

The Atheist Voice

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE METROPLEX ATHEISTS

Q4 2011, VOLUME 9, NUMBER 4

Religion and Byron Nelson HS

Minister wants students; school district eagerly hands them over

William McEwen
Metroplex Atheists

In early October, a person directly involved with Byron Nelson High School in Trophy Club, Texas contacted Metroplex Atheists. We were asked to intervene to prevent events scheduled at the school from happening.

The events? Two "character building" assemblies by a ministry called the Seven Project, scheduled during school hours on Oct. 12. The concerned person called the character initiatives a "front for an evangelical Christian movement" and was alarmed by church and state separation violations.

This person feared repercussions from school staff and local parents and insisted on anonymity.

A few minutes research on the Internet revealed much.

The assemblies would be put on by Pastor Kyle Embry of Youth Alive North Texas, who would also hold a religious rally later that evening at the school.

The Seven Project's website clearly states its goal: "Connecting your community to share Jesus." It further states:

"The Seven Project serves as a catalyst to mobilize and equip Christian communities to reach out to schools. The Seven Project is not merely a school assembly or evening rally. It is a comprehensive outreach strategy that equips and trains leaders and students in effective evangelism and discipleship."

It's clear: The Seven Project is recruiting kids for Jesus. We smelled a rat.

On October 6, Metroplex Atheists contacted BNHS principal Linda Parker, Northwest Independent School District officials, and members of the news media. A link was provided to the Seven Project's website, and Metroplex Atheists called on the school and the school district to cancel all Seven Project events.

(Principal Parker is no stranger to controversy. In September 2010, she made national headlines after accusing student Kyler Robertson, who showed up at school with bloodshot eyes, of smoking marijuana. Parker suspended him for three days and assigned him to an alternate school. Mr. Robertson passed a urine test; it turns out his eyes were red because he was grieving the death of father, who had been murdered two days before. Principal Parker apologized after much media attention.)

(Byron Nelson on page 13)

July 4th Parade – Fun and Controversy

Twenty-five brave Metroplex Atheists faced a crowd of 50,000 as they joined the 44th Annual Arlington Independence Day Parade. It was held Saturday, July 3rd at 9:00. The parade had more than 3,000 participants in over 130 entries including marching

for serving as our group Marshal. It's not an easy job keeping a bunch of rowdy atheists in line.

The many reactions of the crowd to the banner leading our group with our "No Strings Attached" logo were varied

think they can make us disappear by looking away.

We also received many bright smiles, cheers and applause which made our participation very much worth the effort. In addition to the waiting and the actual



bands, drill teams, antique automobiles, unicycle-riding clowns, tiny motorcycle riding Elvis' (Elvi?) and 25 fearless atheists. It's the biggest 4th of July parade in Texas and one of the largest in the U. S.

Special thanks go to Laura and Greg Cox for presenting us with this opportunity. Laura deserves extra kudos

and interesting. We received many frowns, a few thumbs down and several negative remarks. Our position behind a Church of Christ float drew amused comments from many parade watchers and every media commentator with a microphone and a loudspeaker. Some believers just averted their eyes when they saw us, apparently they

marching, some of us had to get up much earlier than we are used to on Saturday morning.

Several of our group appeared very briefly on the 6:00 and 10:00 news on Channel 11 but they didn't get enough of our banner to make a stir among the faith-

(Parade on page 5)

ARGUMENTS 25-28 OF 36 FOR GOD

"This article has been reprinted from the *Huffington Post* with permission from the author. Landon Ross is a contributor to the *Huffington Post*, principal founder of www.RationalApe.com, and Los Angeles based artist."

29. The Argument from Human Knowledge of Infinity

1. We are finite, and everything with which we come into physical contact is finite.
2. We have a knowledge of the infinite, demonstrably so in mathematics.
3. We could not have derived this knowledge of the infinite from the finite, from anything which we are and come in contact with (from 1).
4. Only something itself infinite could have implanted knowledge of the infinite in us (from 2 and 3).
5. God would want us to have a knowledge of the infinite, both for the cognitive pleasure it affords us and because it allows us to come to know him, who is himself infinite.
6. God is the only entity both that is infinite and that could have an intention of implanting the knowledge of the infinite within us (from 4 & 5).
7. God exists.

