



DULUTHINK

NEWSLETTER OF THE LAKE SUPERIOR FREETHINKERS

JOIN US DECEMBER 1ST

"CIVIL
DISCOURSE"

PRESENTER: JIM LYTTLE

SEE PAGE 2

FOOD
DRIVE
PAGE 3

FOOD DRIVE.....Page 3
December LSF Social DinnerPage 3
Future LSF Social Dinners.....Page 3
Upcoming LSF PresentationsPage 4

December LSF Happy Hour.....Page 4
Wisconsin drops chaplaincy program.....Page 5
Unconstitutional School Assembly.....Page 6

LAKE SUPERIOR
FREETHINKERS

Volume 22, Issue 12

LAKE SUPERIOR
FREETHINKERS

is a registered 501(c)(3)
Minnesota non-profit.
Receipts are available
for donations over \$75.

NEWSLETTER

LSFreethinkers@outlook.com

CHAIR

JAN RESBERG

(715) 919-0513

JMResberg@gmail.com

VICE-CHAIR

LINDA CRUMPTON

Linda_Crumpton
@hotmail.com

TREASURER

CHARLES GESSERT

CGessert@yahoo.com

ACTING SECRETARY

DON FRASER

dfraser456@gmail.com

SOCIAL DIRECTOR

SUE ANDERSON

(218) 728-1361



JOIN US DECEMBER 1ST

"CIVIL DISCOURSE"

PRESENTER: JIM LYTTLE

9 AM—COFFEE AND CONVERSATION

9:30 AM—BREAKFAST BUFFET AVAILABLE

10 AM—REFLECTION AND PRESENTATION

Jim Lyttle is a regular host and presenter at Lake Superior Freethinkers, a Charter Commissioner for the City of Duluth, Area Coordinator for Minnesota Mensa, and President of the Clan Little Society. He has a bachelor's degree in philosophy, a masters and doctorate in the study of organizations, and decades of experience teaching adult students. Before that, he was a traveling musician and theatrical lighting designer in Canada. His quest, since retiring in 2016, is to gather insight to leave for his young daughter. Despite his remarkable lack of success at gaining wisdom, he has gathered clues that point towards what wisdom is. One aspect of this is the ability to entertain ideas that are in every sense foreign and tease out from them whatever may be helpful. Jim has prepared this presentation in response to a question from our own Gerry Filiatrault (pronounced to rhyme with Teatro), to whom we give money each month at our First Sunday meetings.

We hear a lot about "Civil Discourse" these days, usually in a nostalgic way. Where has it gone? How can we get it back? Not surprisingly, several books have popped up offering various versions of "Listen to Understand: not to Agree." But we hunger for practical tips on how to do this: how to stay in conversations with those whose ideas might seem crazy or evil. Must we become psychiatrists, listening to others as if we were trying to help them sort out their ideas? Should we pretend our conversation partners are in a novel or on television, so that we won't take what they say personally? Could we chat dispassionately with Adolph Hitler about his ideas? How can we hope to make any impact on the world if we don't get beyond "preaching to the choir"?

These and other important question will go unanswered as we gather on Sunday, December 1st, at the Duluth Radisson Harborview, starting at about 9:00 am.



Food Drive!

Please bring non-perishable food items to the December 1st Lake Superior Freethinkers' program at the Radisson. Clean out those pantry cabinets! Help those who do not have enough!

Thank you!



Dec. LSF Social Dinner with Sue Anderson

Join us **December 18th, 5:30pm**

Radisson Hotel, JJ ASTOR Restaurant



Future LSF Social Dinners with Sue Anderson

Jan 15th	Valentini's	1400 London Road, Duluth MN	(218) 728-5900
Feb 19th	Lyric (Holiday Center)	205 W. Superior St., Duluth MN	(218) 249-9000
March 18th	Sala Thai	114 W. First Street, Duluth MN	(218) 728-4822
April 15th	The Boat Club (Fitzer's)	600 E. Superior St., Duluth MN	(218) 727-4880
May 20th	Green Mill	340 S. Lake Avenue, Duluth MN	(218) 727-7000
June 17th	Tavern on the Hill	1102 Woodland Ave., Duluth MN	(218) 724-0010

Upcoming LSF Presentations

DATE	PRESENTER	TOPIC	HOST	REFLECTION
Dec. 1st	Jim Lyttle	Civil Communication	June Carter	Jan Resberg
Jan. 5th	To be determined: possible video and discussion		Jane Whitledge	Charles Gessert
Feb. 2nd	Howard Mooers	Charles Darwin		Jim Lyttle
March 1st		Religious beliefs of the founding fathers		Doran Whitledge
April 5th	Bill Guse	New Evangelical Themes	Tom Patten	

December 5th LSF Happy Hour

Join us **December 5th** and every first Thursday of the month at **Mexico Lindo** in the **Fitger's Brewery Complex** for Happy Hour from **4:00—6:00pm**.



Wisconsin DOJ drops chaplaincy program, FFRF dismisses lawsuit

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is pleased to report that the Department of Justice has dropped its unconstitutional chaplaincy program. Therefore, FFRF this week has dismissed its lawsuit in federal court.

