



## 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.

The Separationist is 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 SHL newsletter editor's with any questions or comments about this publication. Contributions such as short articles, news items, letters to the editor, or other information of interest to SHL members are always welcome.

The editors can be contacted at: [newsletter@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:newsletter@lowcountryhumanists.org)

# President's Corner

In April, a group of Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry members went to Rep. Joe Cunningham's (D-SC) office to introduce ourselves and talk about secular voters. Here are some of the things we told him.

## Humanist Values

Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry (SHL) is an organization of people who are good without god. We're a group of atheists, agnostics, humanists and other freethinkers. A freethinker is anyone who doesn't simply accept what she's taught, instead using logic and reason to question what society teaches.

Humanists are people who believe that humans have the responsibility and tools to solve society's problems without invoking any supernatural beings like gods. Some humanists believe in god but don't believe god intervenes in daily life and realize that humans must do more than pray; they must take action. When we say "secular" in front of "Humanist," it means without a religious basis.

Secular values are human values: Freedom, equality, inclusion, and knowledge

## Nones Demographic

62 million "Nones," in the US are 25% of the population and are the fastest-growing demographic in the "religion" category. Among people 30 and younger, 39% are nonreligious.

## About Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry

To provide support for secular people, College of Charleston math professor Herb Silverman founded SHL in 1994. We have 1,200 Facebook group members and 480 local people on our mailing list.

We're a 501-C-3, and we gather several times per month for discussions, lectures, social events, and volunteerism. We donate to local charities quarterly.

Herb ran for SC governor as an atheist and wrote a book about his experience, called Candidate without a Prayer. Herb sued SC in 1992 after applying to be a notary while crossing out the phrase "So help me god" from the oath. His application was the only notary application rejected that year, so he sued and won. The state appealed to the SC Supreme Court, arguing that "so help me god" was NOT RELIGIOUS. The

SC Supreme Court ruled unanimously in Silverman's favor, banning a religious test for office in the state. Herb also founded the Secular Coalition for America (SCA), a national coalition of secular groups joined to advocate for the rights of secular Americans.

## **Issues**

Secular Humanists are in the forefront of First Amendment activism on the local, state and national level. We advocate not just for freedom FROM religion for us, but for freedom OF religion for everyone, as our founders intended.

In South Carolina, we've stood up for many students whose first amendment rights are violated. For example, schools sometimes force students to stand for the pledge. Teachers fill their classroom with Christian materials. Organizations attempt to distribute Bibles in schools.

We support evidence-based education and oppose the teaching of religious pseudoscience like creationism.

We advocate for evidence-based laws and policies on issues like stem-cell research, climate change, and reproductive health.

We reject discrimination based on religion or the lack thereof, including discrimination against religious minorities and LGBTQ individuals.

We reject the unconstitutional funding of religious activities.

## **Asks**

Right now, the US Department of Health and Human Services is allowing religious discrimination in foster care, and South Carolina is all for it. The day before our visit to Rep. Cunningham, the state of California has halted all state-sponsored travel to SC because of the Miracle Hill case, in which the HHS has provided a Greenville foster care agency an exemption so that they can receive federal funding AND discriminate against all but straight, evangelical Christians in their foster and adoption services.

We asked that, whatever Rep. Cunningham's religious beliefs, we'd like him to be a leader for all Americans. When he witnesses Christian privilege in our government, we hope he'll speak out for secular Americans. We told him that we need Christians to stand up for us and for the Establishment Clause.

We also asked that Rep. Cunningham to cosponsor the Freedom of Religion Act. There were 131 co-sponsors for Rep Beyer's bill, which prevents the government from denying a person entry into the US based on their religion and includes explicit protections for the nonreligious. At the time of this writing, Rep. Cunningham had not yet signed on to the bill.

## **Advocate with us**

If you'd like to join us in advocating for secular values, please do two things. First, sign up to receive the SCA's action alerts at <https://secular.org/grassroots/rapid-response-network/>.

Second, send me an email and let me know to put you on the list of people willing to visit Congressional offices and otherwise advocate for secular voters. I'm hoping we have enough interest to hold some voter registration drives!

