



The North Texas Church of Freethought BULLETIN

The Fellowship of Unbelievers

Founded 1994

Vol. XVIII No. I

Sunday, January 8, 2012

2012: THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT!

There is no doubt about it. 2012 is the end of the world as we know it. After all, 2011 was the end of the world as we knew it before then. So why should 2012 be any different?

Although on 1/1/2011 there was already trouble in Tunisia that ultimately resulted in the downfall of that government on January 14th, dictators in Egypt and Libya – Mubarak and Ghaddafi – were still in control of those countries and apparently believed they would go on being in control indefinitely. American government officials apparently believed this too. But they were all wrong. And when the new year of 2011 began, no one in Japan could have suspected that on March 11th an undersea megathrust earthquake of magnitude 9.0 (on the MMS – moment magnitude scale, which has replaced the old Richter scale) and an accompanying tsunami would kill over 15,000 people and cause a major release of radioactivity at the Fukushima nuclear power plant, the worst accident since Chernobyl, crippling the facility and which will take many years to clean up. This time last year we also did not know that 2011 would be the year that we finally caught up with – and killed – Osama bin Laden, on May 2nd, who was not hiding in a cave in Afghanistan but in a town only about 30 miles from the Pakistani capital of Islamabad.

Bunches of other people also died in 2011, including notables like Elizabeth Taylor, Betty Ford, Václav Havel, Steve Jobs, and prolific writer and freethinker Christopher Hitchens. Over Christmas, we also lost Marcia Adams, an NTCOFer that some of you may remember from when she and her husband Geoff attended regularly a few years ago when Marcia's health was better.

Some things that happened in 2011 were expected, but they still changed the world as we knew it. Sometime during 2011, for example, the world's population was calculated to hit 7 billion people. In July, NASA ended the 30-year-old space shuttle program with the last flight of the shuttle Atlantis. NASA announced in early August evidence from the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter of what had long been suspected: that Mars still has some water on it. And in November NASA launched the Mars Science Laboratory Rover – which makes it a fairly safe bet that this mission will arrive on and begin transmitting information about the Red Planet in August of this year.

These and many other happenings in the world, and, for many of us, even more momentous changes in our personal lives changed the world forever in 2011. So it is completely reasonable to suppose that 2012 will see similar changes and that 2012 will be the end of the world as we know it.

Of course, astronomers are best situated to make certain predictions, not in the way their pseudoscientific ancestors, the astrologers, made predictions, but because things like the solar transit of Venus coming up on June 6th and the ongoing sunspot cycle are about as certain as that the sun will come up tomorrow morning. Some other things may seem new, but have already been in the works, such as the Chinese launching a three-satellite weather system. A couple of new supercomputers are expected to come on line in 2012. But most things that will happen in 2012 will be unexpected, even surprising, in ways both good and bad.

Life will go on. Many things will stay the same, and many things will change, both in ways that are predictable and also unpredictable. The world as we know it will end and a new world, a world that we may hope to know a little better, or in a different way, begins. For some of us – and we seldom can know or expect which of us – there will be an actual ending of reality in death. But that is a threat that we all live under, one that is far more likely than an apocalyptic destruction of the whole planet that so titillates the imagination.

Not that the imaginary is not useful and meaningful, as long as – which is the constant refrain of the Free-thinker – we remember what is real and what is imaginary, and how to know the difference.



Christopher Hitchens
1949-2011



Our band,
The Faithless Companions
 will be performing at the new, 2nd
 location of the
 Blue Armadillo Winery in Princeton, TX
 (322 Main Street in Princeton 75407)
 on January 27th beginning about 8pm.
 Princeton is located about 30 miles NE of Dallas
 between McKinney and Greenville on US Hwy 380

You can't connect the dots looking forward;
 you can only connect them looking backwards. So
 you have to trust that the dots will somehow con-
 nect in your future.
 - Steve Jobs

I have never been able to grasp the meaning
 of time. I don't believe it exists. I've felt this again
 and again, when alone and out in nature. On such
 occasions, time does not exist. Nor does the future
 exist.
 - Thor Heyerdahl

To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly
 romantic. It is based on the fact that human history
 is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compas-
 sion, sacrifice, courage, kindness.

What we choose to emphasize in this com-
 plex history will determine our lives. If we see only
 the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something.
 If we remember those times and places -- and there
 are so many -- where people have behaved mag-
 nificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at
 least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a
 world in a different direction.

And if we do act, in however small a way, we
 don't have to wait for some grand utopian future.
 The future is an infinite succession of presents, and
 to live now as we think human beings should live, in
 defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a mar-
 velous victory.
 - Howard Zinn

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

**COMING NEXT MONTH:
 "HAPPY BIRTHDAY NTCOF!"
 17 YEARS OLD!**

**>>> February 5th, 2012 <<<
 SHERATON GRAND DFW AIRPORT
 SE CORNER OF 114 AND ESTERS**

All NTCOF events can be found through our website
 calendar (yes, website has now been updated
 thanks to Sarah and Rusty Nejd!), or through
 our meetup page, from which you can RSVP, at:
 - www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought -
JOIN THE NTCOF MEETUP GROUP !!!

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 Sheraton, cross over the freeway and
 make a left onto John W. Carpenter Freeway (114) going
 west. 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. Most Sundays, over breakfast, at the
 Hilton Vineyard in Grapevine; 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!

"I like the dreams of the future better
 than the history of the past."
 - Thomas Jefferson



DFWCOR

Dallas-Fort Worth Coalition of Reason

The North Texas Church of Freethought
 The Fellowship of Unbelievers

TODAY'S MUSIC by Faithless Companions
 (Ed McGuire, Jay Purrington, Kevin and Cathy Smith,
 and Scott Williams of faithlesscompanions.com)

Web Redesigners Rusty and Sarah Nejd

Welcome Coordinator Mark Barnick

Videographer: John Gauthier

Minister: Dr. Tim Gorski

P.O.Box 202447, Arlington, TX 76006
 (214) 702-2050

Website: www.churchoffreethought.org

Email: info@churchoffreethought.org