FFRF filed suit a year ago against then-Wisconsin Attorney General Brad Schimel, after he announced a statewide Department of Justice chaplaincy program staffed by six male ministers, all from conservative Christian faiths. By definition, the program excluded persons who could provide secular counseling to DOJ employees, including atheists and another nonbelievers.

Although the chaplaincy itself was unpaid, the men were under the direction of a paid DOJ chaplaincy program coordinator, and had received training and reimbursement at taxpayer expense. Duties included providing "spiritual guidance" to DOJ employees and their families. The complaint noted that the program set up a religious test as a condition for employment: Chaplains had to be ordained or licensed clergy in good standing of a faith group. Yet they weren't required to be professional mental health providers, or be licensed or otherwise regulated by the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services, like other mental health professionals. FFRF noted that atheists and other nonbelievers were excluded from serving, and the program gave nonreligious DOJ employees no option other than to receive counseling from religious clergy.

Schimel was subsequently defeated by Josh Kaul. The DOJ and Kaul recently dropped the chaplaincy program in favor of what the DOJ terms an "Employee Support Team."

The DOJ website briefly describes the volunteer program: "EST services include non-professional counseling to DOJ employees and immediate family members during and after critical incidents, assistance during death notifications, crisis response, assistance to peer support programs, and visitation



Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker of FFRF

to DOJ employees and immediate family members who are sick or injured. While employees may always contact whoever they wish for support as they deem appropriate, EST volunteers provide access to support services uniquely tailored to the criminal justice profession."

Among the experience sought is "training in counseling, police chaplaincy, and/or empathetic listening." A list of EST volunteers is available on JusticeNet.

"We are reassured that the DOJ has taken FFRF's concerns seriously, but we will continue to monitor how EST is run. If only ministers and religious counselors fill these positions, we will continue to pursue this as an establishment of religion," said FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor, who along with Co-President Dan Barker, was a plaintiff in the case.

Gaylor points out that Pew recently announced that 26 percent of adult Americans today identify as "atheist, agnostic or no religion in particular." It should not be assumed that DOJ employees would need or prefer to seek out religious counselors, and of course, are already free to personally consult their own ministers, Gaylor added.

FFRF was represented by Richard L. Bolton from Boardman & Clark LLP and by FFRF attorneys Patrick Elliott and Ryan Jayne.

Minn. public school must cancel upcoming unconstitutional assembly, FFRF urges

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is calling on a Wheaton, Minn., public school to cancel an unconstitutional religious assembly scheduled for next week.

Wheaton High School reportedly has scheduled an assembly by the Todd Becker Foundation during the school day on Nov. 20. The Todd Becker Foundation is a Christian ministry that travels throughout the Midwest putting on assemblies in public schools with the explicit purpose of converting students to its brand of evangelical Christianity.

According to the group's website, its purpose is to "draw young people into a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ" and to "motivate high school students to discover their potentials and ultimately discover themselves by placing their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior."

The Todd Becker Foundation fulfills its mission by putting on an in-school program that uses a passage from the bible to impart a strong religious message on students. Immediately following the in-school presentation, students are approached by Todd Becker Foundation staff and local church representatives. Foundation members and church representatives ask students about their respective religious beliefs and "share with the student the gospel of Jesus Christ and point them to the hope of a new beginning found in Christ." Not only do they discuss their religious beliefs with students, students are "brought to a decision to surrender their life to Christ or to walk away from Him."

It is well-settled law that public schools may neither advance or endorse religion nor may they use instructional time to allow outside groups to proselytize to students.

"The Todd Becker Foundation is only focused on one thing, evangelizing," FFRF attorney Christopher Line writes in his letter to Wheaton Area Schools ISD #803 Superintendent

Daniel Posthumus. "When students are provoked through the assembly into talking with foundation members about very serious issues in their lives, such as physical or emotional abuse, drug or alcohol use, or other serious concerns, the only solution offered by the foundation is Christianity."

FFRF has asked the district to cancel this event immediately and fulfill the obligation of protecting its students' First Amendment rights.

"These shocking school assemblies are not only problematic from a constitutional perspective, but they are a deeply disturbing and harmful assault on the students' right of conscience," says FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor.

FFRF has obtained a copy of the contract that Wheaton High School Principal Martin Lanter signed on behalf of the district. The contract acknowledges that the Todd Becker Foundation will be having private conversations with students immediately following the assembly where they will be "referencing Bible passages and praying with or for students." The contract prevents the district from restricting any member or representative of the Todd Becker Foundation from being able to freely pray and proselytize to students, and would require the district to pay \$6,215 if they choose to cancel this assembly for any reason other than a weather emergency or a school emergency.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is a national nonprofit organization with 30,000 members and several chapters across the country, including more than 600 members and a chapter in Minnesota. FFRF's purposes are to protect the constitutional principle of separation between church and state, and to educate the public on matters relating to nontheism.



Partnering with ministries to promote life in Christ and present the Gospel through faith-based community outreaches

Bob Lenz shares the love of Jesus which gives teens hope for this life and the next. Whether he is partnering with local churches or touring with national recording artists, he is committed to sharing a respectful and relevant message to the next generation.