



THE SEPARATIONIST

DECEMBER 2013

WINTER SOLSTICE POTLUCK AND BOOK AUCTION SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2013, 5 PM 3226 HEATHLAND WAY, MT. PLEASANT

SHL's annual Winter Solstice Potluck will be held on December 15, 2013, at 5 pm at the Mt. Pleasant home of Esther Lapin. Please bring an appetizer, salad, main dish, side dish, or dessert to share. If you don't like to cook, wine, beer, and soft drinks are always welcome.

Also, bring books, CDs, or DVDs for our annual book auction. Proceeds will be donated to a good cause (see below). Herb Silverman will be our auctioneer. (To keep the auction from lasting an eternity, please bring items related directly to humanism.)

We hope to see you there, and we would like to extend a special invitation to people on our mailing list who rarely come to meetings, as well as past speakers who are not members. There will be no meeting at Gage Hall this month but we will return to our regular meeting format in January.

Though children are welcome, this potluck party is not especially child-friendly.

If you're using Google Maps or a GPS, Esther's address is 3226 Heathland Way, Mt. Pleasant.

From Charleston or West Ashley, cross the Cooper River (Ravenel) Bridge and take the Highway 17 North/Johnnie Dodds Blvd. exit. From North Charleston or Summerville, take I-26 East to I-526 East, then take the 17 North/Georgetown exit. Once you're on Highway 17 North:

1. You will pass Towne Centre on right

2. You will pass Oakland Plantation on right
3. There are two entrances to the Charleston National Subdivision; take the first, just past the traffic light at intersection of South Morgan Point Road and Park West Drive
4. Continue into Charleston National, past the guard house and the pool area (on right)
5. Take a right onto Linksland in the St. Andrews section
6. Take first right onto Heathland Way and follow around
7. Number 3226 is on the left, a two-story yellow house with green shutters; the house number is on the mailbox and the garage



FIND US ONLINE! WE'RE (NEARLY) OMNIPRESENT!



<http://bit.ly/shlmeetup>



<http://bit.ly/shlhome>



<http://on.fb.me/shlFB> (main)

<http://on.fb.me/shlfamFB> (family)



<http://bit.ly/shlyoutube>



<http://bit.ly/shllist>



<http://yhoo.it/shlyahoo> (family)

BREAKFAST SOCIAL
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2013, 9:30 AM
GOLDEN CORRAL
4968 CENTRE POINTE DR, CHARLESTON

While our church-going friends are at church, enjoy a fun and friendly breakfast with other humanists and get your day off to a great start!

HOLIDAY FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS
NOW THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2013

SHL is a proud sponsor of this fun family event featuring lighted displays and a marshmallow roast. (Last year our name was on the “solar system” display.) So, we are selling tickets (including a discount for SHL members). A ticket good for an entire carload of light display viewers costs only \$10 for SHL members (or \$15 for non-members). Order yours at <http://bit.ly/shllights>.

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITY
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2013, 9 AM
LOGAN STREET TRIANGLE ON BEAUFAIN ST
(NEAR LEAF RESTAURANT)

For our December volunteer activity, we will be helping the Charleston Parks Conservancy to trim back existing plants and plant new bulbs. We had a wonderful time when we last worked with this organization, but it was also a lot of work. We are hoping you can join us.

On Saturday December 14th from 9 until 12, we will be gardening at the Logan Street Triangle on Beaufain Street (not far from the restaurant Leaf where we usually have dinner after our monthly meetings)

Wear comfortable, weather appropriate clothing that can get dirty. There is no need to bring gardening equipment as the Charleston Parks Conservancy has a nice supply.

Please e-mail SHL's volunteer coordinators to let us know that you are planning to join us or with any questions at volunteers@lowcountryhumanists.org.



CHARLESTON
PARKS
CONSERVANCY™

CHARITY OF THE QUARTER
CHARLESTON ANIMAL SOCIETY

The Charleston Animal Society is our charity of the quarter for November and December. For 139 years, the mission of CAS has been the same—preventing cruelty to animals.

Every day, CAS combats cruelty by using innovative, science-based strategies including a large-scale spay/neuter program, a free roaming cat initiative, educational outreach programs that teach children to be humanitarians and a food bank for pets that helped 900 families last year. CAS also works with police, prosecutors and lawmakers to make sure animal cruelty laws are enforced and made stronger.

Recently, CAS launched No Kill Charleston 2015—the boldest animal welfare initiative ever undertaken in the Southeast. By thinking out of the box, using proven best practices from animal organizations across the nation, and implementing research-based strategies, CAS has moved from what is known as an Annual Live Release Rate of 34% in 2007 to over a 75% Annual Live Release Rate today, which is almost unheard of in the animal welfare world. Comparatively, other parts of the state realize low live release rates ranging from 10% to 30%.

Please help us support the mission of CAS by donating on our website (<http://bit.ly/shlcommunity>).

