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# Manitoba Humanist

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## Upcoming Events Reminders:

### General Meeting for November

**Place: Viscount Gort Hotel**

Time: 4PM Annual AGM for **members only**

Regular meeting @ 5PM 'Meet & Greet' **open to all!**

6 PM order dinner from 'Coffee Shop Menu'

7 PM General business and introduction of guest speaker.

7:15 guest speaker '**Phil Veldhuis**' Phil Veldhuis is a session Philosophy lecturer at the

University of Manitoba (St. Paul's College) (and beekeeper!) was the (token?) atheist at the Campus Crusade for Christ debate on Does God Exist last week. He also teaches undergraduate philosophy. He has

an MA in Philosophy and is particularly adept at showing the atheist or humanist how to engage others in talking about their religious beliefs in a suitably convivial but effective way. Phil has agreed to come to our November 12 meeting to find out what we

are like and to give us a 30-minute talk leading into a discussion. It is a format he enjoys. Sounds like a winner to me. His topic will be, "What do you say after you have said that you are an atheist?"

The meeting should wrap up at around 9 pm as usual.

### Solstice Meeting on December Dec 17

Place: Habitz Restaurant in St. Francois Xavier (across from the Medicine Rock Café)

Time: 2 PM to 10 PM

Everyone is invited to join us for fun, games and a wonderful meal.

The menu will be made available at the November meeting but it includes a vegan Pasta Alfredo, or a Chicken Cordon Bleu, or Ginger Salmon, or Prime Rib. All the fixings included and special desert being a choice of a cheesecake Parfait or some apple crisp. All of this for a price of \$18.99 (taxes and tips are extra).

**You can't miss it! Book today by E-mailing Dennis at [dousey@mts.net](mailto:dousey@mts.net) or calling 204 254 3691**

## MEMBER OUTLINES JOURNEY TO HUMANISM

By Catherine Ousey

Jeff Olsson, one of HAM's newest members, was the featured speaker at the monthly meeting on October 6. He told us about drastic changes in his life that had been triggered by family crises.

He began by telling us of his childhood. His mother was an agnostic and his father was not a churchgoer. Nevertheless his parents sent him to Sunday school. He remembered how, at the age of twelve, he stood in the back yard and attested to his friends, "There is no God!" His bad behaviour always got him kicked out of Sunday school.

Shortly thereafter events such as his father's alcoholism and the tremors in his parents' marriage

together with the timely arrival of a priest, who invited his parents to send Jeff to be confirmed as a Christian, conspired to bring him into the Christian community. Needing the support such a community provided, Jeff committed to Christ at about the age of thirteen or fourteen.

By his example and persuasion, Jeff succeeded in bringing his father into the Christian community. His father stopped drinking and became a minister of a charismatic Anglican community. Although Jeff continued to have doubts about the scriptures, he followed his father into the priesthood about ten years later.

At that time he did

not doubt the existence of God, but was uncomfortable with some of the scriptures and the attitudes of certain Christian groups. He wondered if those fundamentalist Christians who never hesitated to say to non-believers, "You're going to hell!" were really displaying the loving attitude that Christians profess.

Jeff's God was a loving God and he was uncomfortable with the vengeful, vicious God portrayed in the Old Testament. As a witness at some accidents, including two particularly horrific highway traffic accidents he wrestled with the question of how a loving God could allow such suffering. (Cont'd)

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*Jeff Olsson, one of HAM's newest members, was the featured speaker at the October meeting.*

(Cont'd...)

After the events of 9/11, Jeff was astonished to realize that the terrorists had a stronger faith than he.

A personal crisis involving his daughter sent Jeff into a contemplative journey to refine and set his beliefs on paper. He thought about his historical understanding of the Bible and could not make this fit with his modern scientific understandings.

Reading some of Carl Sagan's books increased the conflict between science and religion. He concluded that belief must be based on empirical evidence. Now the existence of God was in doubt.

He regretted not having spent more time with his family. Once again Jeff made a major change in his life when he resigned from his job in the Anglican Church.

Lately the Anglican Church has been gripped by conflict over the same-sex marriage issue. Jeff recognizes that both liberal and conservative points of view are based on an arbitrarily chosen subset of Christian beliefs.

Attempts by his former colleagues to persuade him to return to the church continue. Jeff has discovered some new friends at HAM and enjoys the new freedom of thought that replaces his

former prayer times. HAM members asked Jeff some questions and assured him that we sympathize with his alienation from some of his former friends. We welcome this new member to our community.