Bonnie Cleaveland, Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry President  
president@lowcountryhumanists.org

# SHL Main Events

Activities and Events Past and Future

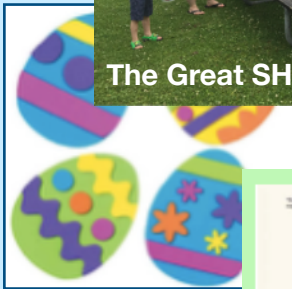


The Great SHL Spring Egg Hunt

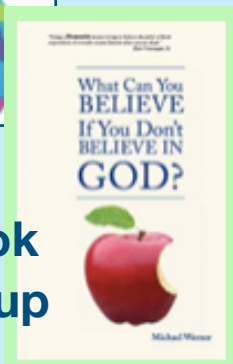
## A look back at April



843 Korean BBQ and Sushi House



## Book Group



The Gathering at Gage Hall

## Gage Hall The tortured path to ranked choice voting in Maine Hosted by Bonnie Cleaveland



## Volunteer Activity: Adopt a Highway

**Saturday, May 4, 2019**  
**9:00 AM to 11:00 AM**



SHL's adopted highway is Azalea Drive from the SC-7 exit to the King Street Extension in North Charleston, which runs past the Lowcountry Foodbank. From I-26 in either direction, take Exit 216B. At the corner with first stop light is a small store called Grove Corner Groceries. We have permission to park in their parking lot.

Picking up trash at the side of the road is a lot more fun than it sounds. We enjoy each other's company and conversation. It is a pleasant walk in the fresh air. And we usually find some interesting items.

As always, participants get a sense of accomplishment from making the world a better place and enjoy a chance to talk as we walk. We also have a sign put up by the Dept. of Transportation there that says that the road is kept clean by "Secular Humanists," which helps us let people know that our group exists and that we care about our community.

SHL will provide the necessary supplies, including trash bags, gloves, and reflective vests. Please join us if you can.

Hosted by Laura Kasman



We had about 19 attend the April Happy hour at the 843 Korean BBQ & Sushi House. The amenities were excellent as was the food, drink, and company.

## JuJu: Urban American Caribbean Fusion

Where: 604 Coleman Blvd.  
Mount Pleasant

When: Wednesday, May 8th.  
6:00 pm

**Happy Hour is always a fun and relaxing evening of stimulating conversation over drinks (alcohol is optional) and yummy food among old and new friends! This month we will be meeting at JuJu Caribbean restaurant in Mount Pleasant. Hope to see you there!**

Hosted by: **Elizabeth Taylor**

## Spring Potluck & Play Day

Sunday, May 19th, 1:00 PM to 5:PM

Join us at the Cottonwood Shelter,  
Wannamaker County Park 8888 University Blvd.  
North Charleston, SC



We'll gather at 1 PM at the shelter, have lunch around 1:30 and hold our (very quick) elections! Come early and play before lunch, or come on time and stay late to play. We'll have a 2:30 PM Socrates Cafe for teens ages 13-17 and talk about launching our new humanist teen program. Park admission fee \$2 per person.

Bring your family and friends and a dish or drink to share. See your old friends and meet some new friends. If you've never been to an SHL event, we'd especially like to welcome you.

We'll elect our board of directors for 2019-2020. Everyone is welcome to come, but only dues-paying members are eligible to vote. If you are not currently a dues-paying member, you can join or renew your membership here: <http://lowcountryhumanists.org/default.php?page=Join>

Come early or stay late. We have the shelter from 9-5, so come take advantage of the beautiful Wannamaker County Park! It's a great day to explore the Whirlin' Waters Adventure Waterpark (additional fee), let your dog enjoy dog park and meet your humanist friends, or let the little kids play in the sprinkler and at the playground! Get your exercise on the trails and bring your frisbee, bocce ball, croquet or volleyball. We'll bring some board games to play under the shelter for the more sedentary humanists. You can also play disc golf at the 9-hole disc golf course, and there are horseshoes, too. Rent a boat or a bike and enjoy all the park has to offer.