FLAW: There are certain computational procedures governed by what logicians call recursive rules. A recursive rule is one that refers to itself,

and hence it can be applied to its own output ad infinitum. For example, we can define a natural number recursively:

See Q1 2010 issue for arguments 1-3

See Q2 2010 issue for arguments 4-7

See Q3 2010 issue for arguments 8-11

See Q4 2010 issue for arguments 12-16

See Q1 2011 issue for arguments 17-20

See Q2 2011 issue for arguments 21-24

See Q2 2011 issue for arguments 25-28

To view go to www.metroplexatheists.org

1 is a natural number and if you add 1 to a natural number, the result is a natural

number. We can apply this rule an indefinite number of times and thereby generate an infinite series of natural numbers. Recursive rules allow a finite system (a set of rules, a computer, a brain) to reason about an infinity of objects, refuting Premise 3.

COMMENT: In 1931 the young logician Kurt Gödel published a paper proving a result called the Incompleteness Theorem (actually there are two). Basically, what Gödel demonstrated is that recursive rules cannot capture all of arithmetic. So though the flaw discussed above is sufficient to invalidate Premise 3, it should not be understood as suggesting that all of our mathematical knowledge is reducible to recursive rules.

30. The Argument from Mathematical Reality

1. Mathematical truths are necessarily true. (There is no possible world in which, say, 2 plus 2 does not equal 4, or in which the square root of 2 can be expressed as the ratio of two whole numbers.)

2. The truths that describe our physical world, no matter how fundamental, are empirical
(Arguments on page 7)

METROPLEX ATHEISTS

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About

Metroplex Atheists is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organized for the purpose of education, maintaining Constitutional separation of government and religion, protection of atheists’ rights and to provide social meetings for those of similar worldviews. We are affiliated with American Atheists, Atheists Alliance of America and the Dallas Fort Worth Coalition of Reason.

President's Proclamations

The bifurcated structure of Metroplex Atheists makes it difficult to define and organize. We are an atheist activist group organized as an IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit to educate it's members and the general public about atheism and to protect atheists rights including the principle of separation of church and state. As such we have monthly meetings the third Sunday to plan activities and react to church/state violations and other concerns about atheist issues.

On the other hand MA is a social group whose purpose is to provide a time and place where non-believers of all stripes can get together to talk about anything, without judging or being judged and without having to worry about offending anyone or being offended.

How many members do we have? Hard to tell when there is no membership roll. How about who pays dues? Well, those are paid on the honor system so it's impossible to tell who pays and who doesn't. Some members attend monthly Sunday “business” meetings and some only attend Wednesday social meetings. So is this one organization or two. Well, yes and no. Again, the bifurcation problem.

The reason I bring this up is that the increased number of people who attend both meetings, members, seems to call for a more organized structure than we have had in

(President on page 12)

(Parade from page 2)

ful, maybe next year. Yes, we want to do it again next year with more valiant atheists and perhaps even a float of our own. We'd like to show the 50,000 that we're here to stay and our numbers are growing.

The Controversy

The parade was not without controversy. When we submitted our "Public Relations Statement", which is read by the announcers during the parade when passing their stands, it was rejected. Here is the statement we submitted:

"The Metroplex Atheists is a nonprofit group that has been meeting in Arlington for over 10 years. Our membership has recently quadrupled, reflecting the growing secular trend in America. Today, about one out of 10 Americans is a nonbeliever. That's right, one out of 10 people does not believe in god. You probably already know some of us; we are among your friends, family members, co-workers and neighbors. Have questions? Visit the Metroplex Atheists website or one of our weekly meetings!"

Here is the response we received from the parade association president:

"The Association that produces the Parade is a nonprofit organization that has to follow strict rules and regulations. The Parade is a patri-

otic event and cannot be used as a vehicle for anything political, religious, solicitation, etc.

Something similar to what you ultimately submitted last year would be appropriate. You can identify your organization, how long you have been around, number of members, location of meetings, that sort of thing. Your last sentence is OK.

Rest assured, you are not being singled out. We have to edit PR regularly so we comply with our 501(c)(3) status."

Of course we are not being singled out, at least not in the eyes of believers. Remember they enjoy "blind faith". So even though politicians were in the parade advertising their platforms and churches were spouting "God and Country", we were told we could not state anything that was political or religious, neither of which was in our statement.

MA sent this email to the parade association president. Please note that MA had not received the transcript of all the PRs used in the parade per several previous open records requests (we were obviously being stonewalled) so I use the phrase "if I remember correctly" in several places:

"We have patiently waited for your organization to provide us with the 2010 transcript of all the publicity re-

leases read during the 4th of July parade. You have not provided us with this document or a valid reason why you haven't. We just want to make sure we are getting fair and equal treatment in the content of our publicity release.

