

Central Minnesota *Friends Free of Theism*

**January
2010**

Friends Free of Theism (FFOT) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the separation of church and state and provides information and community for freethinkers in the central Minnesota region.

The FFOT 2009 Winter Solstice Party

Thanks once again Tom and Jan for hosting the best celebration of the season! The warmth of your home and the gathering of friends will keep us going while the days get longer and we look forward to Spring.



About twenty-five members attended the December Solstice celebration. There was great food and a welcome break from the constant interjection of Christianity into the season. (See page two for more on Christmas myths)

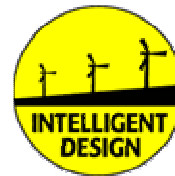


FFOT Monthly Membership Meetings

When: The third Monday of the month at 7:00 pm

Where: St. Cloud Public Library or the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Hall

See the FFOT website Events Calendar on the FFOT website for up-to-date information about meetings and events: <http://freeoftheism.org/>



Visit the online freethought store:

www.evolvefish.com

January Blood Drive

Tom has discovered that we can start a group at the Red Cross and donate individually. Our cumulative progress will be tracked and posted on our site. Watch here for further updates.

Those of you unable to donate are welcome to come and offer your support. You could also contact the Red Cross to inquire about volunteering at blood drives:

St. Cloud Chapter: 320/251-7641

The War on Christmas

Neither the date nor the festivities of Christmas are originally Christian and no one knows when Jesus was born. Origen, a biblical scholar in the third century, argued that only sinners celebrated the date of their births. There is no record during this time that Christians celebrated the birth of Christ. December 25 was an important date, for the Romans. In the Julian calendar it was the date of the winter solstice. Mid-winter was a time to honor gods like Saturnus, Mithra and Sol. There were great festivities during this time; especially, Saturnalia and New Year's Day.

During Saturnalia, Romans visited friends, exchanged presents, sang, and held banquets. Romans decorated their doorways with garlands and lit candles. And Christian theologians condemned it all. Tertullian, the first theologian to proclaim god as "Trinity," was furious at Christians who participated in Mid-winter and New Year's Day indulgences. He argued that people who hung laurel-wreaths on their homes were doomed to the fires of hell. Yet the war on what would become Christmas was being lost even as he preached.

Over time Christmas acquired new elements. Mistletoe was borrowed from the Druids, and Christmas trees began appearing in Germany in the sixteenth century. Folk tales about Father Christmas started in the seventeenth century – the same century a real war on Christmas took place. In 1640 the Puritan Parliament in England banned Christmas for being too pagan and Roman Catholic. Yet their ban lasted less than two decades. Christmas was a tradition that the English people refused to give up.

The only Christian part of Christmas is the nativity, the story of Jesus' birth. It is derived from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Their accounts of the birth of Jesus are irreconcilable, and many historians believe both are fictitious. There is almost nothing Christian in Christmas, and yet time has proven that its celebration is here to stay.

Written by Charles Wallace (modified) and reprinted with permission from the FTCS website @ www.freethinkerscs.com

Freethought Organizations

American Atheists:

<http://www.atheists.org/events>

American Humanist Association:

<http://www.americanhumanist.org/conference/>

Atheist Alliance International:

<http://www.atheistalliance.org/>

Atheists for Human Rights:

<http://www.atheistsforhumanrights.org/>

Atheists United:

<http://www.atheistsunited.org/>

Camp Quest

www.camp-quest.org

Freedom From Religion Foundation

www.ffrf.org

Humanists of Minnesota

www.humanistsofmn.org

Lake Superior Freethinkers

www.lsfreethinkers.org

Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers

<http://maaf.info/>

Minnesota Athiests

www.mnatheists.org

Red River Freethinkers

www.redriverfreethinkers.org

Secular Coalition for America:

<http://www.secular.org/>
SCSU: <http://ssaatscsu.wordpress.com/>