# SHL Volunteer Activity: Feeding the homeless at Potluck in the Park



**Sunday, May 12, 2019**  
**12:45 PM to 2:15**



**Mall Park**  
**68 Columbus St.**  
**Charleston, SC**

We need SHL members to bring food, drinks, paper and plasticware for the weekly community "potluck" for the needy in Mall Park in downtown Charleston. Potluck in the Park organizers do this every week! SHL tries to volunteer to bring the food quarterly, in rotation with other groups. We always feel like we make a difference.

SHL members bring the food and help serve. A recommended menu is below. Potluck in the Park provides tables, and table cloths, chaffing dishes, plastic gloves and water.

It is okay to just drop food off and not stay to serve if you like.

We set up at 12:45 and start serving at 1 pm. Kids and teens welcome! Please join us!

Recommended menu (please reply with what you will be bringing):  
(We can expect 70-100 people)

Green salad with dressings on the side - Ranch seems to be a favorite - Potato salad, pasta salad or other starchy cold salads - Meat or Main dishes with meat, sandwiches Sides or main dishes without meat, vegetarian sandwiches Rolls/bread - Hard-boiled eggs (easy to take away for later) - Bananas or other easy-on-the-teeth hand fruits Deserts

Drinks - Anything is fine, but PLITP brings a drink cooler with water so dry tea or punch mixes are popular.

Paper plates or clamshell take-away boxes

Plastic forks

Paper napkins

Plastic cups - 8-12 oz

Condiments (they usually have some leftover from past weeks, but not always)

**RSVP** via Meetup

## SHL Special Event

**When: May 21, 6:00 pm**

**Where: Dorchester Road branch of Charleston Co. Public Library  
6325 Dorchester Road**

### **The Founding Myth: Why Christian Nationalism is Un-American**



Do "In God We Trust," the Declaration of Independence, and other historical "evidence" prove that America was founded on Judeo-Christian principles? Are the Ten Commandments the basis for American law? A constitutional attorney dives into the debate about religion's role in America's founding.

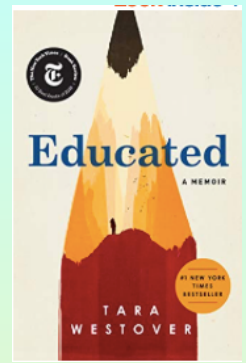
Andrew L. Seidel lives in Madison, WI, and works as a constitutional attorney at the Freedom from Religion Foundation (ffrf.org), litigating cases involving religion and the Constitution. He has appeared on Fox and Friends, MSNBC, and TheO'Reilly Factor; numerous radio shows; speaks and writes extensively about religious freedom; and has been profiled on BBC News, BuzzFeed, International Business Times, and more. Learn more about Andrew at: @AndrewLSeidel on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

### **Details**

**SHL's September book will be The Founding Myth: Why Christian Nationalism Is Un-American by Freedom from Religion Foundation's Constitutional attorney Andrew Seidel, who will also be talking to SHL in May. Join us for Seidel's talk at the Dorchester Road branch of Charleston County Public Library at 6325 Dorchester Road in North Charleston on Tuesday May 21st at 6 PM.**

**In lieu of an honorarium for his talk, Seidel has asked us to buy his books. SHL has purchased 15, so get your copy at the Spring Potluck (Sun May 19 at 1 PM at Wannamaker County Park). We're not allowed to sell it at his talk at the public library, but we'll have some available for a donation to SHL.**

# Book Group for May



**#1 NEW YORK TIMES, WALL STREET JOURNAL, AND BOSTON GLOBE BESTSELLER • NAMED ONE OF THE TEN BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW • ONE OF PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA'S FAVORITE BOOKS OF THE YEAR • BILL GATES'S HOLIDAY READING LIST • FINALIST FOR THE NATIONAL BOOK CRITICS CIRCLE'S AWARD IN AUTOBIOGRAPHY • FINALIST FOR THE NATIONAL BOOK CRITICS CIRCLE'S JOHN LEONARD PRIZE FOR BEST FIRST BOOK • FINALIST FOR THE PEN/JEAN STEIN BOOK AWARD**

An unforgettable memoir about a young girl who, kept out of school, leaves her survivalist family and goes on to earn a PhD from Cambridge University

Born to survivalists in the mountains of Idaho, Tara Westover was seventeen the first time she set foot in a classroom. Her family was so isolated from mainstream society that there was no one to ensure the children received an education, and no one to intervene when one of Tara's older brothers became violent. When another brother got himself into college, Tara decided to try a new kind of life. Her quest for knowledge transformed her, taking her over oceans and across continents, to Harvard and to Cambridge University. Only then would she wonder if she'd traveled too far, if there was still a way home.

