



The Separationist

Celebrating 20 Godless Years in the Holy City

Volume 21, Issue 8

November 2014

Tom Flynn: The Trouble with Christmas

Sunday, November 16, 2014, 4 PM, Gage Hall, 4 Archdale St, Charleston

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About SHL

The *Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry* was founded in 1994 by a group of local non-theists in Charleston, South Carolina.

Our members are freethinkers of many kinds. We call ourselves agnostics, atheists, skeptics, secular humanists, rationalists and scientific naturalists. We welcome you and all who are interested in participating in our friendly community, either as members or observers.

The purpose of our non-profit, educational organization is to promote the non-theistic, human-centered viewpoint as a valid contribution to public discourse and to strive to maintain the First Amendment guarantee of separation of state and church.

Tom Flynn has been recounting the history of the year-end holidays – and offering his rollicking rationale for why secular humanists should just sit the meriment out – since his book *The Trouble with Christmas* came out in 1993. His presentation is now fully illustrated in a lavish PowerPoint presentation containing more than 200 slides. (Fear not, as the angel never really said; some of those slides go by really, really fast.)



In *The Trouble with Christmas* Flynn will examine where our most treasured holiday traditions came from – from the Christ Child to Santa Claus, from the wassail bowl to the tannenbaum – and ask whether there’s still time to send them back. It’s an information-filled, thought-provoking, yet wildly funny audio-visual extravaganza. Missing this presentation would be like getting a lump of coal in your stocking!

Flynn is Executive Director of the Council for Secular Humanism, Editor of *Free Inquiry* magazine, and Director of the Robert Green Ingersoll Birthplace Museum. He co-founded and was for 13 years co-editor of the newsletter *Secular Humanist*

Bulletin. In 1984, having recently given up his religious beliefs for atheism, Flynn stopped celebrating Christmas because “it was no longer the birthday of anyone I knew.” Flynn urges fellow unbelievers to make themselves more visible by sitting out the winter holidays. He argues that Christmas is too narrowly Anglophile to continue much longer as the compulsory winter holiday of an increasingly diverse America. And he maintains: “Yes, Virginia, believing in the Santa Claus myth is harmful to young people’s mental development.”

After writing *The Trouble with Christmas* in 1993, Flynn made hundreds of radio and TV appearances

in his role as the curmudgeonly “anti-Claus.” A leading authority on the Santa myth, he appeared in A&E Network’s *Biography* segment on Santa, which has aired hundreds of times. His other books include the science-fiction satire novels *Galactic Rapture* and *Nothing Sacred*, and the reference work *The New Encyclopedia of Unbelief*, which he edited. Most recently he served as executive producer and an on-screen presenter in the Council for Secular Humanism’s four-part video miniseries *American Freethought*.

When: Sunday, 11/16/14 at 4pm

Where: Gage Hall, 4 Archdale Street

Cost: Free!

Refreshments: **If your last name begins with the letters A-M**, please bring a snack for the refreshments table. SHL will supply the paper goods and beverages.

Dinner: There will be the opportunity to go to dinner at *Leaf* with our speaker after the meeting.

Sunday Quest

Sunday, November 16, 2014, 4 PM, Gage Hall, 4 Archdale St, Charleston

Sunday Quest, our humanist youth program, will provide our children an opportunity to learn about humanism and all of its life-affirming ideals.

Modeled after the Harvard Humanist Learning Lab and other secular Sunday schools, our goal with Sunday Quest is to create a safe space for children to explore their developing

worldviews, think for themselves, connect with their community, and build a strong ethical foundation. Each class will offer fun, interactive games and activities.

Scheduled during our third-Sunday monthly

speaker presentation at Gage Hall, Sunday Quest will be geared toward children ages 5-12 years old. This is a drop-off program, and we

welcome parents to stay and attend the speaker presentation. If space allows, children older than 12 years old may attend as program assistants and children younger than 5 years old may attend with a parent. The program will last approximately an hour to an hour and a half.



Space is limited, so pre-registration is required. Please email president@lowcountryhumanists.org to register your child(ren) or for more information.



