

March 2006
Volume 2, Issue 3

Manitoba Humanist

Special Interest Articles:

- Darwin Day
- Spiritual Care
for Humanists

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UPCOMING EVENTS – MONTHLY MEETINGS

MARCH 11 MEETING

Saturday March 11th 2006: "Conflict Resolution and International Development"

A talk by Dr. Dean Peachey, Dean of the Menno Simons College at the U of W. Conflict resolution is a major component of the subject matter dealt with at the Menno Simons College. While it has application in many areas, it is applied particularly in the field of international development. The Menno Simons College is at the U of W but is also affiliated with the Canadian Mennonite University.

**Location: Viscount Gort Hotel - 1670 Portage Avenue
Time: 5pm - 9pm
Cost: Food ordered off menu. (Approx \$7-12 dollars)**

APRIL 8 MEETING

Saturday April 8th 2006: "Integrative Medicine"

A talk by Dr. Greg Chernish, MD, DTCM on the use of alternative or complementary medicine in the context of conventional medicine. Dr. Chernish has a pain clinic just off Pembina Hwy between Grant and Corydon in which he uses acupuncture in conjunction with conventional medical techniques. He also teaches a compulsory second year introductory course at the Medical Faculty entitled "Integrative Medicine."

**Location: Viscount Gort Hotel - 1670 Portage Avenue
Time: 5pm - 9pm
Cost: Food ordered off menu. (Approx \$7-12 dollars)**

HAM President Speaks On Science and Truth

Barrie Webster, President of the Humanist Association of Manitoba and retired chemist, spoke at the February Monthly Meeting on "Science, Absolute Truth and Humanism."

Barrie reminded us that humanists are fond of saying they believe in Science rather than religion. But science should not be treated as absolute truth. Humanism

is a life stance based on credibility. Science is in continual change and is based on evidence from inquiry.

He went on to give many examples in science where new ideas at first were not accepted as they threatened traditional theories. As more evidence was gathered, the ideas gained more acceptance.

Because scientists and humanists are willing to tolerate uncertainty, belief in science is not analogous to religious faith with its dogma and absolutes.

When those of religious faith accuse us of replacing God with Science, we should reject that idea and explain why we don't agree.

"...scientists and humanists are willing to tolerate uncertainty..."

HAM Member's Darwin Article Published

William Pruitt, a member of the Humanist Association of Manitoba, was published in the Winnipeg Free Press on Sunday February 12. His article proposed the proclamation of Darwin Day on February 12, the day of Darwin's birth. Bill, a zoologist and humanist, reminded the public that Charles Darwin was the first to explain the process of evolution by means of

Natural Selection.

The writer states that evolution is as much a fact as... "as the notion that the Earth is a spheroid or that the Earth traverses an elliptical orbit around the sun once a year or that an apple falls to earth from the tree (instead of going up)."

HAM has proposed precisely the same thing in the past. Letters have

been sent to the Premier of Manitoba and the Mayor of Winnipeg. Neither government has been persuaded to proclaim Darwin Day. We hope that Bill Pruitt's article will remind the citizens of the debt we owe to Darwin. Members are invited to contact the Premier and the Mayor to convince them to proclaim Darwin Day, Feb. 12, 2006.

"...Charles Darwin was the first to explain the process of evolution by means of Natural Selection."

Letter To The Premier

November 23, 2004.
Premier Mr. Gary Doer
Manitoba Legislature
Memorial Boulevard
Winnipeg, MB

Dear Premier:

Charles Darwin was born on February 12, 1809, in Shrewsbury, England. From 1831-1836, in the capacity as naturalist, he voyaged aboard the "HMS Beagle" in the southern hemisphere officially as "Captain's Companion".

His observations in natural history and on the adaptations of animals to their environments eventually led him to formulate his theory of evolution and natural selection. He hypothesized that living things change over time, or evolve, in response to the selective pressures of their environment. In 1859, he published "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life," also more simply entitled "The Origin of Species."

Darwin's ideas changed our understanding of the interrelatedness of all living things and of our place in the natural world. Subsequent findings in the biological sciences, most notably, the universal genetic code of DNA, have supported Darwin's hypothesis. The concept of evolution remains the unifying theory of biology.

In view of the above, and to commemorate the important role played by Darwin in shaping modern scientific thinking, it is proposed that Darwin Day 2005 be proclaimed in Manitoba on Saturday, February 12, 2005. Both Victoria and Ottawa recognized Darwin Day in 2004.

We suggest the wording in the enclosed draft proclamation.

Yours sincerely,
Dennis and Catherine Ousey

Suggested Proclamation

WHEREAS, Charles Darwin was born on February 12, 1809; and

WHEREAS, from 1831-1836, he travelled as a naturalist in the southern hemisphere aboard the "HMS Beagle," officially as Captain's Companion; and

WHEREAS, his observations in natural history and on the adaptation of all living organisms to their environments eventually led him to formulate his theory of evolution; and

WHEREAS, he hypothesized that living things change over time, or evolve, in response to the selective pressures of their environment; and

WHEREAS, the concept of evolution remains the unifying theory of the science of biology;

THEREFORE, I, Gary Doer, Premier of Manitoba, do hereby proclaim February 12, 2005 "Darwin Day" in the Province of Manitoba.