SPEAKER MEETING AND SUNDAY QUEST
SUNDAY, JANUARY 19, 2014, 4 PM
GAGE HALL
4 ARCHDALE ST, CHARLESTON

We will not have a speaker meeting in December. Our next meeting will be on January 19, 2014, when our guest speaker will be renowned blogger and activist Greta Christina.

Sunday Quest, our new humanist youth program, meets at the same time. Modeled after the Harvard Humanist Learning Lab and other secular Sunday schools, Sunday Quest offers a safe space for children to explore their developing worldviews.



WHOSE JEWS? HERB SILVERMAN

There's a major problem in any survey of Jews: deciding who is really Jewish, and who gets to decide. Orthodox Jews demand that the mother be Jewish, while more liberal Jewish groups are willing to accept those with a Gentile mother if the father is Jewish.

Jews stopped the practice of converting Gentiles in the fourth century C.E. for a very persuasive reason. At that time, the Roman Empire, having adopted Christianity as the state religion, made conversion to Judaism a criminal offense punishable by death of both the proselytizing Jews and their converts. Such conversions are no longer crimes, but Orthodox Rabbis discourage conversion and many reject would-be converts three times; if they remain adamant in their desire to convert, they are then allowed to begin the conversion process. Different branches of Judaism are more welcoming to those who wish to become Jews, but Orthodox Jews don't recognize converts to Judaism by other branches.

And then there are Jews with adjectives. I know some Unitarian Jews, Buddhist Jews, and Quaker Jews. Most Jews don't see such "Judaism plus" as a problem for Jews. I have an adjective, myself: atheist Jew, so some Jews might think of me as a "Jew minus." The Pew Research Center's landmark new survey of American Jews found that 62 percent say being Jewish is mainly a matter of ancestry and culture, while just 15 percent say it's a matter of religion. Jews are considerably less religious than the U.S. public as a whole, with 23 percent of Jewish Americans saying they don't believe in God, compared to only seven percent in the general public.

Even religious Jews are generally not very concerned about the existence of atheist Jews. They reserve their antagonism for Jews with a different adjective: Messianic Jews (Jews for Jesus). Much to the surprise of many Jews, the Pew Survey showed that 34 percent of American Jews think that a person can be Jewish if he or she believes that Jesus is the Messiah. Had I been surveyed, I

would have been among those 34 percent. In fact, I think the percentage should be much higher. Ultra-Orthodox Jews have more beliefs in common with Jews for Jesus than with Jews like me. Both sects believe that a Messiah is coming. They differ only on whether it will be his first or second trip to Earth.

There have been dozens of Jewish Messiah claimants over the centuries. Most recently, when Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson died in 1994, many Jews in his Lubavitcher Chassidic sect believed that he would soon return as the Messiah. Some are still expecting his imminent return, just as Christians for the past 2000 years have been expecting Jesus' imminent return.

Many Jews were upset when former president George W. Bush spoke at a fundraising event for the Messianic Jewish Bible Institute, an organization that promotes the second coming of the Messiah by converting Jews to Christianity. Most Jews don't want family members to become Christian, but they also fear a new wave of anti-Semitism if Jews resist conversion, which might "delay" the return of the Christian Messiah.

So American Jews are fine with Jews who don't believe in God, but are concerned and embarrassed by Jews who believe that God has a son.

When a Jewish atheist heard that the best school in town happened to be Catholic, he enrolled his son. Things were going very well until one day the boy came home and said he had learned all about the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. His father, barely able to control his rage, seized his son by the shoulders and said: "David, this is very important, so listen carefully. There is only one God—and we don't believe in Him!"

Some days, it's just fun to be a Jew, with or without an adjective.

(See all of Herb's On Faith posts at <http://wapo.st/herb-on-faith>)



THE SEPARATIONIST

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SECULAR HUMANISTS OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

*Opinions expressed in *The Separationist* are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of SHL.*

Please contact the editor with any questions or comments about this publication. Contributions of short articles, news items, letters to the editor or other information of interest to SHL members are always welcome. Contact the editor at newsletter@lowcountryhumanists.org.

THE SECULAR HUMANISTS OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

CONTACT US

Write:

SHL

Post Office Box 32256

Charleston, SC 29417

Or Call:

843-670-0290

OUR OFFICERS

President: Amy Monsky

Vice President: Herb Silverman

Treasurer: Jason Gregory

Secretary: Laura Kasman

JOIN SHL

SHL is a group of freethinkers who believe in the humanist philosophy. Members come primarily from the greater Charleston, South Carolina, area. SHL is affiliated with American Atheists, American Humanist Association, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, Atheist Alliance International, Council for Secular Humanism, and the South Carolina Progressive Network. Annual tax-exempt membership fees are \$35 (individual) or \$50 (couple or family). Additional donations are always welcome. To join, visit our website at <http://bit.ly/joinshl>, and for more information about our activities, visit <http://bit.ly/shlevents>