Upcoming SHL Events

Events sometimes get added after The Separationist is posted. Keep up to date with SHL events by signing up for our [email lists](#) or [meetup](#), or check postings on our [website](#) and [facebook](#) group.

Volunteer Activity: Adopt-a-Highway

Saturday, November 1, 2014, 8:50am

Harborview Rd, James Island

The leaves are starting to turn, kids are going back to school and the temperatures are (finally) coming back down. Our volunteer activity for September will be to pick up trash along SHL's adopted stretch of Harbor View Road on James Island.



Join us on Saturday, September 6th at 8:50am in the parking lot of South State Bank (formerly First Federal) at 1011 Harbor View Rd, James Island (next to the Harris Tee-

ter (formerly Piggly Wiggly)).

It is often a pleasant walk in the outdoors as well as a chance to talk with fellow volunteers and find strange or funny things along the road. This is an opportunity for us to make things a little better than they were before and to let people know that Secular Humanists exist, and that we care about our communities. If you have any questions, [email our volunteer coordinators](#).

SHL Movie Club

Saturday, November 1, 2014, 4:15pm

Terrace Theater, 1956 Maybank Hwy, James Island



Please join us for our November movie! We will see [Love is Strange](#) on Saturday, November 1, 4:15pm, at the Terrace Theater. Meet us in the lobby at 4:00.

Following the film we will enjoy dinner at a nearby restaurant. Please wait in the lobby until everyone has exited the film (some of us like to watch all of the credits).



Upcoming SHL Events cont.

Sunday Funday at the Park

Sunday, November 2, 2014, 11:00am

RM Hendricks Park, 4953–4999 block of Virginia Ave, North Charleston

Bring the kids and meet other like-minded families in a fun, casual, and judgement-free environment. Dogs on leashes are welcome, too! Don't have kids? No problem! Come on out! Sundays are fundays for everyone.

Where: RM Hendricks Park

When: 1st Sunday each month at 11am

Inclement Weather: Northwoods Mall Play Area; Determination will be made by 10am that morning, if applicable

R.M. Hendricks Park is located on Virginia Avenue in the 4953–4999 block. Although it's very easy to get to, it doesn't have an exact address and GPS units have had problems with it. It's right off the I526 exit ramp for Virginia Ave. It's also right across the street from the intersection of Lincoln Ave and Virginia Ave. This is a very nice park and has an enclosed playground, shelter with several picnic tables, bathrooms, lots of green space, and plenty of parking.



Please call 843–291–8248 if you need help.

SHL Happy Hour

Monday, November 10 2014, 6:00pm

Mex 1 Coastal Cantina, 817 St. Andrews Blvd, West Ashley



Join us for a fun and relaxing evening of stimulating conversation over drinks and food (alcohol is optional and no topic of conversation is ever taboo!) with old and new friends! Everyone is welcome. Don't be shy—come join us!

Happy Hour is the second Monday this month—we'll return the second Tuesdays in December.

Girls Night Out

Tuesday, November 11, 2014, 6:30pm

Annie's Bistro Francais, 1795 Hwy 17 #3 Ave Mount Pleasant, SC



A fun night for girls to socialize! Nursing infants okay, but otherwise adults only, please.

SHL will not be playing trivia this month.

Upcoming SHL Events cont.

Transgender Day of Remembrance

Thursday, November 20, 2014, 7:00pm

Gage Hall, 4 Archdale St, Charleston

What: SC Equality TransAction and We Are Family Present Charleston's First Official Transgender Day of Remembrance Observance.

When: Thursday, November 20, 7pm (FREE)

Where: Unitarian Church In Charleston
4 Archdale Street, Charleston, SC

Parking is available In the garage at 93 Queen Street.

About the Event: Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR), occurs annually on November 20. It is a day to memorialize those who have been killed as a result of transphobia, or the hatred or fear of transgender and gender non-conforming people, and acts to bring attention to the continued violence endured by the transgender community.

