

# secular idaho

Humanists Of ID, ID Atheists, BUUF  
Sages, BUUF Humanists, BSU SSA, West  
Valley Freethinkers, ID Society of Reason,  
Cosmos Coffee Club., HumanKind,  
south central Idaho groups

Free Thought Treasure Valley Coalition of Reason [www.tvcor.com](http://www.tvcor.com).

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## INVENTING HISTORY

*Jeanette Ross*

Last month I wrote about the common human yearning for a better past, the urge to erase the bad parts. Today's story is much darker and more invidious, something that has utterly damaged the quality of public discourse and the suitability of candidates for our highest public office.

In his recently-published book, One Nation Under God, Kevin Kruse reminds us that the belief that America is fundamentally a Christian nation [is a construct that] originated in the 1930s when businessmen enlisted religious activists in their fight against FDR's New Deal. During the 1950s, Eisenhower revolutionized the role of religion in American political culture, inventing traditions like the Day of Prayer while Congress made "In God We Trust" our official motto. Then and still a majority of Americans express a belief that this is a Christian nation. At this time a fear campaign associated with the secret workings of 'communist atheists' has been broadened to include liberal humanists and anyone else objecting to school prayer and extension of human rights. Nixon further extended the enemies lists. Now politics that conflate piety with patriotism are the property of a large minority.

In a concerted effort to demonize FDR's support of the general welfare and, with these expenditures, raise the nation out of the depression, corporate, political and religious leaders re-jiggered the mission of Jesus of Nazareth, re-wrote the intentions of the nation's founders, cherry-picked economist forefathers and messages to 'prove' their assertions, and demonized any and all shared efforts to relieve human suffering as evil and ungodly (consider implications of the 'welfare state' distorting the meaning of 'supporting the public welfare.' Among the government programs cast into the anti-Christian black box: Social Security and SSI, Aid to Dependent Children, EBT (the old food stamp program) and meals for low income public school children; all agencies that support standards for education and support for special education; the federal highway and bridge building support; employment programs, Federal Trade commission, participation in the United Nations, and certainly the Environmental Protection Commission. They would privatize national forest land, BLM, wilderness and protections of rivers., sell national parks.

Despite claims that government wastes money wherever it has authority, there is evidence of the opposite. Idaho's first big dam, Arrowrock, completed in 1917 to help control flooding of the Boise river and assist farmers by providing water for irrigation. This project was entirely financed by the federal government, at considerable savings and with all costs reimbursed by users, because the bids that were submitted were simply too high. Forced by circumstance to complete this, the US Bureau of Reclamation found a way to build what was then highest concrete dam in the world in two years less than the estimated time expected and for one-sixth the cost. For details see the Wikipedia page submitted by the historian who just completed this remarkable study. Not every government project meets this level of efficiency. Still the list of government efforts to be eliminated by Reverend Kenneth Sollitt, winner of a national sermon-writing contest, is a reminder of what governmental benefits we do have. Sollitt condemns anti-Christian minimum wage standards, any system of health care, which he says violate the ten commandments, by stealing from the rich who have been blessed by the Almighty.

Consider pronouncements by current presidential candidates to see how this effort has succeeded in many ways. You recall Mitt Romney's speech condemning the 47% of voters (including families of veterans) as takers; objecting to veterans benefits was among the programs damned by 'one nation under god.'

This movement has dichotomized public discourse and legislative action, has corrupted many recipients of government support and protection, who seem unable to acknowledge what they are given, has chased faithful Christians into congregations that rail against social benefits and rely on emotional appeals and mutual flattery. They enrich those spreading the 'doctrine of prosperity' while emptying pews of mainline Christians. As they depend upon Jeremiads and their own definitions of secular language (as 'freedom of speech') they extend their enemies to include the work and the findings of science. Witness: one of my close relatives told me one week ago that Charles Darwin's theories cannot be accepted because they are unbiblical. Let me add that this person whom I cherish is not a Bible scholar. This good-evil construct has placed the Roman Catholic Church into adversarial camps, also, with those claiming the 'traditional' perspective uncomfortable with Pope Francis' recognition of damage to the earth and exploitation of the needy as not in keeping with the church's core mission. Let me add that early in the 1950's they turned celebrations of the signing of the Declaration of Independence into celebrating their version of freedom.



