

# Manitoba Humanist



Happy Carl Sagan Day!

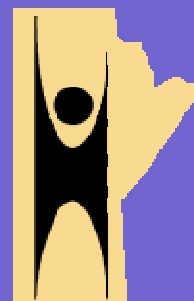
November 9, 2011

[Carlsaganday.org](http://Carlsaganday.org)

(Earthrise as seen from Apollo 8)

Published by and for the Humanist Association of Manitoba

*“We are beyond belief”*



[www.mb.humanists.ca](http://www.mb.humanists.ca)

## SCIENCE AND THE GOD BELIEF

**IMPORTANT NOTICE: Our November meeting will start one hour later than usual – at 6 pm – to accommodate the time difference from Virginia.**

Our November meeting will be going high tech!

Our speaker is Anderson (Andy) Thomson, of the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science. He is a Trustee on their Board as well as their Chief Financial Officer.

Thomson is a psychiatrist in private practice in Charlottesville, Virginia. He is also a staff psychiatrist at Counseling and Psychological Services at the University of Virginia Student Health Center

He has written publications on narcissistic personality disorder, PTSD, the psychology of racism, psychobiographical essays on Robert E. Lee and Lee Harvey Oswald, the psychology of suicide terrorism, forensic psychiatry, depression, and the cognitive basis of religious belief.

Obviously, Dr. Thomson is not in Winnipeg. He'll be joining us from Virginia in the US.

We will be watching Prof. Thomson's speech, on 'Why We Believe in Gods'. After the video, he will be joining us via computer (Skype), and we'll have a question and answer session.

Thomson will be sharing the many advances in scientific research that point to

## UPCOMING EVENTS

All of our upcoming events can be found on page 5 of this newsletter.



Anderson (Andy) Thomson, our November speaker

biological and neurological bases for the belief in a god, or gods.

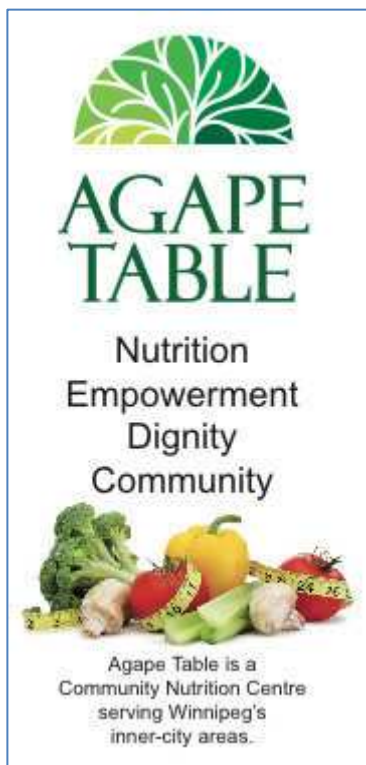
These beliefs stem from neurotransmitters such as dopamine, a predisposition to accept a mind-body dualism, and theory of mind mechanisms. But enough of that for now, please join us at our November meeting to learn more!

This topic is fascinating, and, as usual, our meetings are free and open to the public, so don't miss it! All of the details are on page 5.

## **ALL THE 411 ON AGAPE TABLE!!**

Agape Table has a number of ambitious projects

If you're hungry, Agape Table will feed you. No questions asked. They offer an emergency-type soup kitchen option. But what if you don't like the soup du jour? As they say, beggars can't be choosers. You take what you get and you can't complain.



But Agape also offers a subsidized breakfast option. For \$1 you get a balanced breakfast, and since you're paying for it, you can complain if your eggs aren't to your liking. And you can also

pay for a number of breakfasts in advance, so you can maximize your food budget.

And, by the way, this food is all purchased fresh, nothing is donated.

Agape Table has been offering the West Broadway community food assistance for over 30 years. Interestingly, they started as an initiative from several local churches, but today, they're a completely secular organization.

But the name says it all. They're not a soup kitchen – they're a Community Nutrition Centre. To improve nutrition, they also offer a low cost grocery option.

If you would like to support Agape Table, you can donate cash or goods directly (check their website for details – [www.agapetable.ca](http://www.agapetable.ca)), or please also consider supporting their suppliers. They include:

- Garden Grove Distribution (wholesaler/distributor)
- Vic's Fruit Market, 1022 Pembina Highway
- Vita Eggs (from Countryside Farms, Steinbach, MB). Available at many retailers
- D.A.L. Meats (Killarney, MB) ([www.dalmeats.com](http://www.dalmeats.com))
- Ian Smith (Natural Raised Pork) ([www.naturalpork.ca](http://www.naturalpork.ca))

## **SOPHIE'S BOOK**

Our own Sophie has published her book on religion. It's called "The Trouble With Religion".



According to the jacket, Sophie's book "examines the harm done by organized faith-

based zealotry, the undeserved privileges granted to clergy at expense of lay people, and the unfounded assumption that religious belief is the only source of morality.”

Check out the book's website at [troublewithreligion.com](http://troublewithreligion.com).