*"Both Victoria and
Ottawa recognized
Darwin Day in 2004."*

Humanist Association of Canada Update

2006-2008 HAC board

Only eight nominations for a nine-member board were received by the nominations deadline (January 15, 2006, 12:00 midnight). Therefore, instead of being elected the following were acclaimed to the HAC board for 2006-2008:

- Gary Bauslaugh, Duncan, B.C. (Victoria Secular Humanist Assn.)
- Bill Broderick, Shannonville, Ont. (Quinte Humanist Assn.)*
- Tony Clark, Edmonton, Alta.
- Derek Kail, London, Ont. (Humanist Assn. of London and Area)
- Gail McCabe, Mississauga, Ont. (Humanist Assn. of Toronto)*
- Peter Moller, Almonte, Ont. (Humanist Assn. of Ottawa)*
- Pat O'Brien, Vancouver, B.C. (British Columbia Humanist Assn.)
- Graham Ross-Smith, Shawnigan Lake, B.C. (Victoria Secular Humanist Assn.)

*) Bill Broderick, Gail McCabe and Peter Moller already are on HAC's 2004-2006 board. Bill is serving as editor of *Canadian Humanists News*, Gail as membership secretary and Peter as treasurer. Whether they will continue to serve in these positions after their current term ends is expected to be determined at the first 2006-2008 board meeting next June.

The 2006-2008 board takes office at the end of HAC's annual general meeting, June 2006.

Camp Quest

Kathy Meidell, HAC's second-vice-president, has resigned as director of HAC's Camp Quest. The board is in the process of determining the feasibility of continuing the project this year or holding it in abeyance until it is clear whether or not sufficient interest among the membership and sufficient funds are available to continue Camp Quest at some point in the future.

HAC conference 2006

A committee, headed by Pat O'Brien, president of the British Columbia Humanist Association, is planning HAC's 2006 conference in Vancouver, June 15-18. Some details appear in the January 2006 issue of *Canadian Humanist News*. More information is planned for HAC's *Bulletin 5* and other future HAC means of communication, including the HAC website www.hac.humanists.net.

AGM 2006

The 2006 annual general meeting of HAC will be held sometime during HAC's conference in Vancouver next June. The **tentative** date has been set for Saturday morning, June 17.

Officiants program

At its meeting on January 10, 2006, the HAC board accepted several recommendations in a report from its officiants program review committee. The acceptance is based on the following provisos: that (a) the board be charged with seeking a national structure for a 'HAC officiants program', (b) the said program, when in place, oversee ceremonies activities for the entire country, (c) the committee proposed in the report be called the 'HAC officiants program committee - Ontario' and function under the authority of the board until the establishment of the 'HAC officiants program'.

New position for Robert Buckman

Robert Buckman has accepted the invitation from the current HAC board to continue serving the association as President Emeritus once his current term as president of HAC ends in June 2006.

Miep van Raalte

Spiritual Care for Humanists

By Catherine Ousey

In December I lost my husband. He was in hospital for less than two weeks before he died. Being a humanist and an atheist, my husband did not want or ask for any visits from a clergy person. When he was moved into palliative care, I spoke to his nurse and asked that we NOT receive any visits from clergy.

On the day my husband died, a pastor knocked and entered the room. He introduced himself and I told him that my husband and I were atheists. He said that he respected that but he might be able to help. I interrupted him, and in a somewhat angry voice said, "I requested that we NOT receive a visit from a pastor."

He immediately apologized and left the room. It was uncharacteristic of me to speak to someone so disrespectfully and I am sure it was embarrassing for him. I think I will be forgiven in light of the stress and grief I was experiencing. This pastor did not offer a humanist or atheist as an alternative. Why not? If he really respected my beliefs shouldn't he have offered to provide an atheist? Those of no religious faith are a large and growing group.

It is my understanding that the work of pastoral care in hospitals is to provide emotional support and spiritual assistance to those experiencing loss and grief. Humanists want someone who has the same beliefs and can speak their language. They want an atheist or a humanist to lean on in troubled times. Think how insulting it would be to send a rabbi to speak to a dying Muslim. That's how it feels to an atheist to find a clergy person offering spiritual comfort. Even the name "pastoral care" has a religious connotation that is offensive to atheists.

Yes, humanists and atheists need emotional support and spiritual care at difficult times in their lives. But they need the support of members of their own communities in dealing with loss and grief.

"Humanists want someone who has the same beliefs...offering spiritual comfort."

Quotes on Grieving

Death leaves a heartache no one can heal, love leaves a memory no one can steal.
~From a headstone in Ireland

Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak whispers the o'er-fraught heart and bids it break. ~William Shakespeare

In the night of death, hope sees a star, and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing. ~Robert Ingersoll

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Manitoba**

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We're on the Web!
See us at:
mb.humanists.ca

Darwin Day Carol

The HMS Beagle

(Sung To the tune of O Come All Ye Faithful)
By Justin Kalef

The HMS Beagle's
Captain, Robert Fitzroy,
Invited Charles Darwin on board his ship.
Learned companion, specimen collector;
The HMS Beagle,
The HMS Beagle,
The HMS Beagle,
Had Darwin on board.

The Beagle left England
Late in cold December,
But made South America by February's end.
There Darwin found the bones of megatheria;
The HMS Beagle,
The HMS Beagle,
The HMS Beagle,
Had Darwin on board.

That five-year voyage,
The second of the Beagle,
Led Darwin to see the flaws in Paley's approach.
Evolution! That was the solution;
The HMS Beagle,
The HMS Beagle,
The HMS Beagle,
Had Darwin on board.