**Humanists of Idaho**, a chapter of American Humanist Association & Council for Secular Humanism, is a nonprofit corporation promoting ethical, democratic, and naturalistic Humanism through public awareness, education and community involvement. We have met 3rd Mondays, Jan-Nov, in upper room of the Flicks, Boise. Open discussion and dining at 6:30pm; business 7pm; program 7:30pm. Our next meeting will be October 19. **More at meetup page, see below.**

## President's Message

Our big event in September was the Hyde Park Street Fair, an annual outreach effort. HOI again shared booth space with other groups from the TV CoR coalition. Revenue wise, it wasn't as good as some of the banner years previous, but we did enjoy a somewhat steady stream of visitors, many of whom gave small donations or purchased items. As usual, we handed out a large amount of information in pamphlet and letter form, as well as freebies like The Humanist Magazine and Freethought Today newspaper. The experience was mostly positive, with only a couple of noisy detractors stopping by. A major difference this year was that Idaho Atheists had their own booth this year, unlike past years where all TV CoR groups shared the HOI booth. This allowed TV CoR groups to divide between the two, greatly reducing the congestion of squeezing 7 groups into one booth. The weather was perfect and the turnout was good. Many thanks to all the volunteers that helped make this year's booth experiences a success.

September's HOI meeting featured a speaker from the Boise Rescue Mission, who talked about the many services they provide above and beyond meals and beds for the homeless. These include, but are not limited to, addictions services, shelters designed for women and children's needs, and a variety of VA approved veteran services. For more information on Boise Rescue Mission, visit their website: <http://boiserm.org/>

As I write this, TV CoR member groups are getting ready to participate in Light The Night Walk for leukemia and Lymphoma research. At last glance, the TV CoR team had reached about 2/3 of its goal. This is a worthy charitable effort that HOI has participated in for several years. Of course, those who are unable to participate in the walk can donate through either the team or individual walkers. Hopefully the weather will cooperate and allow for a large turnout. For updates on this, other projects, and future speakers, visit our Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/Humanists-of-Idaho-155704194462211/>

D. G. Van Curen, President HOI

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## We Can Vote To Pay for This Jeanette Ross

*Independent thinkers are not locked into any one set of political beliefs or labels. We do tend to agree that after basic human needs and rights are protected, we can consider purchasing some of life's niceties and benefits together.*

*Fifteen years ago residents of Boise did this, agreeing to a modest addition to property taxes for a limited period of time in order to build a pot of money toward purchase privately-held land that could be added to public open space. Boise voters can chose to do this again November 3rd by voting for a two year levy that amounts to about \$2.50 per household.*

*The new levy would add to funds to protect water and wildlife habitat along the Boise river. A citizen's advisory committee will decide specific purchases with public input. See [iloveboise.org](http://iloveboise.org)*

**West Valley Freethinkers, Nampa** Contact Charlie B deep-bluesigh@gmail.com wvfreethinkers@gmail.com

**C of Southern Idaho Secular group** see Facebook "Secular Student Alliance at CSI". For Freethinkers Twin Falls Contact is Erica, erical@eaglemail.csi.edu

**COSMOS COFFEE CLUB conversation** v begins at 6:30pm 1st & 3rd Mondays at Papa Joe's. Contact Sander Karas at <http://www.meetup.com/CosmosCoffeeClub>

**Humanists in Idaho Falls** meet at the Unitarian Universalist Church. Ask Doug at [gerstner\\_doug@yahoo.com](mailto:gerstner_doug@yahoo.com)