The first publicity release we submitted for this year's parade was rejected as "unacceptable". This PR contains information about the growth of atheism in this country and in particular the growth of our local group. Below is the text of that submission:

"The Metroplex Atheists is a nonprofit group that has been meeting in Arlington for over 10 years. Our membership has recently quadrupled, reflecting the growing secular trend in America. Today, about one out of 10 Americans is a nonbeliever. That's right, one out of 10 people do not believe in god. You probably already know some of us; we are among your friends, family members, co-workers and neighbors. Have questions? Visit the Metroplex Atheists website or one of our weekly meetings!"

That certainly does not seem to conflict with your statement made in an email to us, quoting, "The Parade is a patriotic event and cannot be used as a vehicle for anything political, religious, solicitation, etc".

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DFWCoR and Alan Ross Gay Pride Parade

Metroplex Atheists and Fellowship of Freethought co-sponsored a DFWCoR entry in the 2011 Alan Ross gay pride parade in Dallas on Sept. 18th. Between 70 and 80 supporters showed up to help us show our support for the LGBT community. The parade audience welcomed our group of heathens with open arms as compared to other parades we participate in which by and large ostracize non-believers. You could just feel the exuberance, fun, love and acceptance that reverberated through the crowd, which was estimated at about 100,000.

Afterwards about 40 of us gathered at the Spaghetti Warehouse in the West End for dinner.



We are participating in more and more events like these so keep an eye on the

Metroplex Atheists website and our meetups for future events.

Metroplex Atheists Business Meeting Location

METROPLEX ATHEISTS MEETS AT 1:00 P.M. THE MEETINGS ARE HELD ON THE THIRD SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH.

**THIS MEETING WILL BE CONDUCTED AT:
Irving, Texas – monitor Metroplex Atheists
Meetup announcements for exact location**



TEMPTED?

Go to www.metroplexatheists.org

(Arguments from page 3)

cal, requiring observational evidence. (So, for example, we await some empirical means to test string theory, in order to find out whether we live in a world of eleven dimensions.)

3. Truths that require empirical evidence are not necessary truths. (We require empirical evidence because there are possible worlds in which these are not truths, and so we have to test that ours is not such a world.)

4. The truths of our physical world are not necessary truths (from 2 and 3).

5. The truths of our physical world cannot explain mathematical truths (from 1 and 4).

6. Mathematical truths exist on a different plane of existence from physical truths (from 5).

7. Only something which itself exists on a different plane of existence from the physical can explain mathematical truths (from 6). 8. Only God can explain mathematical truths (from 7).

9. God exists.

Mathematics is derived through pure reason — what the philosophers call *a priori* reason — which means that it cannot be refuted by any empirical observations. The fundamental question in philosophy of mathematics is: how can mathematics be true but not empirical? Is it because mathematics describes some trans-empirical reality — as mathematical

realists believe — or is it because mathematics has no content at all and is a purely formal game consisting of stipulated rules and their consequences? The Argument from Mathematical Reality assumes, in its third premise, the position of mathematical realism, which isn't a fallacy in itself; many mathematicians believe it, some of them arguing that it follows from Gödel's incompleteness theorems (see the COMMENT in The Argument from Human Knowledge of Infinity, #30 above). This argument, however, goes further and tries to deduce God's existence from the trans-empirical existence of mathematical reality.

FLAW 1: The inference of 5, from 1 and 4, does not take into account the formalist response to the non-empirical nature of mathematics.

FLAW 2: Even if one, Platonistically, accepts the derivation of 5 and then 6, there is something fishy about proceeding onward to 7, with its presumption that something *outside* of mathematical reality must explain the existence of mathematical reality. Lurking within 7 is the hidden premise: mathematical truths must be explained by reference to non-mathematical truths. But why? If God can be self-explanatory, as this argument presumes, why then can't mathematical reality be self-explanatory — especially since the truths of mathematics are, as this argument asserts, necessarily true?

FLAW 3: Mathematical reality — if indeed it exists — is, admittedly, mysterious. But invoking God does not dispel this puzzlement; it is an instance of "The Fallacy of Using One Mystery to Pseudo-Explain Another." The mystery of God's existence is often used, by those who assert it, as an explanatory sink hole.

31. The Argument from Decision Theory (Pascal's Wager)

1. Either God exists or God doesn't exist.

2. A person can either believe that God exists or believe that God doesn't exist (from 1).

3. If God exists and you believe, you receive eternal salvation.

4. If God exists and you don't believe, you receive eternal damnation.

5. If God doesn't exist and you believe, you've been duped, have wasted time in religious observance, and have missed out on decadent enjoyments.

