

SECULAR
HUMANISTS



OF THE
LOWCOUNTRY

About SHL

The *Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry* was founded in 1994 by a group of local non-theists in Charleston, South Carolina.

Our members are freethinkers of many kinds. We call ourselves agnostics, atheists, skeptics, secular humanists, rationalists, and scientific naturalists. We welcome you and all who are interested in participating in our friendly community, either as members or observers.

The purpose of our non-profit, educational organization is to promote the non-theistic, human-centered viewpoint as a valid contribution to public discourse and to strive to maintain the First Amendment guarantee of separation of state and church.

The Separationist is the newsletter of the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry. Opinions expressed in *The Separationist* are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of SHL.

Please contact the SHL president (president@lowcountryhumanists.org) with any questions or comments about this publication. Contributions such as short articles, news items, letters to the editor, or other information of interest to SHL members are always welcome.

The Separationist

Volume 24, Issue 8

November 2017

A Year Combatting Witch Hunts in Ghana: Humanist Volunteerism

Sunday, November 19, 2017, 4:00 PM, Gage Hall
4 Archdale Street, Charleston, SC

These days, you often hear Americans metaphorically referring to something as a “witch hunt.” Unfortunately, in Ghana witch hunting is still literally occurring. People, often women or children, are tortured or killed because they are believed to have supernatural powers.

Our guest speaker for November, **Warren Tidwell**, recently returned from a year in Ghana working as a humanist volunteer for the humanist Foundation Beyond Belief. But, at the age of 39 and with a family, Warren is not what you might imagine of someone spending a year doing international charity work. Moreover, he has a lot more experience with humanist volunteerism than just this one activity.

Warren is a lifelong Alabama resident who has used blogs and social media to organize thousands of volunteers and secure millions of dollars’ worth of financial and material donations for disaster relief and recovery efforts. He worked as a volunteer in rural



Mississippi in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and created a network of small nonprofits to aid victims of tornados. Warren sparked a worldwide movement after the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary, when he started the 26 Acts of Kindness Facebook page, which encourages people to combat tragedy by engaging in acts of lovingkindness.

Come hear Warren Tidwell speak about his experiences volunteering in Ghana and elsewhere at the November SHL meeting, which is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served. Afterwards, everyone in attendance is invited to join the guest speaker for dinner at a local restaurant.

President's Corner: Going Retro with Snail-Mail Newsletters

The main way that the Secular Humanists of the Lowcountry communicates with our members is through the internet. After all, this is the 21st century!

In addition to our primary website at <http://lowcountryhumanists.org>, SHL has two Facebook pages, and a calendar of events at Meetup.com. Moreover, we send out frequent e-mail announcements via MailChimp. (If you would like to receive those announcements and are not already getting them, you can sign up at our primary website by selecting "More" from the main menu.)

But, we have recently undertaken an experiment that is decidedly old school. We are printing and mailing copies of this newsletter to everyone who is current in paying their

membership dues! That's right, we are using actual paper and the US Postal Service. And, we are providing a service specifically for our paid members. (If you are interested in joining SHL, you can do that at our primary Website by clicking on Join/Donate or at the treasurer's table at any of our monthly meetings.) For now, we have committed to doing this from September through December 2017.

This experiment has already prompted a variety of reactions. Some have told us that they really appreciate the printed newsletter. We have heard that people read it at the breakfast table, browse it in the bathroom, or post it on their refrigerator. Some feel that they are learning more than they would through our electronic communications.

Others have told us that they do not even open the newsletter they received in the mail, and that it ends up going straight into the recycling bin. For them, it is a waste of SHL's money and the planet's limited resources.

Now, the question is, what do *you* think of this? Do you want to urge us to continue printing the newsletter for paid members even beyond December 2017? Do you want us to stop sending you a printed newsletter immediately? Or, do you have an entirely different comment to make about it?

In any case, write to us at shl@lowcountryhumanists.org and let us know. The SHL board needs your feedback on this and we would appreciate any comments, opinions, or suggestions you can share.

A Microbiologist Reads the Bible

This will be a short essay, because the Bible makes no direct mention of microbes anywhere. Considering their essential place in the planetary ecosystem, and their significant contribution to human suffering, this seems inexplicable for a book that is divinely inspired. Think of how different the world would be now if Genesis had explained how on the third day, God created all of the miniscule living things that make the air we



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Mycobacterium leprae, the bacterium that causes leprosy.