This event is co-sponsored by the following groups and organizations: Alliance For Full Acceptance (AFFA), BEAU Magazine, Charleston Area Transgender Support (CATS), Charleston Area World AIDS Day Committee, Charleston Pride, Citadel Spectrum Alliance, College of Charleston Gender and Sexuality Equity Center, Human Rights Campaign (HRC), Metropolitan Community Church of Charleston, Palmetto Transgender Association, SC GSA Network, **Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry**, South Carolina Equality, Trans Love Fund, Unitarian Church In Charleston. Unity Fellowship Church of Charleston.

For more information email SC Equality TransAction Chair Amy Garbati at Amy@scequality.org or We Are Family Executive Director Melissa Moore at info@waf.org

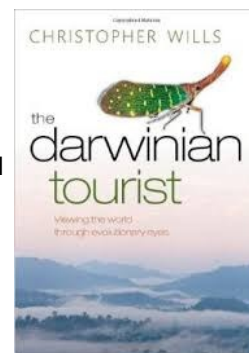
For more information email SC Equality TransAction Chair Amy Garbati at Amy@scequality.org or We Are Family Executive Director Melissa Moore at info@waf.org.

SHL Book Club

Sunday, November 23, 2014, 4:00pm

Barnes & Noble, 1812 Sam Rittenberg Blvd, West Ashley

Our next book club selection is **The Darwinian Tourist: Viewing the World Through Evolutionary Eyes** by Christopher Willis. The author is a biologist, traveler, and wildlife photographer who "draws out the evolutionary stories behind the wildlife and shows how our understanding of the living world can be deepened by a Darwinian perspective



We will go out to eat as usual after the meeting. Early arrivals have the privilege of choosing where we go out to eat.

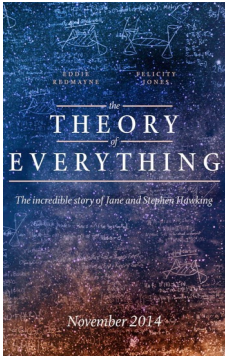
SHL is affiliated with the Amazon Associates program! Our organization earns up to a 15% commission on items purchased at Amazon.com through the links on our Website. So, if you are buying the book club book (or anything else from Amazon), this is a super-easy way to contribute to SHL! Simply use the link at <http://lowcountryhumanists.org/default.php>

Upcoming SHL Events cont.

SHL Movie Club, part 2

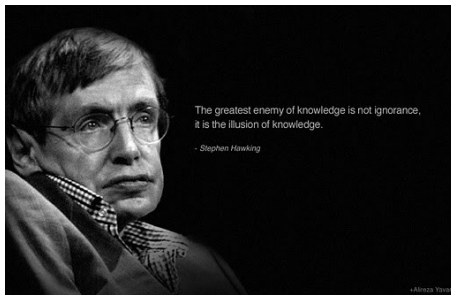
Saturday, November 29, 2014, time TBA

Terrace Theater, 1956 Maybank Hwy, James Island



Please join us for a special bonus movie club! We will see **The Theory of Everything** on Saturday, November 29, at the Terrace Theater. Showtimes have not yet been announced so check postings on the website or facebook, or sign up for the movie club email or meetup for updates.

Based on the memoir "Travelling to Infinity: My Life with Stephen," by Jane Hawking, this is the extraordinary story of one of the world's greatest living minds, the renowned astrophysicist Stephen Hawking, who falls deeply in love with fellow Cambridge student Jane Wilde. Once a healthy, active young man, Hawking received an earth-shattering diagnosis at 21 years of age. With Jane fighting tirelessly by his side, Stephen embarks on his most ambitious scientific work, studying the very thing he now has precious little of – time. Together, they defy impossible odds, breaking new ground in medicine and science, and achieving more than they could ever have dreamed.



Following the film we will enjoy dinner at a nearby restaurant. Please wait in the lobby until everyone has exited the film (some of us like to watch all of the credits).