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*"Now the existence of God was in doubt."*

## **Intelligent Design vs. Evolution.**

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*Intelligent Design is an attack on the separation of church and state. We must not promote it.*

Intelligent design is just thinly veiled creationism. As I write this, the ID vs. Evolution case has finished in Pennsylvania and is now in the hands of the judge. The sole purpose of "Intelligent Design" is to make creationism look like a scientifically credible theory, so that it can be perpetuated in public schools, among other places. Intelligent Design, however, is not supported by scientific evidence, and is invalid as a scientific theory. Intelligent Design would not really be anything of

consequence if it were not for its targeting of public schools. There are plenty of people with crazy ideas, conspiracy theories, and the like, who do not cause anyone any trouble. Unfortunately, Intelligent Design's attack on the separation of church and state in our schools is something to be concerned about. It is a slippery slope, from the teaching of a theory with no scientific backing in the classroom, to school sponsored prayer in the classroom. It

may seem like a stretch, but as soon as the line is blurred, it is much easier to rationalize each step until an extreme is reached. But it can be stopped now. As long as people are educated about the lack of scientific evidence in support of Intelligent Design, about its lack of validity as a scientific theory, and about the true motives of those who promote it. This religious movement disguised as science cannot gain a hold on the science classrooms of this country.

### **Quotes:**

#### **A Humanist Code of Ethics:**

- Do no harm to the earth she is your mother.
- Being is more important than having.
- Never promote yourself at another's expense.
- Hold life sacred; treat it with

- reverence.
- Allow each person the dignity of his or her labour.
- Open your home to the wayfarer.
- Be ready to receive your deepest dreams; sometimes they are the speech of unblighted

- conscience.
- Always make restitutions to the ones you have harmed.
- Never think less of yourself than you are.
- Never think that you are more than another.

Arthur Dobrin.

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*-Do no harm to the earth she is your mother.*

*Dobrin*

**AGM Meeting to be held before the regular meeting on Nov. 12<sup>th</sup>, 2005**

November 12, 2005, is the date for the annual general meeting of the Humanist Association of Manitoba when we will once again elect the executive to serve for another year. Ensuring that HAM not only stays alive but also provides a program that will

attract members and not-yet-members requires an active executive and many good ideas.

Please consider allowing your name to stand for election to the new executive. To indicate your

willingness to run, talk to Helen Friesen at this month's meeting of the association, or e-mail her at [heljohn@mts.net](mailto:heljohn@mts.net).

One might consider being a 'Member-at-large' for a year or two to get involved.

**What do executive members do?**

The executive of the Humanist Association of Manitoba to be elected on Nov. 12<sup>th</sup>, 2005 consists of four specific positions and several members—at-large. These positions are:

**President** - Chairs all meetings, ensures the smooth flow of all organizational events and undertakings, calls executive meetings, prepares the agendas for all meetings, oversees all executive members, maintains communication with all executive members, assists as and where necessary. (Term 2 years)

**Vice-president** - Assumes all the duties of the president when the president is absent or incapacitated. (Term 2 years)

**Secretary** - Takes minutes at executive and regular meetings, works in conjunction with other executive members in communicating with members. (Filled for second year of 2 year term)

**Treasurer** - Collects membership dues and all other funds due or donated to the organization, pays all approved bills, keeps the membership records, and prepares membership and financial reports. (Filled for second year of 2 year term)

**Members-at large** - Duties of members-at-large will be assigned at the first meeting of the new executive. This could include the "out Reach committee" or editor of the newsletter, or 'web-master' or any number of other duties. (Term 1 year)

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***Joke page:***

Subject: Did you find Jesus? A man is stumbling through the woods totally drunk when he comes upon a preacher baptizing people in the river. He proceeds to walk into the water and subsequently bumps into the preacher. The preacher turns around and is almost overcome by the smell of alcohol, whereupon he asks the drunk, "are you ready to find Jesus?" The drunk says, "Yes, I am." So the preacher grabs him and dunks him in the water. He pulls him up and asks the drunk, "Brother have you found Jesus?" The drunk replies, "No, I haven't found Jesus." The preacher shocked at the answer, dunks

him into the water again for a little longer this time. He again pulls him out of the water and asks again, have you found Jesus my brother?" The drunk again answers, "No, I haven't found Jesus." By this time the preacher is at his wits end and dunks the drunk in the water again - but this time holds him down for about 30 seconds and when he begins kicking his arms and legs he pulls him up. The preacher again asks the drunk, "For the love of God have you found Jesus?" The drunk wipes his eyes and catches his breath and says to the preacher, "ARE YOU SURE THIS IS WHERE HE FELL IN?"

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A team of engineers were required to measure the height of a flagpole. They only had a measuring tape, and were getting quite frustrated trying to keep the tape along the pole. It kept falling down, etc. A mathematician comes along, finds out their problem, and proceeds to remove the pole from the ground and measure it easily. When he leaves, one engineer says to the other: "Just like a mathematician! We need to know the height, and he gives us the length!"  
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