Upcoming SHL Events

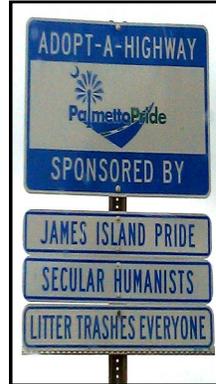
Volunteer Activity: Adopt-a-Highway

Saturday, November 4, 8:45 a.m.—10:00 a.m.
1011 Harbor View Road
Charleston (James Island), SC

Picking up trash at the side of the road is a lot more fun than it sounds. We enjoy each other's company and conversation. It is a pleasant walk in the fresh air. And we usually find some interesting items.

Here are two more reasons you should especially plan to come help us out this Saturday:

- (1) Some of our regulars will be away and so we will be short-handed.
- (2) Since we are planning to switch to a new location soon, this may be your last chance to pick up this pleasant stretch of Harbor View



Road, which (coincidentally) runs from Darwin Street to Fort Johnson Road.

As always, participants get a sense of accomplishment from making the world a better place and enjoy a chance to talk as we walk. We also have a sign put up by the Dept. of Transportation there that says that the road is kept clean by “Secular

Humanists,” which helps us let people know that our group exists and that we care about our community.

SHL will provide the necessary supplies, including trash bags, gloves, and reflective vests. Please join us if you can.

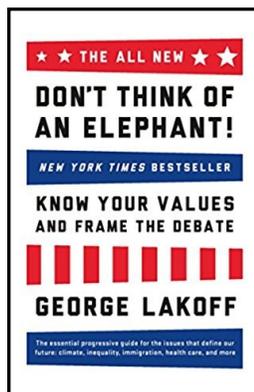
If you have any questions, please feel free to email our volunteer coordinators (volunteers@lowcountryhumanists.org).

November 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4: Adopt-A-Hwy Pickup 8:45AM Harbor View Rd
5 		7	8	9	10: Veteran's Day observed	11 Veterans Day 
12	13	14	15: SHL Happy Hour 6:00 PM LG's/Creek	16	17	18
19: SHL Monthly Meeting 4:00 PM Gage Hall	20: Church/State Separation Week (through 11/24)	21	22	23 	24	25
26: SHL Book Club 4:00 PM Barnes & Noble	27	28	29	30		

SHL Book Club

**Sunday, November 26,
4:00–5:30 p.m.**
Barnes & Noble
1812 Sam Rittenberg Blvd.
Charleston, SC
*Look for us in the music
 section on the right-hand
 side of the store, about
 halfway towards the back.*



For November we return to a book that continues to be relevant. This month's selection is **The ALL NEW Don't Think of an Elephant! Know Your Values and Frame the Debate** by George Lakoff (2014). Paperback, 195p. \$11.55, Kindle \$8.10, Audible \$14.69 7hrs.

Geri, a long-time book group member, recommended this updated version of the 2004 classic, which the club read in the past. Book group organizer Yvonne Michel's reaction? "I am reading it now, and it is blowing my comfortable socks right off."

According to Amazon, "Ten years after writing *the* definitive, international bestselling book on political debate and messaging, George Lakoff returns with new strategies about how to frame today's essential issues..... In this updated and expanded edition, Lakoff, urges progressives to go beyond the typical

laundry list of facts, policies, and programs and present a clear moral vision to the country—one that is traditionally American and can become a guidepost for developing compassionate, effective policy that upholds citizens' well-being and freedom."

You are welcome to RSVP on SHL's Meetup page (www.meetup.com/lowcountryhumanists/) or Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/90436456767/>).

SHL Happy Hour

**Wednesday, November
15, 6:00 p.m.**
LG's by the Creek
1005 Tanner Blvd.
Hanahan, SC



Happy Hour is always a fun and relaxing evening of stimulating conversation over drinks (alcohol is optional) and yummy food among old and new friends! Everyone is welcome—we hope to see you there!

So we can get an idea of how many people to expect in advance, **please RSVP on SHL's Meetup page** (www.meetup.com/lowcountryhumanists/) or **Facebook group** (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/90436456767/>).

breathe, generate soil for plants to grow, cause our bread to rise and our wine to ferment, and return our bodies to the earth when we die. Instead, it wasn't until about 400 years ago that their existence was even suspected, and only the last 150 years that science has been able to understand how they cause disease and perform all of their more important functions.

