Family is a big part of the NTCOF, and in fact we tend to think of our entire congregation not just as a collection of members, but as an extended family. In our existence, we’ve seen couples come together in marriage, dealt with the tragedy of death, and welcomed new life into the world. Children have always been a part of the NTCOF experience since the very beginning, and we count the active participation of families as one of the most delightful and rewarding parts of fulfilling our mission. From its inception, Youth Director Deborah Boak has worked hard in collaboration with many volunteers to provide a nurturing and educational environment for children that focuses on scientific, historical, and ethical exploration. The need for this kind of connection is profoundly underestimated, and the NTCOF is one of the few groups in the Dallas/Fort Worth area that provides this critical service.

But don’t just take our word for it. Bobbie Kirkhart, vice-President of the Secular Coalition for America and former President of Atheist Alliance International, has written about this subject in chapter 9 of the book Parenting Beyond Belief:

“Humans are social animals, and our children seek a tribe to identify with. It requires as much faith as any religion to believe we can meet this need by chanting, “The world is my country” or saying we must let them decide for themselves. They will decide for themselves, of course, and they will grow beyond the boundaries of the little groups they depend on in childhood, but our eagerness for this to happen does not alleviate our responsibility to provide them with a community.

...I encourage all nonbelievers to join at least one freethought organization, but for parents, I think it is a must for two reasons. First, whether your child is quiet or confrontational, you can’t guarantee that she won’t be subject to harassment or worse. In that case, you and he will need a group to fall back on, and you both will be much more comforted if it is a group she knows. And then there’s the tribe thing. You child will identify with a tribe, and both he and you will be happier if it is your tribe.

Once you locate a freethought community, you may discover that it is virtually childless,
with mostly older people and no programs or institution for children. Your instinct may be to cut and run, but unless there is another freethought group in your area, your job is to make a place for your child in such a population. It won’t be as hard as it looks. Even those groups that appear unfriendly to families almost certainly lament the lack of youth in their organization. I suggest that parents first go to the group alone and size up the situation. If there’s a children’s program, check it out, but don’t demand perfection. It will almost certainly be acceptable and will often be excellent. ... Talk to the leaders, share with them your desire to make a place for your child in their community, and elicit their help. Identify resources you have noted and ask to be put in touch with other parents. Talk about encouraging teens and young adults to become leaders for children’s groups. “Youth leader” looks great on a résumé.

...Freethought groups should conscientiously and effectively welcome families, and many do. Find your group, and if it is welcoming of your child, consider yourself lucky.”

The NTCOF certainly is welcoming of all children, and we also welcome your active participation in our youth activities. We’ve been extraordinarily proud to help bring to the Dallas/Fort Worth area the author and speaker Dale McGowan, who has compiled the landmark non-religious parenting book Parenting Beyond Belief, from which the above quote was taken. Dr. McGowan has compiled an impressive array of nonreligious and secular parenting advice from such notable individuals as Dr. Richard Dawkins, Penn Jillette, and Julia Sweeney. The NTCOF was proud to be a sponsor of a nonreligious parenting seminar Dr. McGowan presented at the University of Texas at Arlington, based on his important book; a book which addresses a vastly-overlooked situation that it seems nobody in the mainstream culture has realized yet: the plight of the nonreligious parent.

From the preface to his book:

“Parenting is already among the toughest of jobs. Living secularly in a religious world is among the most difficult social choices. When these two challenges are combined, and a parent wishes to raise children without religious influences, the difficulties are compounded. But despite the difficulties, a large and growing number of parents are rising to the task. In 1990, 8 percent of respondents to a USA Today poll identified themselves as nonreligious. By 2002 that sector had grown to 14.1 percent. The U.S. Census of the year 2000 counted 37.3 million households in the United States with school-age children. These numbers yield a conservative estimate of 7 million individual nonreligious parents in the United States today. ... It’s easy to assume that every parent on your block, everyone cheering in the stands at the soccer game or walking the aisles of the supermarket, is a churchgoing believer. It’s the assumed default in our culture. But it isn’t true. All you need is to realize that they are making the same assumption about you. You are not remotely alone.”

This book is undoubtedly a must-have resource for any atheist, agnostic, or freethinking parent. And if you live in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, we’d like to think that the NTCOF can provide additional resources, and we’d love for you and your family to join ours.
The following is a sampling of the ongoing discussions held at the NTCOF forum through the past month—log on to add your two cents!

**DAP:** “The “nothing in particular” category is interesting because I have been a lifelong nonbeliever, and I probably would have answered that category. It is only recently that I have been seriously looking at nonbeliever culture and social circles, and what the various labels mean.”

**BrandonBlair:** “As an nonbeliever, I would focus first on reversing the trend of social ineptitude in our society; I don’t just mean racial segregation, or a lack of etiquette. I mean our tendency as a society to raise children that have no idea how to interact with other human beings in a positive and meaningful manner.”
SCARBOROUGH FAIRE TRIP

Scarborough Faire is a favorite destination for freethinkers all over the North Texas area who want to “go back in time,” at least in jest, to celebrate many of the fun things a Renaissance festival has to offer.

People from all the groups within the DFW Coalition of Reason will be getting together for a fun trip to the Faire on Saturday, May 23rd. Will you be with them? Go to our Meetup page to RSVP YES! today.

www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought/

MAY EVENTS

All NTCOF events can be found through our website calendar, or through our Meetup.com site. Please check these locations regularly, and RSVP through Meetup.

Social Luncheon: Today, immediately after our Service, join us for lunch and friendly discussion at Jason’s Deli in Irving, located just south of I-635 on MacArthur, at 7770 N. MacArthur Blvd., phone (972) 432-0555. Easy driving directions: To reach Jason’s from the Holiday Inn: turn RIGHT out of the parking lot onto Esters Blvd., RIGHT onto Freeport Parkway, RIGHT to enter I-635 EAST. Exit I-635 at MacArthur Blvd., then RIGHT onto MacArthur, and RIGHT again just ahead into the Jason’s parking lot.

Board Game Night: The NTCOF Board Game group meets nearly every Friday night at the smoke-free IHOP at 2310 Stemmons Trail in Dallas. The IHOP is adjacent to the Radisson Hotel along North-west Highway, about a ½ mile east of Loop 12.

Secular Singles: The Freethinking NTCOF Singles meets at the Vineyard restaurant in the Hilton DFW Lakes Executive Conference Center in Grapevine (1800 Highway 26 East).

Debate Team: Come sharpen your debating chops as Cody Evans and Kip Lewis face off on the issue of legalized euthanasia. If you like participating in debates, watching other people debate, or simply want to hear both sides of an issue, come out to Dr. Zach’s house on Sunday, May 17th at 2:00 PM to find out who’s the winner!

Women’s Group: Do you miss getting to spend quality time with female friends? Want a comfortable place to chat without all those pesky men around? Come on out to the newly-formed NTCOF Women’s Group, where there will be knitting lessons, conversation, and lots of female freethinking fun!

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Folks, you hear this over and over, but it’s true: Freethought is NOT Free! Our continued growth is only possible through your generous donations and contributions to the church- our success depends on the commitment of ALL our members.

In order to make our vision a reality, we’ll need all our members to consider making a pledge of continued support to the North Texas Church of Freethought. This is the only way that we can achieve the financial stability necessary to purchase a building and provide a home to even more Texas freethinkers.

Please mark on the back of your service program if you’d like to pledge ongoing support to the NTCOF, and drop it in the rainbow-colored box, along with any feedback you may have to improve our church!