6. If God doesn't exist, and you don't believe, then you have avoided a false belief.

7. You have much more to gain by believing in God than not believing in him, and much more to lose by not believing in God than believing in him (from, 3, 4, 5, & 6)

8. It is more rational to believe that God exists than to believe that he doesn't exist (from 7). This unusual argument does not justify the con-

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(Arguments from page 7)

clusion that "God exists." Rather it argues that it is rational to believe that God exists, given that we don't know whether he exists.

FLAW 1: The "believe" option in Pascal's wager can be interpreted in two ways.

One is that the wagerer genuinely has to believe, deep down, that God exists; in other words, it is not enough to mouth a creed, or merely act as *if* God exists. According to this interpretation, God, if He exists, can peer into a person's soul and discern the person's actual convictions. If so, the kind of "belief" that Pascal's wager advises — a purely pragmatic strategy, chosen because the expected benefits exceed the expected costs — would not be enough. Indeed, it's not even clear that this option is coherent: if one chooses to believe something because of the consequences of holding that belief, rather than being intuitively convinced of it, is it really a belief, or just an empty vow?

The other interpretation is that it is enough to act in the way that traditional believers act: say prayers, go to services, recite the appropriate creed, and go through the other motions of religion.

The problem is that Pascal's wager offers no guidance as to *which* prayers, *which* services, *which* creed, to live by. Say I chose to believe in the Zoroastrian cosmic war be-

tween Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu to avoid the wrath of the former, while the real fact of the matter is that God gave the Torah to the Jews, and I am thereby inviting the wrath of Yahweh (or vice-versa). Given all the things I could "believe" in, I am in constant danger of incurring the negative consequences of disbelief even though I choose the "belief" option. The fact that Blaise Pascal stated his wager as two stark choices, putting the outcomes in blatantly Christian terms — eternal salvation and eternal damnation — reveals more about his own upbringing than they do about the logic of belief. The wager simply codifies his particular "live options," to use William James's term, for the only choices that seem possible to a given believer.

FLAW 2: Pascal's wager assumes a petty, egotistical, and vindictive God who punishes anyone who does not believe in him. But the great monotheistic religions all declare that "mercy" is one of God's essential traits. A merciful God would surely have some understanding of why a person may not believe in him (if the evidence for God were obvious, the fancy reasoning of Pascal's wager would not be necessary), and so would extend compassion to a nonbeliever. (Bertrand Russell, when asked what he would have to say to God if, despite his philosophical atheism, he were to die and face his Creator, re-

sponded, "Oh, Lord, why did you not provide more evidence?") The nonbeliever therefore should have nothing to worry about — falsifying the negative payoff in the lower-left-hand cell of the matrix.

FLAW 3: The calculations of expected value in Pascal's wager omit a crucial part of the mathematics: the probabilities of each of the two columns, which have to be multiplied with the payoff in each cell to determine the expected value of each cell. If the probability of God's existence (ascertained by other means) is infinitesimal, then even if the cost of not believing in him is high, the overall expectation may not make it worthwhile to choose the "believe" row (after all, we take many other risks in life with severe possible costs but low probabilities, such as boarding an airplane). One can see how this invalidates Pascal's Wager by considering similar wagers. Say I told you that a fire-breathing dragon has moved into the next apartment and that unless you set out a bowl of marshmallows for him every night he will force his way into your apartment and roast you to a crisp. According to Pascal's wager, you should leave out the marshmallows. Of course you don't, even though you are taking a terrible risk in choosing not to believe in the dragon, because you don't assign a high enough probability to the

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Atheists are Coming to a Restaurant Near You

Since you can't come to a Metroplex Atheist event, why not have Metroplex Atheist events come to you?

We now have a Metroplex Atheists Meet-up Group on www.meetup.com. Over the years we've had many folks lament that they couldn't come to a MA social event because of time/location of our normal Wednesday get together.



Why not start one of your own?

If you have a good meeting place and you're willing to show up to be somewhat of a host, then just contact Metroplex Atheists and we can put an announcement out on the web.

All it takes is for you to say, "Hey, why don't we meet at X?" and show up!

We'd like to have a number of social groups that meet informally (because, let's face it, the business meetings are only just so much fun). The real fun lies in meeting other like minded people.

Where do YOU want to meet up?