**Where? West Ashley Barnes and Noble Sam Rittenberg Blvd.**

**When? May 26th at 4:00 Dinner from 5:30**

Book Group had a rewarding discussion, with six in attendance at the April review of *What Can You Believe if You Can't Believe in God*. Book Group is an opportunity to share the Secular experience with like minded free thinkers. If you like to read, this is the place for you. Hope to see you at the April meeting.

## The Leading Edge of Reason

Contributions from our Community of Free Thinkers

*This article appeared on Facebook in April. Anyone interested in looking into this interesting approach to informing your secular children can use the hot links in this letter that was sent to Amy.*

Amy,

Would you share my secular kickstarter with the Charleston community of free-thinkers?

"Christian Mythology for Kids" is on kickstarter to raise money to illustrate and publish a secular kids book (ages 4-12).

Inform your children about Christianity before someone else does! The book is a paraphrase of the bible and other christian myths from an unbiased secular viewpoint. It is a tool for families to learn about christianity without the dogma, before they hear those stories

accompanied by fear, threats or empty promises from friends or relatives.

<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1465829500/christian-mythology-for-kids>

From the Richard Dawkins Foundation: "Christine Trooien is trying to provide a resource for secular parents to teach their children about Christianity in a way that both brings alive the myths and contextualizes them as myths."

Let me know if I can send you a Media set for easy posting to facebook, twitter, newsletters, etc.

In gratitude,  
Christine

[admin@liberatedmind.com](mailto:admin@liberatedmind.com)



**Leading Edge continued on Pg. 8**

### Leading Edge continued.

**Editor's Note:** Over the past few months we have placed interviews that were conducted with Herb Silverman In the Leading Edge: If you missed them or want to review them you can open them at the the following links.

<https://www.canadianatheist.com/2019/03/ask-herb-4-jacobsen/>

<https://www.canadianatheist.com/2019/03/ask-herb-5-jacobsen/>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwXTptXbRqw&feature=youtube.be>  
<https://www.canadianatheist.com/2019/03/ask-herb-3-jacobsen>  
<https://www.canadianatheist.com/2019/03/ask-herb-6-jacobsen/>



**Editor's note:** The leading edge reflects the writings of freethinkers. Rather than ask for submissions we will be reviewing various local social media to be included each month on this designated page in the Separationist. Suggested writings are welcome. Please send letters or articles to [newletter@lowcountrynewsletter.org](mailto:newletter@lowcountrynewsletter.org) .

# Reason Without Borders

Articles and Opinions Beyond the SHL Community

**The following is an article from Raw Story that was recently posted on Facebook.**

A study published in the journal *Neuropsychologia* has shown that religious fundamentalism is, in part, the result of a functional impairment in a brain region known as the prefrontal cortex. The findings suggest that damage to particular areas of the prefrontal cortex indirectly promotes religious fundamentalism by diminishing cognitive flexibility and openness—a psychology term that describes a personality trait which involves dimensions like curiosity, creativity, and open-mindedness.

Religious beliefs can be thought of as socially transmitted mental representations that consist of supernatural events and entities assumed to be real. Religious beliefs differ from empirical beliefs, which are based on how the world appears to be and are updated as new evidence accumulates or when new theories with better predictive power emerge. On the other hand, religious beliefs are not usually updated in response to new evidence or scientific explanations, and are therefore strongly associated with conservatism. They are fixed and rigid, which helps promote predictability and coherence to the rules of society among individuals within the group.

Religious fundamentalism refers to an ideology that emphasizes traditional religious texts and rituals and discourages progressive thinking about religion and social issues.

Fundamentalist groups generally oppose anything that questions or challenges their beliefs or way of life. For this reason, they are often aggressive towards anyone who does not share their specific set of supernatural beliefs, and towards science, as these things are seen as existential threats to their entire worldview.

Since religious beliefs play a massive role in driving and influencing human behavior throughout the world, it is important to understand the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism from a psychological and neurological perspective.