**Idaho Society of Reason** is part of Treasure Valley Coalition of Reason. <http://meetup.com/nontheist/events>

**Local Objectivists** meet monthly, last Wed 6pm at varying restaurants. Ask Tim Scharff at [scharffdesignworks@icloud.com](mailto:scharffdesignworks@icloud.com)

**Meet An Atheist** or several, socialize 2nd Tuesdays, typically at The Reef. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/IdahoAtheist/>

**Human KIND project** <http://www.human-kind-project.com/>, Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/humankindproject2014>

## "Bush at War" By Bob Woodward

Review by Wally Keltner

My perceptions of leadership in Washington D. C. has been of concern to me for many years. Perceptions axiomatically represent absolute truth to me, and without Herculean applications of fact verification and rational skepticism, they can be warped and inaccurate. I form my perceptions from inputs from many sources – the news media, books, Internet sites, movies, and conversations conducted with or overheard from all sorts of others. Who knows what additional factors there may be. I consciously or unknowingly mutate these inputs with filters and amplifiers driven by religion, political bent, family, peers, culture and many more factors. The resultant is a set of perceptions which I hold dear and subsequently use to participate in the selection our leaders at election time.

Today I am adrift in a swirl of spin, political rhetoric, dogma, lies, and unprofessional reporting. Also, some perception-forming occurs involuntarily, and with an attendant total lack of filtering. A more effective restraint is to select carefully the inputs using the best possible sources of information. Accuracy at the source of information, driven by professionalism, intellect, and dedication, yields a higher quality of input.

With these thoughts in mind, I chose a copy of Bob Woodward's "Bush at War" from a used book sale at the Cascade, Idaho library to detoxify my perception of our 43<sup>rd</sup> President, George W. Bush. Many of you will recall Woodward – he was portrayed by Robert Redford in the movie version of his earlier book, "All the President's Men". He needs little introduction to most. His string of best sellers covering the key players and definitive moments of modern U. S. history are well known. His prowess as a journalist has made him an editor on the Washington Post for years. He is known for an unrelenting lust for information and detail that enables him to recreate conversations, regenerate the ambience of meetings and activities, and give his readers a time-machine trip into the past. "Bush at War" is the story of the first 100 days after September

11, 2001. Lead cast members are Bush, VP Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Collin Powell, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Director of Central Intelligence George Tenet and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice. Bit players, cameos and walk-ons include dozens of names from our own nation, Europe, and the Middle East. Most names will stir the memories for those who lived through the crisis and its aftermath. With just a gentle nudge, who cannot recall Osama bin Laden, Tony Blair, Hamid Karzai, General Musharraf, Scooter Libby and Vladimir Putin and their roles within those tumultuous times?

Woodward sets out meetings, conversations, Special Forces camps, automobile rides, airplane trips and other venues in those 100 days, with prodigious research into documents, meeting minutes, and other media and his personal interviews permit this historical recreation. Woodward's skills make the detail and minutiae flow with ease. Readers are left to observe, interpret, judge and conclude on their own.

Rather than condense the hundred days of horror and reaction, this reviewer will encourage others to read the book and form opinions. A goal of accuracy will require reflection.

Reviewer conclusions: Condi Rice was the most rational, stable and valuable member of the Bush team. Our government was ill prepared to react to 911 despite intelligence dating back to the Clinton presidency. Leaders also failed to understand the nature of the Near Eastern culture, tribalism, mainstream and fundamentalist Islam, and nationalism. Those at cabinet level acted without adequate facts, competency, or wisdom, while the public was kept in the dark through spin and control of available information. The President and cabinet not as evil and unintelligent as portrayed by the American left, nor as righteous and intellectual as claimed by the American right. The president had poorly defined initial conditions and indistinct views of parts of the world., believing that his god had told him to run for office and start two wars in the Middle East. The 911 era was initiated by a Saudi who believed his god wanted him to slaughter a few thousand infidels in our country.