UPCOMING EVENTS

Business Meeting

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING:

What: Meeting to decide general business of the group and to discuss current events

Date: Third Sunday of the month

Time: 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Place: Irving, Texas—monitor Metroplex Atheists Meetup announcements for exact location

Social Meetings

DALLAS / PLANO ATHEIST MEETUP DAY:

What: Meet with other local Atheists to talk about your beliefs

Date: Every Tuesday

Time: 7:00 PM

Place: TBA; For locations near you visit: atheists.meetup.com

MA ATHEIST MEETUP:

What: 'My dinner with Atheists,' social time with a bunch of heathens

Date: 2nd, 3rd, 4th, (& 5th) Wednesday

Time: 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Place: J. Gilligan's Bar & Grill (Meet on the grill side)
400 E. Abram Street, Arlington, TX

NOTE: Location can vary on 3rd Wed of each month - check [meetup site for details](#)

MA ATHEIST MEETUP:

What: 'My dinner with Atheists,' social time with a bunch of heathens

Date: 1st Wednesday of the Month

Time: 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Place: Blue Danube, 2230 West Park Row, Pantego, TX

Adopt-A-Highway:

What: Highway clean up volunteering

Date: Once a month-check website

Time: Check website

Place: Hwy 157, Arlington-check website

To have your events listed email:

The Atheist Voice Editor at
editor@metroplexatheists.org

THE ATHEIST VOICE is a quarterly publication of Metroplex Atheists.

For more information, please visit our website: www.metroplexatheists.org

To submit an article or letter to the editor, please email us.

The Atheist Voice Editor: editor@metroplexatheists.org

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dragon's existence to justify even the small inconvenience.

32. The Argument from Pragmatism

(William James's Leap of Faith)

1. The consequences for the believer's life of believing should be considered as part of the evidence for the truth of the belief (just as the effectiveness of a scientific theory in its practical applications is considered evidence for the truth of the theory). Call this the pragmatic evidence for the belief.

2. Certain beliefs effect a change for the better in the believer's life — the necessary condition being that they are believed.

3. The belief in God is a belief that effects a change for the better in a person's life.

4. If one tries to decide whether or not to believe in God based on the evidence available, one will never get the chance to evaluate the pragmatic evidence for the beneficial consequences of believing in God (from 2 and 3).

5. One ought to make 'the leap of faith' (the term is James's) and believe in God, and only *then* evaluate the evidence (from 1 and 4).

This argument can be read out of William James's classic essay "The Will to Believe." The first premise, as presented here, is a little less radical

than James's pragmatic definition of truth in general, according to which a proposition is true if believing that it is true has a cumulative beneficial effect on the believer's life. The pragmatic definition of truth has severe problems, including possible incoherence: in evaluating the effects of the belief on the believer, we have to know the truth about what those effects are, which forces us to fall back on the old-fashioned notion of truth. To make the best case for The Argument from Pragmatism, therefore, the first premise is here understood as claiming only that the pragmatic consequences of belief are a relevant source of evidence in ascertaining the truth, not that they can actually be equated with the truth.

FLAW 1: What exactly does effecting "a change for the better on the believer's life" mean? For an antebellum Southerner, there was more to be gained in believing that slavery is morally permissible than in believing it heinous. It often doesn't pay to be an iconoclast or revolutionary thinker, no matter how much truer your ideas are than the ideas opposing you. It didn't improve Galileo's life to believe that the earth moved around the sun rather than that the sun and the heavens revolve around the earth. (Of course, you could say that it's always intrinsically better to believe something true rather than something false, but then you're just using the lan-

guage of the pragmatist to mask a non-pragmatic notion of truth.)

FLAW 2: The Argument from Pragmatism implies an extreme relativism regarding the truth, because the effects of belief differ for different believers. A profligate, impulsive drunkard may have to believe in a primitive retributive God who will send him to Hell if he doesn't stay out of barroom fights, whereas a contemplative mensch may be better off with an abstract deistic presence who completes his deepest existential world view. But either there is a vengeful God who sends sinners to Hell or there isn't. If one allows pragmatic consequences to determine truth, then truth becomes relative to the believer, which is incoherent.

FLAW 3: Why should we only consider the pragmatic effects on the *believer's* life? What about the effects on everyone else? The history of religious intolerance, including inquisitions, fatwas, and suicide bombers, suggests that the effects on one person's life of another person's believing in God can be pretty grim.