To investigate the cognitive and neural systems involved in religious fundamentalism, a team of researchers—led by Jordan Grafman of Northwestern University—conducted a study that utilized data from Vietnam War veterans that had been gathered previously. The vets were specifically chosen because a large number of them had damage to brain areas suspected of playing a critical role in functions related to religious fundamentalism. CT scans were analyzed comparing 119 vets with brain trauma to 30 healthy vets with no damage, and a survey that assessed religious fundamentalism was administered. While the majority of participants were Christians of some kind, 32.5% did not specify a particular religion.





## Dead State article on Religion

### Satanic Temple gets approved by the IRS to be a fully tax-exempt church.

By: Sky Palma

Posted on April 25, 2019



Lucien Greaves

In a move that's likely to make the heads spin of various far-right religious figures, the IRS has reportedly given approval to **The Satanic Temple** to be a tax-exempt religious institution. In a statement **posted to Instagram**, the temple announced that for "the very first time in history, a satanic organization has been recognized by the United States federal government as being a church."

In another statement published on the website **Patheos**, temple co-founder and spokesperson **Lucien Greaves** said that the newly-obtained status will help the church further its activism. [https://www.instagram.com/p/BwpikC5hJrY/?utm\\_source=ig\\_embed](https://www.instagram.com/p/BwpikC5hJrY/?utm_source=ig_embed)

"In light of theocratic assaults upon the Separation of Church and State in the legislative effort to establish a codified place of privilege for one religious viewpoint, we feel that accepting religious tax exemption — rather than renouncing in protest — can help us to better assert our claims to equal access and exemption while laying to rest any suspicion that we don't meet the qualifications of a true

religious organization. Satanism is here to stay," Greaves wrote.

While the Temple may project the image of a religion that centers around dark themes and the occult, it's primarily a non-theistic organization that seeks to shine a light on the hypocrisy of religious groups that try to undermine, or reinterpret, the separation of church and state.

"First I think it's important to understand that we are an atheistic religion," Greaves said in an interview with the **Religion News Service** in 2016. "... the religious context we frame our works in and our little subculture in is not dependent on a belief in a literal Satan."

The Temple's history of successfully trolling the Religious Right is unprecedented. They've put Christians' "religious freedom" arguments to the test with their "**After School Satan**" school clubs, they got Arizona Christian lawmakers to **ban public prayer**, and even had a Satanic-themed **coloring book** made available for display at an elementary school. The Temple's mission is to take the far-right Christian drive for religious superiority in the public sphere and use it against them.

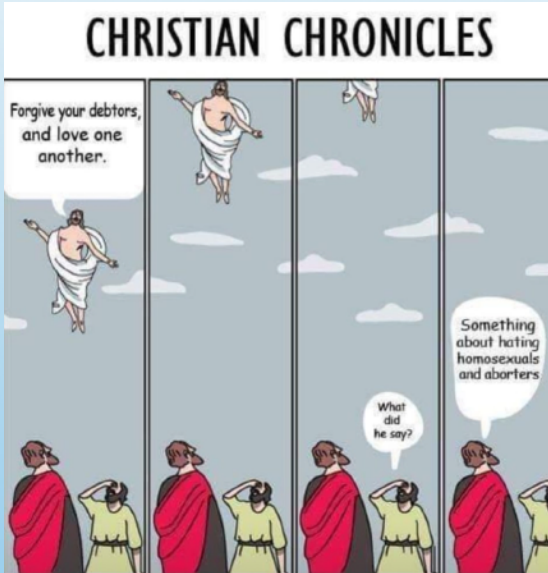
[https://www.instagram.com/p/BwpikC5hJrY/?utm\\_source=ig\\_embed](https://www.instagram.com/p/BwpikC5hJrY/?utm_source=ig_embed)



**Editor's Note:** Reason Without Borders is a section dedicated to reaching out beyond our SHL community. Person's interested in having articles printed in The Separationist or members who have read interesting articles relative to secularism, humanism are welcome to send your ideas to [newletter@lowcountrynewsletter.org](mailto:newletter@lowcountrynewsletter.org) for our consideration.

