be attributed to Laura W. Murphy, Director of the ACLU Washington Legislative Office: "Public dis-

course and debate is a cornerstone of our democracy and our Constitution ensures the right of individuals to engage in these conversations without being exposed to unnecessary risks of harassment or embarrassment."

With these quotes in mind, I pondered the idea of government interference. The idea that people are upset (about the policy of requiring health insurance to cover birth control) has me baffled. Should we deliberate or just go with our gut feeling? Does the government have a right (or perhaps a duty) to try

nence. Why shouldn't birth control pills be covered? Plus, birth control pills are prescribed for medical reasons other than just pregnancy prevention.

Overpopulation is a problem. Unwanted children are a problem. Why shouldn't public policy address those issues? Requiring all health insurance policies to cover birth control

seems a good way to get the word out: Planned parenthood is a good idea.

I assume that Libertarians would be OK with OSHA laws. So it appears we're simply discussing how far can the government go? Certainly I don't want government to dictate too much. I wouldn't want laws against homosexual

behavior or laws against interracial marriage or laws against marijuana or laws requiring me to go to church. BUT what is so bad about requiring health insurance companies to cover birth control? It isn't requiring people to take it. It is just a public relations campaign to get the word out.

Are churches (that think that people should continue to have children willy nilly) wrong? Should there be some planning?

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"Are churches (that think that people should continue to have children willy nilly) wrong? Should there be some planning? I answer with a very loud YES. And since they are wrong, they cannot be exempt from the law."

to encourage behavior that the great thinkers of our country determine to be appropriate for our times? My gut feeling answer is a loud YES. I realize my YES is only because I think that birth control pills should be covered under a health insurance policy. I think that is the RIGHT thing. I feel to do otherwise is to treat women as second-class citizens, since pregnancy is something that happens to only women. There is a way to prevent unwanted pregnancy which doesn't entail absti-



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I answer with a very loud YES. And since they are wrong, they cannot be exempt from the law. If a religion thought slavery was OK, they couldn't be exempt from that law. Treating women like second-class citizens is wrong. And in my view, excluding birth control pills is treating women like second-class citizens.

The government isn't requiring anyone to take birth control pills. I would certainly think that sort of requirement is way beyond the intent of a sound public policy to encourage planned parenthood. I do believe in a limit to government

interference.

I also am a HUGE proponent of the first amendment:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free ex-

grievances."

I do therefore think that we should try to give churches as much leeway as we can. We should respect the "free exercise thereof" as much as we respect the part that I interpret as "freedom from religion."

BUT...I don't think we have to extend that to breaking the law. IF a law is a good policy, then churches and/or faith-based organizations need to follow the rules also.

If you have comments that you'd like to send directly to me rather than to the editor of the

newsletter, you may post comments on my blog: <http://susaninflorida.wordpress.com>



ercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of



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saddened last year upon hearing about the slaying of the cake-eating bear by Florida authorities fearful of the potential threat he posed, my recollection of my feelings upon learning of Bundy's execution in 1989 was relief at the certainty that he would never escape and murder again. Yet there was no doubt that Bundy was extremely dangerous and guilty as charged. What about those cases in which it turned out the persons convicted were innocent, the evidence suspect or mitigating circumstances involved? Those cases in which it is evident that convictions were obtained due to

prosecutorial misconduct should evoke as much public outrage as the murders themselves—after all, not only were innocent people nearly put to death, but the actual murderers were not even being sought for the crimes, and justice thus doubly perverted and society ill-served by its government. In truth, it would be a mark of advanced civilization to acknowledge that not only are humans imperfect, we are also unguided by any perfectly objective, all-knowing beings. An infallible legal system appears beyond our capacity. Certainly, governments have a duty to punish violent criminals and do their best to prevent them from fur-

ther predation on other people. However, in deference to too many errors in the system, which even appellate courts too often fail to correct and in which people have been and will continue to be convicted of crimes they did not commit, the death penalty should be abolished. After all, despite his 25-year wrongful imprisonment, Michael Morton is still alive to enjoy his exoneration and current freedom. If future findings reveal Troy Davis to have been truly innocent of the crime for which he was executed, he'll still be too dead to take pleasure in it, slain in the name of the people.



Defining God

Joe Varon

A long time ago, our family attended a performance of “The Cross and Sword,” a historical reenactment of the conflict between the Spanish and French during the founding of Florida. It was performed at a wonderful outdoor amphitheater in St. Augustine. My favorite part involved the two sides praying around their campfires (concurrently, on opposite sides of the stage) the night before the big battle; each group (both Christian) sure that they would be victorious because “god” was on their side.

I’m an atheist. But I believe the closest theistic philosophy to mine is that held by a good friend whose concept of “god” is the force that set everything in motion with the Big Bang. After that event, 14 billion years ago, his god lets science and evolution take over, and they are generally doing their jobs reasonably well. Our theistic and atheistic viewpoints are not really that far apart. However, there are a great many people whose god is much more involved, much more precise, and much more opinionated.

I often ask (when discussing religion with open-minded theists), “What is the scope of in-

fluence of your god? How interested and involved is he/she in your life?” The range of beliefs of god’s involvement is nothing short of amazing. Approaching this comparison from the most general and abstract to the more specific, I’ll start with the god who perpetrated the Big Bang, created the universe and let it expand, develop, and flourish. This implies that my friend’s singular god is the god of the entire universe, trillions of stars, planets (and life forms?).