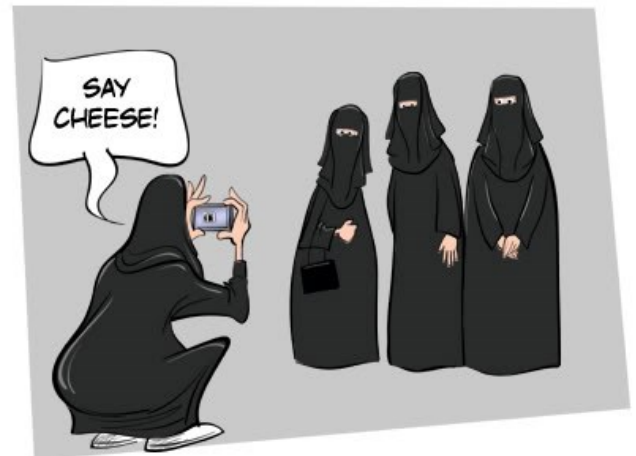
SHL Breakfast Social

Sunday, November 30, 2014, 9:30am

Golden Corral, 4968 Centre Pointe De, Charleston

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

Breakfasts are held on the 5th Sunday in the months that have 5 Sundays!



ReligiousCartoons.com

Upcoming SHL Events cont.

Secular Parenting Discussion

Date and time TBA—please check website for info

Homegrown Brewhouse, 117 S Main St, Summerville

Most of us are first-generation secular parents, and many are even new to humanism/atheism/non-belief/whatever. Parenting can be hard by itself, but navigating the sometimes-overbearing and -unforgiving religious culture of our community while trying to raise ethical and responsible free-thinking children can add extra layers of difficulty. Without the benefit of being raised in a secular family, we must find our way on our own. Or we can learn from each other.

Please join us for our next secular parenting discussion. Date and time TBA—please check our website, meetup, or facebook for updates.

The idea behind this will be to discuss topics that are the most prevalent/difficult for secular parents, to share ideas, and build a supportive community.

This event is designed to be for adults only. Babies in arms are okay, but please leave other children at home so that we can focus on the topic at hand with minimal distraction.

This event is especially for both moms and dads, but grandparents and parents-to-be are also welcome.

We are meeting at Homegrown Brewhouse. They are a small, locally-owned pub who is allowing us to use their space. Please buy a drink or two if you can, and please no outside food or drink. They have non-alcoholic beverages as well as some food.



Happy Halloween to All Who Aren't Afraid of Harmless Fun

The War on Christmas rages on. The War on Thanksgiving has begun.

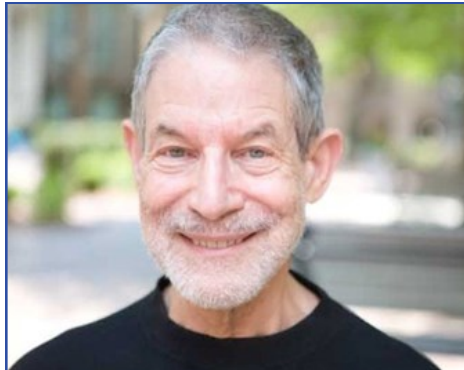
But what about Halloween?

A while back I wrote about the [War On Christmas](#) manufactured by Fox News, in which saying "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas" was somehow taken as an insult to Christians. Then I wrote about the [War on Thanksgiving](#), again manufactured by Fox News after President Obama gave a three-minute Thanksgiving Day speech without the word "God" in it. So now I'll complete the [hat trick](#) by writing about the War on Halloween.

Christian evangelist Pat Robertson is the most famous opponent of Halloween, which he calls "Satan's night." Robertson claimed, without any evidence, that the original practice of trick-or-treating came from the Druids, who went house to house asking for money and threatening to [kill one of the owner's sheep](#) if he didn't pony up. (Both October 31 and December 25 were initially celebrated by pagans and later adapted by Christians.)

Pat Robertson doesn't like children dressing up as ghosts or zombies, which he doesn't believe exist. However, he does believe in the Holy Ghost. And since a zombie is supposed to be a human who died, was raised from the dead, and once more walked among the living, the Gospels seem to imply that Jesus was a zombie. Furthermore, Zombie Jesus offers everyone the ultimate trick or treat: eternal torture or eternal bliss.