FLAW 4: The pragmatic argument for God suffers from the first flaw of The Argument from Decision Theory (#31 above) — namely the assumption that the belief in God is like a faucet that one can turn on and off as the need arises. If I make the

(Arguments on page 12)

(Parade from page 5)

Last year the Church of Christ group in front of us stated, if I remember correctly, in their PR that they were growing and building a new church. They also used the parade as a religious vehicle in their PR, again if I remember correctly, by promoting ways to read the bible and they displayed bible verses and the Ten Commandments prominently on their float. We just want to make sure there is not a double standard being applied with respect to Metroplex Atheists. Those are the reasons we are requesting last year's transcript. We will also be requesting this year's transcript as soon as it is finalized.

The 4th of July Association is receiving funding from the City of Arlington through the Arlington Tomorrow Foundation in the amount of \$2,000 or \$3,000. This makes your organization "publicly funded". As such you are subject to the Texas Open Records laws.

A nonprofit corporation's books and records are also available to the public under the Texas Public Information Act (chapter 552 of the Government Code). Section 552.003(1)(A) of the Public Information Act defines "governmental body" to include the "part, section, or portion of an organization, corporation, commission, committee, institution, or agency that spends or that is

supported in whole or in part by public funds.

In addition the open records law stipulates that you have ten business days to provide the requested information.

I made my initial request for the 2010 PR transcript on Tuesday, June 14, 2011 at around 10AM, you responded on Wednesday, June 15, 2011 at around 6:30PM but did not provide the requested document. Ten business days will have passed from the time of my request on Tuesday, June 28th at around 10AM. Please provide me with the requested document before then to avoid any further complications.

Metroplex Atheists does not want to be, or create, a problem for the parade or its organizers. Many times we are treated unfairly because of our lack of belief, we just want to make sure this is not one of those times.

We are as patriotic a group as any and proud of our American heritage. We think the July 4th parade provides the perfect occasion for all groups and people to come together to celebrate the day of our country's freedom. We enjoyed very much marching in the parade last year and are looking forward to marching this year and in the future."

It looks like we finally got their attention because here is the

final response from the parade president:

"On behalf of the Arlington 4th of July Association, I am responding to your request for a copy of the Public Release scripts from the 2010 4th of July Parade. As I stated earlier, the delay in supplying this information was due entirely to poor timing. This is an incredibly busy time for us, this close to the Parade. Producing a Parade of this magnitude can be a logistical nightmare and anytime something unexpected comes across our plates, it clogs things even more. And please know that my response at this time has nothing to do with your citing the Texas Open Records Act. I am fully aware that this type of information is, in fact, "open to the public."

I will not be able to provide the scripts for the 2011 Parade until after the Parade because some of the PRs change up to the time of the Parade. The Parade will be broadcast via several media forms, during and after the Parade, so you will be able to hear what the announcers are saying. Speaking of which, you should also be aware that what is in the PR is not necessarily what will be announced. Many times the announcers do their own editing due to time constraints; i.e., if the Public Release provided is too lengthy/wordy, and the entries are moving right along, they often cut

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(Parade from page 11)

any given script to meet the time frame available.

In closing, the Association will be happy to reinstate your original wording for this years Parade. We would also appreciate any positive feed-

back following the Parade to help us make improvements for all participants."

This is another example of the battle we fight for our rights as non-believers on a continuing basis. But, as you can see, when religiously biased

people attempt to suppress those rights and we have the law on our side we can win. But we must continue the fight because many religious people will not stop their Christian bullying until forced to by the law.

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leap of faith in order to evaluate the pragmatic consequences of belief, then if those consequences are not

so good, can I leap back again to disbelief? Isn't a leap of faith a one-way maneuver? "The will to believe" is an oxymoron: beliefs are forced

on a person (ideally, by logic and evidence); they are not chosen for their consequences.

(President from page 4)

the past and a more formalized definition of the concept of "member". The "business" part of MA has been talking about this for awhile along with ways of enhancing the benefits of being a member. We have kicked around several ideas and are continuing to play soccer with several old and new models about how to improve Metroplex Atheists as a whole organization and how to improve the quality of individual membership.

If you have any ideas about improving MA as an organization or enhancing individual membership or anything else that might make Metroplex Atheists better, please let me know or come to a business meeting and express yourself. If you think everything is just fine and we should leave it the way it is, please let me know that too.

be our last of the year. Election of new officers will be held for the first time after our bylaw change. Voting members will be electing officers for two years, from January, 2012 through December, 2014. Look for some changes.

Terry McDonald

President

Metroplex Atheists

Our next Sunday business meeting is on November 20th and will

Adopt-A-Highway



Come join Metroplex Atheists in their "Don't Mess With Texas" highway trash pick up once every three months and help support our community. Just go to www.meetup.com/metroplex-atheists/ and sign up.