Woodward ends around 2002. The aftershocks continue to reverberate as a newly-formed caliphate demonstrates itself ruthless and highly lethal, but with indeterminate long term prospects. Bob Woodward still has books to write to cover new material.



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### It's Against my Religion Jeanette Ross

As a humanist I believe that equal, civil discourse is essential to finding common ground. You damage my faith in human capacity to do this if you close conversation with an assumption that one set of beliefs (yours, I suppose) trumps others. We are at an impasse.

Someone just did this to me, and maybe one or two of you out there. Bruce Feiler urges forgiveness. He's a lovely Christian and I respect that kind of turning the other cheek. However, I will proceed with my plan.

He urges us to consider how vulnerable and fearful the intransigent may be. (Or the Other is a power-hungry bully). When you have been attacked in such circumstance, first, check in with yourself. Before expressing one of your own beliefs, recognize that you have been invaded. This is more important than trying to speak to the topic of your invader, because the game is fixed.

Attend to the damage done to you. Before you can repair the breach on your side and make a plan for how to greet any future invaders/ Jeremiads, you have to counter-attack. That's part of my faith; I'm a Montana sect humanist.

I suggest that you loudly say "Stop" and proceed with your own truth. "I don't agree with you and I cannot accept your style of presenting your beliefs. Your behavior seems to me to be meant to demean your listener and prevent honest sharing. You have faith in intimidation. You must leave my presence immediately. I consider your behavior to be an assault. Give me your full name, including middle initial, and I will speak to the appropriate authorities. I believe in the rule of law and you are breaking the law as I know it."

Good Luck. Let me know how it goes.

### Your Brain, Your Self Jeanette Ross

How important is it to freethinking individuals to believe in a core of Self? We get a trickle of information each time someone investigates on sliver of information, which is the way of science, after all. We have enough evidence now to see that physical exercise, that which contains challenges, encouragement for new ways of thinking, can stimulate the neurons and hold off symptoms of aging.

In a recent New York Times summary of research, Nina Strohming and Shawn Nichols consider one of the most disturbing of the neurological diseases, dementia, to consider what is lost of the sense of self—and what remains. Their results aren't obvious. After memory fades, they concluded, an essential remnant of the self remains, that of the 'moral compass.' This is meaningful for nontheists.

What is left, built into the sense of right and wrong, after sacred texts can no longer be recalled or even read? I'd like to see a study that separates study groups by the pious, those who were regular congregants and spoke words averring their faith before onset of dementia? What happens if the sense of self is not based upon a set of external forces, or the support of a faith community? In my visit to a Catholic women's retreat I heard the assumption that those without belief in a saving Force (meaning here there god) must be much lonelier, and under the indignities of age susceptible to depression and worse. We could test that assumption, couldn't we? Does anyone reading this need a dissertation topic?

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*Donations (tax deductible) through Idaho Atheist website ([mailbag@idahoatheists.org](mailto:mailbag@idahoatheists.org)), or contact us to donate via PayPal.*

**HumanKIND community page to join:**

<https://www.facebook.com/humankindproject2014> Group page: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/436333686513039/>



# Boise State

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advisor Robin W Allen

## The Art of Life Jeanette Ross

Actor, musician, magician, as well as author and art collector, Steve Martin reasoned his way beyond a stern Baptist parent. He studied enough philosophy to realize that even logic is absurd and turned all plus remarkable discipline and intelligence into an amazing career, who is able to lead us to laughing at the foibles of our entertainment heroes, and thus our own. He can sing, play banjo with the best. My own favorite is his lament for atheists— believers get all the good songs.

Steve Martin moved back into my attention with his latest gig, that of a curator of new show that brings Lawren Harris, an artist well-known to Canadians but relatively new to most of us. Harris' dramatic, graphic style is particularly fitted to receiving new, worldwide interest for leadership in graphic art.

Martin's wiki lists his accomplishments. I respect his capacity to continuously remodel his life, expanding his creative demands upon himself. Philosophy became comic fodder; the rules of comedy these days have stretched again to incorporate timely satire.