To Pat Robertson's credit (I've never used *that* phrase before),



Herb Silverman is founder and President Emeritus of the [Secular Coalition for America](#), author of [Candidate Without a Prayer: An Autobiography of a Jewish Atheist in the Bible Belt](#), and Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Mathematics at the College of Charleston.

he is merely spreading misinformation and advising Christians not to celebrate Halloween. This is a moderate position compared to some other groups.

The ministry of [Christians against Halloween](#) considers Halloween "the anti-Christ's biggest nightly congregation of hell and damnation on earth." And it's just as bad to go to horror movies at Halloween or any other time because they are "[created by disturbed and evil people](#), by the inspiration of the devil, for the purpose of manifesting demonic wickedness and evil in a tangible, visible and audible way." Hey, I've learned from horror movies that you can protect yourself from demons by simply waving a cross or wearing a necklace of garlic cloves. This ministry would

like Christians to "barricade their family in their home, with the doors locked and the shades closed, praying for Jesus Christ to protect them and stand guard around their home to keep them safe from all the wickedness (people and demons) that are crawling the neighborhoods." This sounds a lot like a real-life horror scenario to me, not to mention child abuse.

And speaking of child abuse, some churches use "[Hell House](#)" evangelism on Halloween and other times to shock young people with graphic exhibits and frighten them into becoming Christians. They literally try to scare the hell out of children by promoting misinformation about the "gay lifestyle," premarital sex, satanic rituals, and demonic possession.

All this reminds me of Carl Sagan's insightful book, [The Demon Haunted World](#), and H.L. Mencken's comment that "Puritanism is the [haunting fear](#) that someone, somewhere may be happy."

I began celebrating Halloween early this year on October 25 with a [5K Zombie Run](#) in my local county park. Some of us were runners and others were dressed as zombies who stalked the runners and tried to grab "flags" worn on the runners' belts. I'm happy to report that we all had fun and survived this race for the "undead."



The author at a Zombie fun run.

The Tuesday after Halloween this year is another scary time for many — Election Day. A candidate in my home state of South Carolina seems to have conflated the two days. Anthony Culler, Republican nominee for Congress in the 6th District, refers to same sex couples as “[Gremlins who will destroy our way of life.](#)” Now that’s really scary, even for South Carolina Republicans.

Because of my tradition, I suppose I shouldn’t be surprised by so many holiday wars. A half-joking description of all Jewish holidays is: “They tried to kill us. We survived. Let’s eat!” This means latkes, gefilte fish, chicken soup, kugel, and hamentashen — not people.

Happy Halloween to all whose worldview doesn’t preclude a little harmless fun.

Charity of the Quarter

SHL’s charity for November and December is Share Our Suzy (SOS). Our goal is to allow patients to focus solely on recovery and not the financial stress brought on during this very difficult battle. The foundation picks up where Suzy left off and aids those with bridging the financial gap from diagnosis to remission. Funds raised are used to provide assistance to those with every day needs such as wigs, prosthetics, childcare, gas cards, utility bill assistance, medication assistance and more. We help cover the critical areas that insurance companies do not.

The people we serve are more than just patients: they are mothers, grandmothers, sisters and daughters. They have children, spouses and responsibilities. Fighting cancer is about more than having chemo and radiation treatments. It affects all aspects of life. It is amazing what a wig can do for a patient's self esteem. A prosthetic bra can make all the difference to a recovering breast cancer patient. Having family there to hold a hand during treatment makes the battle bearable. Knowing that the electricity bill will be paid is a big relief.

Four times a year SHL collects donations on behalf of a worthy local charity. You can donate by cash, credit card, or check at our monthly meeting or by mailing a check to:

*SHL
PO Box 32256
Charleston SC 29417-2256*

Make checks payable to SHL and note COQ in the memo line.

Or securely [donate online!](#)

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SECULAR HUMANISTS



OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

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The Separationist

The Newsletter of the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry

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