(Byron Nelson from page 1)

The Freedom From Religion Foundation contacted the superintendent of schools, Dr. Karen Rue, and also called for cancellation of the Youth Alive North Texas events. "It is difficult for us to understand how this event could have been approved," wrote staff attorney Patrick Elliott.

You're obviously mistaken

On October 8, Principal Parker forwarded two letters assuring no religious motives to Metroplex Atheists. One was from Pastor Kyle Embry of Youth Alive North Texas, and the other was from Sam Geddie and Ricky Franklin of Byron Nelson Parent Teacher Student Association. All denied any religious motives or content in the assemblies.

Franklin is vice president of programs for the Parent Teacher Student Association at Byron Nelson High School.

He is also Lead Pastor of New Day Church in Roanoke, Texas. In a YouTube video featuring Franklin and Embry, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhQb3_tq4k4, Franklin calls Youth Alive North Texas his church's "evangelism arm," and says, "it equips our students to be campus missionaries and it helps us to pray better."

In a Youth Alive North Texas promotional video, Pastor Franklin can be seen on stage at last year's Youth Alive North Texas event at

BNHS, imploring students to receive Jesus. (Go to 2:21, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ycfzq9EuwRc&feature=related>)

In the letter defending the assemblies scheduled for BNHS, Geddie and Franklin noted the Seven Project is on the school district's approved vendor list, and said: "The PTSA of Byron Nelson High School is proud to sponsor The Seven Project as part of our ongoing efforts to bring Character Education to the students of BNHS. There have never been any religious references during the school hours and there won't be."

On Oct. 10, Metroplex Atheists responded to school officials, and again alerted the media. We included additional links to troubling website content, including Pastor Embry's Youth Alive North Texas' stated goal:

"North Texas Youth Alive maintains the VISION of empowering students through the holy spirit and campus strategies to present JESUS to every student at every school. This is a combined effort of the church, youth pastors, and students."

A link was also provided to Pastor Embry's blog post, "Five entry points into the schools," where Embry boasts of his organization's "stable connections and a specific

anointing to reach the schools."

Links to two YouTube videos were also included. One showed Pastor Embry speaking with Youth Pastor Jason Ellis about how to infiltrate schools, closing with Pastor Embry declaring, "If you want to reach your community, start with the schools."

The other YouTube video was Pastor Embry giving his Byron Nelson High School "campus missionaries" instructions on what to do after the Oct. 12 assemblies. "There were hundreds that came to know Jesus Christ. Congratulations," he said. [Pastor Embry removed the video from YouTube shortly after we sent our release. A full transcript is available by request from Metroplex Atheists.]

We soon received an email from PTSA vice president Franklin, with a letter attached. The letter was another from Pastor Embry and said:

"I believe some confusion may have come in through an outside group that is trying to link our daytime character program with our night time program, 7@Night. 7@night IS a faith based presentation and is sponsored by the student led campus club, Youth Alive BNHS. All 7@Night subject matter and events happen after school hours and

(Byron Nelson on page 14)

are well within students legal rights to sponsor bringing in groups they feel will have a positive impact on their friends and community. Your PTSA has not and will not sponsor 7@Night."

"If we were confused, it was only because we took Pastor Embry's websites and YouTube videos at their word," Terry McDonald said. "What we're seeing, we believe, is what's called a fast one. It definitely appears Pastor Embry needs to change his website and YouTube content so they don't contradict what he tells school officials."

An in-person appeal

A Northwest ISD school board meeting occurred on Oct. 10. Metroplex Atheists president Terry McDonald, Dallas Fort Worth Coalition of Reason coordinator Zachary Moore, and Ashley Paramore, development director of the Secular Student Association, as well as your correspondent, addressed the school board and voiced our concerns.

One of the people who spoke in favor of Youth Alive North Texas was 17-year-old Joe Franklin. He is a senior at BNHS and president of the school's Youth Alive North Texas chapter. He is also Pastor/BNHS vice president of programs Ricky Franklin's son.

"There's four or five pregnant teens at the school," Franklin told the school board. "And if they would have heard

Seven Project two months earlier, they wouldn't be pregnant right now. So I see and I walk the halls, and I say, man, they really need a good character education program like this."

After listening to the guest speakers, school district superintendent Dr. Karen Rue dismissed any concerns that had been presented:

"We've made it very clear that our position is a position of character education and development for our students, and we are quite uninterested in the religious background of the presenter," she said.

A religious school district

After the school board meeting, a parent with three children in the Northwest ISD school district approached us. "You have no idea how many people are thrilled that you're here to finally try to do something about this," she told us.