When La Grande high school authorities forbade production of his first full length play, [Picasso at the Lapin Agile](#) in the time-honored way of bowing to a few parental complaints, Martin wrote in a letter to the local newspaper, "I have heard that some in your community have characterized the play as 'people drinking in bars, and treating women as sex objects.' With apologies to William Shakespeare, this is like calling *Hamlet* a play about a castle [...] I will finance a non-profit, off-high school campus production [...] so that individuals, outside the jurisdiction of the school board but within the guarantees of freedom of expression provided by the Constitution of the United States can determine whether they will or will not see the play".

As for conclusions on a grand scale, Wiki says, "In his authorized biography, close friend Morris Walker suggests that Martin could "be described most accurately as an [agnostic](#) [...] he rarely went to church and was never involved in organized religion of his own volition".

BSU SSA is a home for secular students., encouraging critical thought, open, rational, scientific examinations of the universe and our place in it. We believe ethics and morality can be based on humanistic and rational values. We present a positive view of various -isms and non-religious worldviews through debates, workshops, speakers, movies, book club, discussion, and social gatherings.

### Fall 2015 officers

Lindee Neumeier - President, Colin Fenello - Treasurer  
Kendra Sanford - Secretary

## Mocking the Absurd

Jeanette Ross

Seeing Steve Martin described as intentionally absurd, at least at times, I turned to what I consider one of our culture's least appreciated art movements,. The Surrealist revolution began in Europe about when the end of the Great War revealed how a series of missteps and mis-alliances pull millions of foot soldiers into a morass of toxic gas and mud that ended with a small circle of so-called victors dividing the spoils— in a way that led directly to even greater catastrophes. This is the territory now victim to a new caliphate and land still ruled by at least one clueless dictator sending refugees across continents..

Back to 1924, while Hitler was learning how to make Ted Cruz-type histrionic gestures, young poets and painters determined that those in charge were skating over the crazy. New nations made no sense, the arguments given for this, the heavy fines that turned one loser, Germany, murderous— these artists said they would invent a new reality, something unreal or surreal.

Picasso, Picabia, Klee, Arp, Chirico, Miro, Masson, Magritte, many others, and Oh, I'll include Dali, why not? The genre allows for posers. These are now the staples of art museums. And prints hanging in hotel lobbies.

What did they think they were doing? One of them, Julian Gracz, said they were 'awakening to self-awareness."

It was a different kind of self-awareness. Paintings, poetry, plays were seemingly left unfinished. Take "Waiting For Godot." There's enough comedy here, and enough familiarity, that most audiences recognize that the joke is not just on the befuddled main characters— it's also on us, living in our comfortable rectangles, eating whatever is easy and available at the deli on our way home from the theater.

We can laugh at the characters, laugh at ourselves, and admire the clever playwright while we thank the local university for assigning this to their students. Before we drive off.



*Huumanists meet 3rd Sunday, 11:15:am, at Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship library, next on Oct 18. Sages: Oct 8 and 22, 9:30am for no-host breakfast and programs, at Kopper Kitchen, near the Boise airport.*

### Sages Meet and Greet Tom von Alten

Join the BUUF Sages and our new minister for a friendly chance to get to know one another a little better, over a no-host breakfast at the Kopper Kitchen, 2661 Airport Way. Newcomers are always welcome! We meet Thursday, Oct. 8, at 9:30 am. The group started meeting 30-some years ago; bring an "old times" story if you have one. Contact Tom von Alten at 208 378-1217 or [tva@fortboise.org](mailto:tva@fortboise.org) for more information or to be added to our reminder e-list.

**Humanists at BUUF** will gather 11:15 am Sunday October 18 to hear Kenneth Watts reflect on his work as a hospital chaplain. Bring your questions!

