



# The North Texas Church of Freethought BULLETIN

A Fellowship of Unbelievers

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## SANTA CLAUS IS COMING!!



Santa Claus must be real because even NORAD is again getting ready to track Santa Claus' annual flight from his home at the North Pole beginning the night of December 24th. Headquartered inside Cheyenne Mountain near Colorado Springs, Colorado, NORAD, the North American Aerospace Defense Command, is the joint US-Canadian military collaboration which, since 1958, has provided advance warning of missile and air attacks and maintains airborne defense forces to guard against such threats. But every year NORAD also tracks and reports on Santa Claus' coming to town. Using its network of satellites and radar installations supplemented by fighter jets and special Santa Cams pre-positioned at many locations worldwide, NORAD monitors the flight of Santa and his flying-reindeer powered sleigh.

The project began quite by accident when a 1955 Sears ad misprinted a telephone number for children to call and speak personally to Santa. The misprinted number was for the "hotline" of the Commander-In-Chief of NORAD's predecessor CONAD, the Continental Air Defense Command. The Director of Operations at the time decided to "play along" and gave callers radar updates on Santa's progress. Under the circumstances, then, it may have been not so much a matter of promoting Santa as deciding not to undermine the Santa myth.

So far, no lawsuits appear to have ever been filed against NORAD or either the US or Canadian governments in connection with NORAD's Santa-tracking activities. Should they be? Santa is hardly a religious

figure even though he is linked to a 4th Century Turkish bishop, Saint Nicholas of Myra. There are at least as many links between Santa and other mythical figures including the Norse deity Odin for whom Wednesday is named.

Clement Clarke Moore's 1823 poem, "A Visit From St. Nicholas," more commonly known as "The Night Before Christmas," established Santa Claus' sleigh pulled by reindeer, his entering homes through the chimney and carrying a bag of toys. Moore, interestingly, was a wealthy New York City Episcopalian cleric who was opposed the abolition of slavery and was himself a slave-owner. 40 years later, American cartoonist Thomas Nast enlarged Santa from the diminutive elf of Moore's poem and had him living at or near the North Pole.

Santa Claus has been readily and frequently exploited in advertising. Beginning in the early 20th Century, Coca-Cola used the imagery to the point that even today snopes.com includes a debunking of the claim that the Coca-Cola corporation invented Santa, clothing him in its corporate colors of red and white. It is true, though, that Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer was invented in 1939 by the Montgomery Ward chain of department stores.

Santa Claus is a unique and fascinating figure in American culture. Although there are the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy as well, neither of these are embedded in such a well-developed mythos or are as personalized as Santa. For many children, Santa may be even more real than any of the characters of the prevalent American theologies. Santa Claus is certainly a lot more fun!

## **RICHARD DAWKINS ON CHRISTMAS**

A December 17, 2006 article in The New York Times, related the response of Richard Dawkins to an email inquiring as to "his own Christmas philosophy" as follows:

"Presumably your reason for asking me is that 'The God Delusion' is an atheistic book, and you still think of Christmas as a religious festival. But of course it has long since ceased to be a religious festival. I participate for family reasons, with a reluctance that owes more to aesthetics than atheistics. I detest Jingle Bells, White Christmas, Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer, and the obscene spending bonanza that nowadays seems to occupy not just December, but November and much of October, too. So divorced has Christmas become from religion that I find no necessity to bother with euphemisms such as happy holiday season. In the same way as many of my friends call themselves Jewish atheists, I acknowledge that I come from Christian cultural roots. I am a post-Christian atheist. So, understanding full well that the phrase retains zero religious significance, I unhesitatingly wish everyone a Merry Christmas."

### **CHRISTMAS GIFT SUGGESTIONS:**

To your enemy, forgiveness.  
To an opponent, tolerance.  
To a friend, your heart.  
To a customer, service.  
To all, charity.  
To every child, a good example.  
To yourself, respect.

Oren Arnold

**COMING NEXT MONTH:  
A BRAND NEW YEAR: 2011  
WHAT DOES THE FUTURE YEAR,  
AND THE FUTURE GENERALLY,  
HAVE IN STORE FOR FREETHOUGHT  
AND FREETHINKERS??**

**YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS  
TO THE NTCOF ARE NEEDED,  
APPRECIATED,  
AND TAX-DEDUCTIBLE!!**

All NTCOF events can be found through our website calendar (if it doesn't work, we're working on it!), or through our meetup page, from which you can RSVP, at: [www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought](http://www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought) - **JOIN THE NTCOF MEETUP GROUP to get email updates too!**

**Social Luncheon:** Today, immediately after our Service, join us for lunch and discussion at the Golden Corral Buffet and Grill in Grapevine, located just across from the Grapevine Mills Mall, at 2605 E. Grapevine Mills Circle, phone (972) 874-7900. To reach Golden Corral from the Wyndham, take the SOUTH exit from the parking lot (turn your head left as you walk out the main entrance), then drive across Esters Blvd onto John W. Carpenter Freeway (114). Then take the first exit RIGHT onto International Parkway (121), then Grapevine Mills Parkway exit. Turn LEFT on Stars and Stripes Way, continuing on to E. Grapevine Mills Circle.

**Freethought Salon:** Get together to discuss today's service topic or other conundrums of interest to Freethinkers. Second Sunday monthly, over breakfast, at the Hilton Vineyard in Grapevine this month; see the meetup site!

**Game Night:** The regular game night crew meets nearly every Friday night at the IHOP on 2310 Stemmons Trail (I-35), near Northwest Highway (Loop 12). Plan to arrive at about 7:30 PM, and stay late playing Risk, Rummikub, and other fun games!

**Secular Singles:** Freethinkers have met their life-partners with whom they have begun families through the Secular Singles group. Check the meetup site for the next date, time and location!

**"They who have not Christmas in their heart will never find it under a tree."**

- Roy L. Smith



# **DFWCOR**

Dallas-Fort Worth Coalition of Reason

The North Texas Church of Freethought  
A Fellowship of Unbelievers

Music by "Faithless Companions" Jay Purrington,  
Ed McGuire, Cathy & Kevin Smith  
and Scott Williams

Welcome Coordinator Mark Barnick

Equipment Wrangler: John Hendricks

Videographer: John Gauthier

Minister: Dr. Tim Gorski

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