# Reasonable Humor

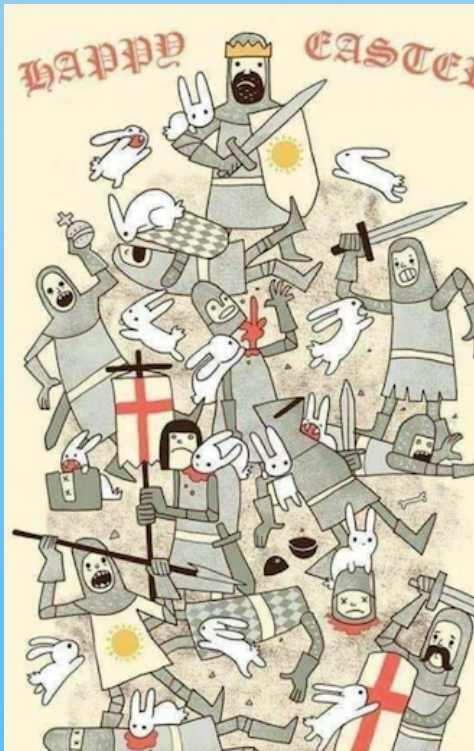
Quips and Cartoons offered by membership from online sources



Cataract is the third biggest cause of blindness. **Religious extremism** and **politics** remain the first two.

@weirdworldinsta

Weird World



## The Eric Challenge:

First, for 2 weeks,  
Pray to your favourite gods



Then, for the next 2 weeks,  
Pray to Eric, the **Purple Toaster**



Finally, honestly ask yourself  
If you noticed ANY DIFFERENCE

## Letters

### Question lingers

EDITOR:

I am thinking about converting from agnosticism to Christianity, but I have a question: Am I to understand that as a Christian I can deny basic humanitarian assistance to penniless, homeless refugees from the Middle East, the same part of the world that Jesus called home, as long as I demonstrate proper outrage because Starbucks' seasonal coffee cup isn't Christ-masy enough?

Jim Keller  
West Reading

# May 2019



## Charity of the Quarter

“Fresh Future Farm leverages unused city assets to create food and job opportunities that will transform the current food desert into a more self-reliant and robust community.” “Established in late 2014 on a vacant North Charleston, SC lot, Fresh Future Farm sows healthy food to harvest community and independence. Food access is an \$11 billion business in South Carolina and a comprehensive way to bring green jobs to blighted communities.” They have a store in a food desert in N. CHS, providing fresh produce to underserved neighborhoods.

Please help SHL make a difference: Contributions can be made at the Monthly Gathering at Gage Hall or contact our SHL Treasurer: Garrett Gehlhausen at [treasurer@lowcountryhumanists.org](mailto:treasurer@lowcountryhumanists.org) .

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4 SHL Adopt a Highway 
5	6	7	8  Happy Hour 	9	10	11
12 SHL Vol. Activity Mall Park Columbus St	13	14	15	16	17	18 
19 SHL Pot Luck & Play Day Wannamaker Park	20	21	21 SHL Special Event  Why Christian Nationalism is Un-American	23	24	25
26 SHL Book Group 	27	28	29	30	31	

## SHL Board for 2018-2019

**Bonnie Cleaveland**, President  
**Steffi Green**, Vice President  
**Garrett Gehlhausen**, Treasurer  
**Member-at-Large**, Tom Jhou  
**Member-at-Large**, Joshua Pershin  
00 00 00  
**Volunteer Coordinator**, Laura Kasman  
**News Letter Editor's** *John and Barbara Childs*

# SECULAR HUMANISTS



OF THE  
LOWCOUNTRY

### Contact us!

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**Charleston, SC 29417-2256**  
843-670-0290  
president@lowcountryhumanists.org

SHL is a non-prophet  
organization

## Staying Connected

You can find us all over the internet, we're (nearly) omnipresent.

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

 <https://www.meetup.com/lowcountryhumanists/>

 <https://www.facebook.com/groups/706311382830164/>

 <https://twitter.com/CHShumanists>

 [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=Secular+humanists+of+the+lowcountry](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Secular+humanists+of+the+lowcountry)

**Follow us,  
Interact,  
Share!**

Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry

a *non-prophet* organization