### That Urge to Create... Jeanette Ross

**Paul T.** started our meeting with two large bags of stackable units, telling us they fit together. But how? As our only child went to work and the rest of us stared, our one theater major talked about the place of theater in medieval culture—how until 1600's actors couldn't be buried in hallowed ground, like other liars and prostitutes (who presumably only pretend to like their customers.) He has in mind a book on creativity and synergy. It's a myth, he said, that actors primarily perform because they like showing off. It's a re-creation of one's own possibilities, finding your own sources for expressing someone else's words. Art historians look at how we define ourselves through drama. Roman satire offended Christian leaders (and today all of us are forbidden to create an image of the Muslim prophet Mohammed). Another, **Francis**, started with a metaphor, of creativity as composting. He draws in pen and ink, shares these on Instagram. He also writes poetry, helped start a poetry performance group in Corvallis. Not a slam group, he adds. Robert: stories are ways we understand each other, from Gilgamesh forward. Jeannie: They are the way we renew (and remodel) our identity. This led Andrew to declare himself a contrarian and encouraged me to mention my love of absurdist drama and art. Pat: the renaissance was rediscovery. Rick: OT stories that were meant to help understand a tribe's growth from loose tribe to nation became literal, essential code of belief.

Monica should have spoken first, but she's new and modest in manner. She has almost finished her art history degree. "We do use art to tell a story." As RCC commissioned the best artists of the day. "Modern art is complicated. We are trying to impart our values through gods; interpret, understand our world. Modern art is conceptual, not aesthetic. The line between art and craft has blurred—artists can learn a skill toward a purpose of expression; craftspersons do the same. Both may work toward meticulous drafting skills. She has her own practice, likes to sketch along the Boise river.

Woody spoke of the surprises waiting when he cuts into a rock; he looks in and wonders how it came to be. Rocks hold their understanding, their history, get beauty from rubbing against each other. Rocks like people have a lot inside if you knock off the rough edges. He has an 18" rock-cutting blade, a big one. **Andrew** tells us that Nolan has a shelf of rocks that he has found. **Jeannie** brought one of her journals of poetry, read one "On Hearing Scarborough Faire" (the song). She wrote of the yearning for hope, imagining love regained..

**Robert F** looked up the intersection of art and humanism, found a description of the art of the 1300's before Michaelangelo carved his David. (and Michaelangelo's sculpted horse is still admired and reproduced, Paul R adds.) **Frances** brought two pieces of her jewelry, a ring that she made by casting, the lost wax process; and the linked-together dolphin necklace, hammered silver wire and cast dolphins, are hooked together by her own invention. Blended in the chain: red coral stones she carved, mounted, from red coral out of the deep near Okinawa.

**Andy Axe** shared a set of photographs he took at Sweatsville, a one-man eccentric show built and shared by a man named Sweat, of imaginary creatures welded together from rusty automobile and related machinery parts. Alas, he was forced by town fathers to move the whole show, to unknown venue. **John Munson** spoke of the art of training horses that hug back and love to be trained. He and Mary are also members of a rock club and he has a rock saw he exercises in winter, when the horses do less.

Karen shared one of her pithy summaries: an artist wants to know, a craftsperson wants to know how.. This was quickly challenged in a group that prefers nuance. Jeannie recalled how the poor of Europe, living in mostly windowless hovels, experienced art in the soaring structures, sculpture, stained glass and beautifully costumed ritual.

## October 2015

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At the September 10 meeting of Sages, **Dario Bollacasa spoke of "The Maya Then and Now."**

They built great cities, pyramids, astronomical observatories and were mathematical wizards. They ruled a vast territory for hundreds of years, and then they and their cities melted into the jungle." Dario made a choice about ten years ago to prepare himself to be a destination lecturer on travel cruises. He readily found work and now has about eighteen topics for 'enrichment' regarding places in view or visit as part of the very popular business of vacation cruises. He shared one of his polished presentations, complete with slides on a big screen, which accompanied a cruise through the Panama Canal. Our cost: no host breakfast at Kopper Kitchen.