So, Genesis was a missed an important opportunity, but then

Jesus comes down from heaven and there was another chance for some explanations. For example, in Matthew 8, Jesus heals a leper. The story goes like this:

"And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

"And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed."

Now this seems pretty impressive at first, since leprosy can be really disfiguring. But as a microbiologist it's hard to ignore how much more impressive this encounter *could* have been. Jesus, Creator of the Universe, must have known (since He knows all things) that leprosy is caused by a bacterium, and that in the future drugs would be developed that cure it. That means that Jesus could

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Charity of the Quarter: Hurricane Recovery

The SHL Charity of the Quarter for October through December 2017 is the Hurricane Recovery fund coordinated by Foundation Beyond Belief. FBB has raised over \$25,000 for the victims of Hurricane Maria, a Category 4 storm that struck Puerto Rico on September 20.

FBB recently announced that the primary on-the-ground beneficiary of their fundraising work will be Proyecto Matria, a “local organization working to help the women of Puerto Rico become self-sufficient in order to overcome situations of violence and gender discrimination.” Proyecto Matria was founded in 2004 with the goal of providing women with such vital services as affordable housing (an especially dire need in the wake of the destructive power of the storm) as well as education, psychological support, and job assistance.



FOUNDATION BEYOND BELIEF

FBB is a humanist charity that has promoted secular volunteering and responsible charitable giving since 2010. FBB provides an avenue for humanists to give to highly qualified and vetted charities in a number of cause areas. FBB has already channeled millions of grant dollars toward programs that alleviate poverty, promote education, work for social justice, and benefit the natural world.

In January 2016, FBB deployed their first Humanist Disaster Recovery team to Columbia, SC. Volunteers helped victims from the “Thousand Year Flood” of the previous October to rebuild their homes and lives. Now we in South Carolina can turn to FBB to help

have done three much more impressive things in that encounter than simply cure the man of his leprosy.

First, he could have explained to the bystanders everywhere he healed people that many illnesses, like the one afflicting the man, are caused by tiny animals too small to see with the naked eye, and you can kill most of them with soap and water and by heat.

Second, he could have taken

pity on humankind and just eradicated the bacterium that causes leprosy from the earth. Think of it. We would have found mummies in Egypt from the period before Jesus that were disfigured by a horrible disease, and then suddenly, the disease disappears from the archeological record and is never observed again. A true miracle!

Third, if Jesus thought destroying *Mycobacterium leprae*

Donate Today!
Four times a year, SHL collects donations on behalf of a worthy charity. You can donate by cash, credit card, or check at our monthly meeting or by mailing a check to:

SHL

P.O. Box 32256

Charleston SC 29417-2256

Make checks payable to SHL and note “COQ” in the memo line.

Or securely **donate online** on our website (go to lowcountry-humanists.org and select “Join/Donate > Donate to our Charity of the Quarter” from the top menu.)

others recover from a similar disaster.

was too drastic, he could have at least taught the people how to isolate tetracycline, a naturally occurring antibiotic that we use to cure leprosy and many other infections today. It’s relatively easy. Think of all the deaths and suffering that would have been prevented in the 2000 years since.

Laura Kasman is a professor of microbiology and immunology at MUSC. She has been a member of SHL since 2000 and has served of the SHL board for much of that time.

SHL Board for 2017-2018

Alex Kasman, President

Bonnie Cleaveland, Vice President/
Secretary

Garrett Gehlhausen, Treasurer

Tom Amon

Steffi Green

Vera Hannaford

Ed Stephens

∞ ∞ ∞

Newsletter editor:

Sharon Strong

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Contact us!

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SHL is a non-prophet organization!

Find us online! We're (nearly) omnipresent!



Web (check out SHL's one-stop-shop)



Meetup (find future events and RSVP)



Email Lists (manage your notifications)



YouTube (watch video debates etc.)



Zazzle (buy SHL T-shirts & more)



Yahoo Families Group (parenting info)



Facebook Page (public postings)



Facebook Group (closed group for conversations about atheism/humanism)



Facebook Lounge (closed group for wide-ranging discussions)



Facebook Families Group
(closed group for parenting support)



Facebook Pay-It-Forward Group
(exchange free stuff & info on good causes)