We quickly learned there is a pervasive, overwhelming culture of Christianity at Northwest ISD.

"I'm Catholic," she told us, "and we are not considered Christians here."

Where we once thought Pastor Embry drove his ministry into schools via loopholes, we quickly learned that wasn't the case. No loopholes were needed; district officials

opened the doors and Embry marched right in.

The Franklin/Embry connection cannot be ignored.

"That's what we pour the majority of our, of our energy and evangelism into our campuses with our students and Youth Alive helps us do that," Pastor Franklin boasts in the YouTube video.

On Oct. 9, four days prior to the Youth Alive North Texas ministry assemblies at Byron Nelson High School, Pastor Franklin re-tweeted the following message on his Twitter page:

"SevenRoanoke is this Wednesday! Praying that the hearts of Byron Nelson students will be open to receiving Christ."

The website for the Byron Nelson PTSA, Franklin's group, states its purpose as including students' "spiritual education" and "To promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, community and place of worship." (<http://www.bnhsptsa.com>.)

All that seems just fine with school officials, students, and even parents.

Devin Jones, a mother of a BNHS student, told KDAF-TV news reporter Dawn Tongish: "I don't have a problem with it. I completely agree with

(Bryon Nelson from page 14)

anything faith-based even if it's during the school day."

Business as usual

The assemblies went on as planned, under the spotlight of additional media interest sparked by Metroplex Atheists objections.

Tickets for the evening assembly, handed out by Pastor Embry's "campus missionaries," advertised

- Extreme sports
- Free stuff
- Inflatable games
- Tons of people
- Great music
- Win stuff!
- IPad 2 giveaway
- Free Red Robin to the first 500 students
- Games & food at 6 p.m./ Events start at 7

Strangely absent is the promise of eternal salvation if the youngsters turn their souls over to Christ.

In a statement released to the press, Terry McDonald said, "It's interesting to see one school official after another, and Pastor Embry himself, continue to deny any evangelistic motives when asked directly about these assemblies."

The Freedom from Religion Foundation has filed an open records request with Northwest ISD for internal information regarding these events

at the school. Expect more in our next newsletter.

In the meantime, there's no stopping Pastor Embry and his mission to infiltrate public schools. On Jan. 28, Pastor Embry will have his "Together Training" session, which he advertises as "a day of power-packed and practical training for any campus missionaries, or those that want to be campus missionaries." It's from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at a church in Denton, and the \$25 fee includes lunch, an "Ask me about Jesus" shirt, resources, and "free giveaways, etc. etc."



Pastor Kyle Embry and Pastor/BNHS PTSA director of programs, Ricky Franklin discuss campus strategies. YouTube Video.

Embry is clear about his bait-and-switch tactics. "The vision of Seven Project is reaching a community and schools for students. The (mechanical) bulls are nice, and all the food's nice, and all that, but what it's all about is winning

students in bringing them to know Jesus Christ." (September 20, 2010 Youth Alive North Texas podcast; go to 6:04 <http://youthalivetx.com/ntyapodcast-behind-the-scenes-of-seven>)

In an Aug. 23, 2010 podcast, Pastor Embry presented his campus missionaries with a challenge:

"This is my challenge to you that the day the final bell rings, the day your final class concludes, is that you won't be able to say I haven't done enough. But you'll be able to say with all the faithfulness in your heart that you did everything you could to win your school for Jesus Christ. Hey, man, we want it to be a great year and we send you off with our prayers and love and support. You CAN win your campus for Jesus.

(Go to 2:57, <http://youthalivetx.com/ntyapodcast-havent-done-enough>)

Students of Texas, hear the message. Do it for Jesus. Do it for Kyle.

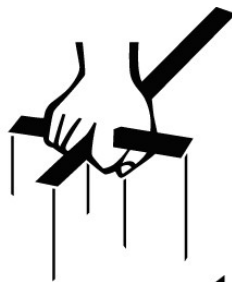
Are you a parent or a school district employee with concerns about state/church separation and Youth Alive North Texas coming to your school? Contact us and we'll get involved.

Metroplexatheists.org

WHY DO WE FIGHT?

‘Because we must. Because we have the call. Because it is nobler to fight for rationality without winning than to give up in the face of continued defeats. Because whatever true progress humanity makes is through the rationality of the occasional individual and because any one individual we may win for the cause may do more for humanity than a hundred thousand who hug superstition to their breasts.’

– Isaac Asimov, when asked why he fights religion with no hope for victory



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NO STRINGS ATTACHED.