Although those who identify as Mayan people continue to live in traditional ways, with their own languages, beliefs and skills, they have accommodated to contemporary life in ways that leave them mostly undisturbed, even as the evidence of their once-great empires have been reclaimed by jungle. The remains of cities that once held thousands are still being explored—Caracol found gain in the 1930's. Coba was found about the same time and at the time that Tom and I visited the site, February of this year, we were told that it is still 95% unexcavated.

The many Mayan-related people continue to live where Spanish explorers found them, the lowlands of the Yucatan peninsula and the highlands south of this. They have been hostile to outside marketers and merchandisers; few anthropologists have been allowed in. Even National Geographic photographers hire local guides, take a few photos and leave. Their reluctance to entertain us is understandable. Spain was looking for opportunities, not friends. A few priests provided rituals, yearly celebrations and a few saints who have been incorporated in some ways (the wealthy support handsome cathedrals, while poor villagers pick their own ritual leaders, thank you.)

Mayans studied their seasons and kept records of cycles in written codexes and in stone. The Dresden Codex, one of four remaining, describes the Veutian year, predicts eclipses including that in 1991. Their sophisticated number system incorporated zero. After Christian authorities destroyed nearly all written records, murals and edifices provoke our interest. The rich lived very well, the poor supported them. Gods and priests (who kept detailed records) were demanding, unforgiving. We look at their ball courts and try to imagine a sport where losing teams were enslaved or killed. Like native people elsewhere in the Americas they imagined a three tier world, with earth in the middle, sacred figures supporting the sky. We know that ordinary people lived in single room straw, mud and wood structures because they still do.

The best clue to the spiritual life of the Mayan people is contained in their artwork. Without the kings who once ruled absolutely, Mayan weavings and embroidery express the impulses of their creators and are filled with the animals they know and simply imagine; this world is filled with leaping, twisting and magnificently healthy animal life. Their sun god and rain god are ubiquitous in stone carvings and jewelry sold to tourists (I have a copper version of Chac). Caves that once held ceremonies that included human sacrifice now are tourist stops. Their hats from palm fronds are prized possessions.

They never mastered the arch that allowed European structures to soar. Their only use of the wheel was for children's toys. Tulum was their last occupied city. Our February tour guide there is a genial Mayan with an entertaining whistle, with stories for each structure and a knack for taking photographs of the tour group with every single camera. *Jeanette Ross*

## A Freethinker Friendly Church?

Humanists at the Unitarian Universalist association's 2015 General Assembly proposed an active movement for UUs around the country to actively welcome atheists and agnostics.

Some proposals: Include language in published statements that explicitly welcome non-theists.

As a congregation, discuss ways to be more inclusive.

Provide times and spaces for celebration of the humanist worldview, including meetings and programs for humanist groups.

Reach out to the wider non-theist community and let them know you want to support them.

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**Idaho counties spend millions every year on emergency health care** for those who can't afford insurance, so county governments have a stake in getting more residents covered under a health insurance plan. On Wednesday the Idaho Association of Counties endorsed the [Healthy Idaho proposal](#), which would significantly expand access to Medicaid in the Gem State. One of those who supports the move is Latah County Commissioner Tom Lamar. "The Healthy Idaho plan will save money for the taxpayers within Idaho, because we're already paying for these medical costs with our property taxes," he says. The move is being billed as an Idaho alternative to the Affordable Care Act's Medicaid expansion. It would accept federal dollars to close the coverage gap for the 78,000 Idahoans who make too much to qualify for Medicaid – but too little to receive subsidies on the Health Insurance Marketplace. Lamar says it's the right thing to do on multiple levels. "The Healthy Idaho plan will move us forward so we can cover these people in the gap," he says. "We have to close that gap and make sure people have the opportunity to be covered. And we have a better way to pay these medical bills." The Idaho Association of Counties will present a policy statement to the state Legislature this fall. The Legislature will be back in session in January.