“Even within our own country, and even within one of our generic belief systems (the belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ), we find “believers” claiming that their own specific church’s teachings are more correct, more absolute than another church’s approach to Christianity.”

Another more focused perspective, held by many, is that their god is Earth centered. They believe that our planet’s environment, flora, and fauna are unique among the trillions of others; that god chose Earth upon which to bestow his designs, oversight and blessings. This, by the way, is a central part of many creationists’ arguments for the existence of god—since Earth is the sole location of life in the universe (their position, not mine), there must

have been a god to make such an important and statistically unlikely choice.

But Earth’s humans have further subdivided god’s responsibilities among our religiously diverse population. The leaders of some of the more open-minded and inclusive philosophies often say that people of different religions probably pray to the same god, but in their own diverse ways. Unfortunately, too many of their followers really believe that the god of their own specific convictions is the only true god and that the followers of other religions are blasphemous heretics and should be persecuted in this life and eternally condemned afterward.

Returning to my opening paragraph, even followers of the same religion further divide god’s favoritism according to geographical boundaries. God apparently favors France or Spain or Germany—all predominantly Christian and all claiming god’s protection and support in their conflicts.

Let’s take it a step further. Even within our own country, and even within one of our ge-

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neric belief systems (the belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ), we find “believers” claiming that their own specific church’s teachings are more correct, more absolute than another church’s approach to Christianity.

Finally, we take the discussion of god from the abstract and mysterious to the ridiculous—god’s preference of America’s political parties and candidates. These days, a candidate’s “faith” is often considered an important measure of his/her electability. Their public policy opinions are tested against (someone’s) true faith and demonized when they are found to



be at odds with (someone’s) religious beliefs and, of course, god’s absolute “rules.” A recent poll found that only 30% of

American voters would consider an atheist for president, a lower percentage than for any other major category of belief.

So, the god that may have created trillions of celestial bodies and all the physical and biological entities that we know about (so far), has now been trivialized to writing (and re-writing) all the rules people are supposed to live by—how we dress, how we eat, how we enjoy ourselves, and (now) how we vote. According to some, god now determines which candidate has the right faith, the best faith, or any faith at all. By any definition, this perversion of god’s over-

sight is so UN-godlike...

I’m glad I’m an atheist.



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, **see the website**, <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>, or **ask a greeter** at the back table, at a meeting.

Second Harvest Second Saturday: On the **2nd Saturday of every month**, 10:00 a.m. to noon, join FCFS members and JAM (Jacksonville Atheist Meetup) group members, to volunteer at the Second Harvest North Florida food bank warehouse, 1502 Jessie Street, to help distribute food to the less fortunate in North Florida. See <http://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org> for details.

Secular Sunday Morning in the Park: Freethinkers, let’s get acquainted and enjoy intelligent conversation the **4th Sunday of every 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, flowers, or a sympathy card to a member is in order, please contact **Judy Hankins** at 904-724-8188, or e-mail her at info@firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org.

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!

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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 submissions is the THIRD 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.

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2012 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://firstcoastfreethoughtsociety.org>
All inquiries are held in the strictest confidence.

Upcoming Freethought Events of Interest on the First Coast

Saturday	April 14	FCFS Deadline to submit articles for January 2012 <i>FreeThinker</i>
Saturday	April 14	JAM/FCFS Volunteer at Second Harvest - 10:00 p.m.
Monday	April 16	FCFS Monthly Meeting, Jacksonville - 6:30 p.m.
Sunday	April 22	FCFS Secular Sunday in the Park, Jacksonville - 10:00 a.m.
Tuesday	April 24	FCFS Monthly Social at Olive Garden, Jacksonville - 6:00 p.m.
Sunday	May 6	FCFS Humanist Book Discussion Group, Jacksonville - 2:00 p.m.
Saturday	May 12	JAM/FCFS Volunteer at Second Harvest - 10:00 p.m.
Monday	May 14	JAM Meetup at European Street Café in San Marco - 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.**

Meet Our March Speaker - David Schwam-Baird, Ph.D.

This month's speaker, Dr. David Schwam-Baird needs practically no introduction. Dr. Schwam-Baird has served as Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at the University of North Florida since 2005. He received his B.A. in Philosophy at the University of New Orleans, his Masters in Public Administration at the School of Urban and Regional Studies, University of New Orleans, and his Ph.D. in Political Science from Tulane University.



You may be aware that Dr. Schwam-Baird is known in Jacksonville as a gifted and well-loved political science professor. Additionally, he is an author and is a highly sought-after expert on Middle East politics. He has taught courses in Latin American politics, Middle East politics, political philosophy, and globalization. He has lectured extensively and is multilingual. He loves cappuccino, traveling, and walking in the rain. But did you know David he is also one of the founding members of the First Coast Freethought Society and has served as both vice president and president several times in the past?

At the April meeting, he will be discussing "The Politics of Harry Potter." The series is a tense, taut and terrific chain of stories, shot through with important moral themes but also raising some troubling moral and political questions. The series has been attacked as anti-Christian, but it is actually a social and cultural phenomenon which reflects some interesting, and even some troubling, aspects of our popular culture. The politics of Harry Potter are definitely worthwhile looking into.