## **SPRINGS CHURCH IN THE SPOTLIGHT**

I just finished a really good article by Bruce Clark. Thou Shalt Not Be Gay: Public Funding for Private Schools. You can read it here:

[thewinnipegreview.com/wp/2011/09/thou-shalt-not-be-gay-public-funding-for-private-schools-2/](http://thewinnipegreview.com/wp/2011/09/thou-shalt-not-be-gay-public-funding-for-private-schools-2/)

In it he mentions the Springs Church franchise, Manitoba's answer to the mega church. Its pastor, Leon Fontaine, holds a special place in my heart. He inspired me to write one of my first letters to the editor. In his weekly faith column he stated that atheists didn't exist. It led me to thinking, maybe it's time I got churched up, so one sunny fall morning this atheist went to church.

Springs Church holds 2500 but I was still surprised by the size of it. I entered and followed a wide wrap-around hallway. Being a little early I walked the whole building. The loud Christian rock music never stopped as I passed kindergarten classrooms, offices, guest services, seniors lounge, daycare and nursery, a prayer room and even a room for nursing mothers. At the main entrance there is a Starbucks style coffee shop with a fireplace and a bookstore across the hall. Multiple flat screen monitors suspended from the ceiling broadcast the show from inside the auditorium. And what a show it was.

It was about time to start so I stepped inside as the place was filling up. The crowd (all standing) listened to the music with their arms stretched out, some swaying, some singing. The band played on a large rotating stage in front of a massive screen flanked by two smaller

Jumbotron type screens on either side of the stage. The lightshow combined with the professional sound system and fog machine gave a real rock concert like feel to the place.

Four TV cameras focused on stage while another boom camera floated above getting crowd shots. The music never stopped. The only time I could tell when a new song started was when they flashed the title, artist, and catalogue number (so you could buy it) on the big main screen. This went on for another half hour.

Finally Leon took the stage, and informed the congregation of some successful prayer requests. One truck driver got a raise and a bonus, one lady had her cancer cured. No word on the famine and starvation in Ethiopia though.

Then there was the special guest Ms. Christine Martin, wife of prosperity gospel huckster Dave Martin, who has made a fortune by teaching evangelical churches how to make a fortune. She spent 5 minutes hawking her latest DVD on health and beauty, marriage and relationships (all three discs just \$75), then it was 35 minutes of her personal testimony, which I really must share with you Readers digest style.

Christine, a tall blond stick of a woman, was promiscuous, kicked out by her father, molested by an uncle and raped. She found Jesus after a really bad car accident. Since then God has provided her with a husband, a seventy thousand dollar convertible at no cost to her and new dresses. The great master of the universe has also helped her marriage by firing her husband's really attractive secretary (I am not making this up)! God has provided her with a son who she says is a documented miracle.

Her son was an ectopic pregnancy. She needed surgery but, after much prayer, Jesus moved the "baby" into the womb. All those people who abused her in the past have come to know Jesus and are born again, she has forgiven them.

As she carefully exited the stage on her four inch heels, Pastor Leon thanked her for her

“amazingly powerful” testimony then reminded people her DVD’s will be on sale in front of the book store. Leon covered the last ten minutes with a short prayer and attendants handed out goodie bags to the first timers. He talked about the importance of tithing. I stepped out to the hall as the sheeple started to fill the money buckets.

After the show I grabbed a coffee and headed over to the book store. In it is a small selection of bibles. This is dwarfed by the wall corner display of Leon Fontaine’s DVD’s, CD’s, and books (from \$23 to \$199 sets). There is an aisle for women, covering only health, beauty, and marriage. There is an aisle for Christian finances and prosperity gospel. The rest of the store is overpriced trinkets and rack upon rack of books authored by every rightwing Christian wingnut in North America, such as rapture enthusiast Joyce ‘can’t wait for the world to end’ Myers, Rick ‘kill the gays’ Warren and Charles ‘humanist pagans are taking over’ Stanley, and many others.

What really bothers me is people are buying this stuff – both figuratively and literally. The two cash registers didn’t stop while I was there. People were emptying their wallets and filling their heads with hate and misinformation.

This church is very much about business, wealth and personal prosperity. From what I can tell they are very well moneyed. It’s very much a ‘business’ atmosphere. In the whole building there are no crosses, no biblical phrases on the walls. Pastors and priests are replaced with Life-coaches. I didn’t see a single person (Pastor Leon included) with a bible. During the service, scripture was only referenced twice. I got the feeling the sheeple who attend churches like this are here for the show. The main aim is improving the parishioner and the church financially rather than making the world a better place. They have forgotten how to think and maybe some actually do believe this crap. But most are drawn in by the flash, the sense of community, sports teams, self-improvement courses and various other services, of course all for a price.

It’s scary and disappointing at the same time. Even their statement of faith I find confusing,

and contradictory. You can find it at the link below.

[springschurch.com/downloads/SCA/Parent\\_Handbook\\_2011-2012.pdf](http://springschurch.com/downloads/SCA/Parent_Handbook_2011-2012.pdf)

They don’t discriminate – unless you’re gay or not their brand of Christian.

They believe in a godhead, the father, the son and Holy Spirit, all of whom are one but separate and completely equal. Except the father, who is greater. (Again I’m not making this up) They believe people will go to a literal hell and Satan is a real person, but Jesus loves them.

They do offer some free stuff like their connect courses. This fall you can take courses called “Healing Your Brokenness” or “Redemption and Why It’s Necessary” and, my favourite, “The Truth Project” -Understanding Gods Nature, Absolute Truth and The Nature of Reality (I know of several sceptics that could wreak havoc and bedlam in this class!) The most disappointing: “Creationism” - Learn how science supports biblical history and the biblical account of creation. At this point it was time to go.

I popped the course pamphlet in my pocket and left the deluded but happy people at Springs Church. I never did get to meet Pastor Leon and prove I exist, I guess he’ll have to take it on faith.

As I drove home I couldn’t help but find myself disappointed and maybe a little angry at this supposed enlightened species we call humanity. We as skeptics, atheists, humanists and freethinkers really do have our work cut out for us.

- Pat Morrow

## **CELEBRATE CARL SAGAN DAY!**

Whether you belong to an independent skeptics group, an astronomy club, a science department, or are a researcher, a teacher, a student, or just a really big Sagan fan, there are

plenty of ways to celebrate Sagan Day:

- Host a COSMOS marathon—all 13 episodes are available for free at hulu dot com.
- Check out Sagan's many books at your local library or bookstore (or the HAM library!)
- Enjoy the special collection of articles by or about Sagan, previously published in Skeptical Inquirer magazine.
- Refresh your skeptic skills with a review of Sagan's Baloney Detection Kit.
- Invite your friends over and try to convince them you have a dragon in your garage.
- Take in a star show at your local planetarium.
- At the very least, seek out a dark sky, look UP, and reconnect with the grandeur of the cosmos.

## **NOTED – THE PASSING OF TWO GREAT HUMANISTS**

Last month we lost two notable Canadian Humanists.

Dr. Robert Buckman, oncologist, professor and public speaker, passed away at the age of 63. He was named Canada's Humanist of the Year in 1994, and was also the past president of Humanist Association of Canada.

Bill Broderick was a Humanist Canada board member, and a member of the Quinte Secular Humanists.

Eric Thomas, president of the Quinte Humanists, was asked about Broderick's opinion of a supreme being's work in the heavens. "His opinion about intelligent design was, 'Are you kidding?'" said Thomas. "If this is intelligent design, it wasn't an overly intelligent design," he quoted Mr. Broderick as saying.

Our sympathies go out to their loved ones.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **Saturday, November 12, 2011**

#### **Regular Meeting**

Location: Canad Inn Polo Park, 1405 St. Matthews Avenue

Time: Meet & Greet 6:00 pm, order our meal 6:30 pm, meeting intro & video 8:00 pm

Speaker/Topic: Andy Thomson, Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science, video: "Why We Believe in Gods" and Skype Q&A

### **Saturday, December 10, 2011**

#### **Solstice Party**

Location: Affinity Vegetarian Restaurant, 100 – 208 Edmonton Street

Time: 5:30 p.m.

### **Saturday, January 14, 2012**

#### **Annual General Meeting**

Location: Canad Inn Polo Park

Speaker/Topic: TBA

### **Saturday, February 11, 2012**

#### **Regular Meeting**

Location: Canad Inn Polo Park

Speaker/Topic: TBA

**Executive:**

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**Donna Harris, Vice President**  
**Helen Friesen, Treasurer**  
**Heather McDonell, Secretary**

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**We're on the Web!**

See us at:

[mb.humanists.ca](http://mb.humanists.ca)



Yes, I would like to BECOME A MEMBER of the Humanist Association of Manitoba

New Member       Renewal

**Membership Category:**

- Individual Membership      \$25.00
- Individual Limited Income      \$10.00
- Household Membership\*      \$45.00
- Household Limited Income      \$15.00

\* After July 1<sup>st</sup>, just pay ½ the yearly fee for the rest of the year. After October 31<sup>st</sup>, pay full fee and get the entire next year.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone#: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell #: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Household Memberships: Please give the names of all additional Humanists in your household 18 years or over:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**DONATION** (Tax receipts issued for all donations of \$10 or more)

I would like to make a donation to HAM of:

- \$10     \$20     \$30     \$50     \$100
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**PAYMENT:**     Cheque       Money Order  
 Visa       Mastercard     Amex

Please complete the following if paying by credit card:

Account No. \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make cheque or money order payable to:  
**Humanist Association of Manitoba** and mail to:  
*Humanist Association of Manitoba, 7 Pinehurst Lane, Mitchell, MB, R5G 2J3.*

Or bring your form and the fees to any HAM meeting and give it to Helen Friesen, or any member of the executive.