



The Utah Humanist

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Humanists of Utah is a Chapter of the *American Humanist Association*.

We are a nonprofit corporation organized to advocate and promote ethical, rational, and democratic humanism among our membership and the larger community.



Humanism is a rational philosophy informed by science, inspired by art, and motivated by compassion. It affirms the dignity of each human being and supports individual liberty consonant with social and planetary responsibility. Humanism advocates participatory democracy, the open society, human rights and social justice. Free of supernaturalism, it recognizes human beings as part of nature and holds that values—be they religious, ethical, social, or political—have their source in human nature, experience, and culture. Humanism thus derives the goals of life from human need and interest rather than from theological or ideological abstractions, and asserts that humanity must take responsibility for its own destiny.

—*The Humanist*,
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President's Message

A big hello to you, my precious friends. I hope that this edition finds you healthy, happy and ready for Spring. We have been through alot in the past year. There is light at the end of this very heavy tunnel. The seasons are changing, there is much more information on what we are dealing with and the instruction on how we, as a people of the planet, should proceed. For now, still with extreme caution. I think that this is the hardest part... knowing that we are close to being able to be together with people who are important to us and doing the things that we love, but it's not quite time. I can speak for me - I CANNOT WAIT to go to concerts, travel our planet and hug everyone I can get my hands on. For us hugger type of people, this has been awful.

In the meantime, let's get our plan of action together. We cannot wait to meet in person and be together safely. I am paying very close attention to the state and CDC guidelines and recommendations. If all goes well, it could be in a handful of months. But until then, do your best to help be part of the bigger solution of safety: get vaccinated, wear your mask, still stay home or social distance as much as possible to help prevent any spread and keep your chin up. We have made it this far and we are much stronger than we thought.

Please know that I think of you all often and we are here, helping spread the word on how to to be better folks. The saying goes - Never waste a crisis. With that said, I know that I am not wasting this one by helping others on how to become/ how to realize they already are/ and more importantly - how easy it is to be a humanist. Keep fighting the good fights. Keep standing your ground on what you believe. Keep loving people and striving for goodness in all things. Keep exemplifying our humanist beliefs. But most importantly - keep being you! See you all soon (and consider yourself hugged from afar). Have a beautiful day, be safe and well.

Kindest regards, and have a blessed day.

—*Melanie White-Curtis*
President, Humanists of Utah

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Using Our Own Minds

Input from experts is valuable but our own sense of the truth is ultimately the most important.

To a certain degree, we rely on other people's accounts of reality to inform us of the nature of the universe. For example, we can't all be scientists or engineers, but we can benefit from listening to their findings and research. In the same way, we often look to teachers, various leaders, and gurus to tell us about the path to enlightenment and the nature of the realm of spirit. While this input from experts is undeniably valuable, our own sense of the truth is ultimately the most important piece in processing the information we take in from external sources. In the end, we are the authorities in our own lives, and we have the final say on whether something generally held as true is true for us. Have you thought about how you process information and incorporate it into your own life?

We need only take a brief look at history to remember that the religious, scientific, and political establishments that ruled the day were all wrong about something at some point in time. This is the beauty of learning, experiencing, and evolving. While we sometimes wish we could just let someone else decide for us what is real and true, this is clearly not a viable option. The good news in all this is that we can confidently devote ourselves to making up our own minds about reality, taking everything that is handed to us as truth with a grain of salt. Technology has made it much easier to research, validate and always learn so we can be much more present in our thoughts, beliefs and make appropriate stances and changes upon our growth and learning in our lives.

This does not mean that we discount the information we receive from outside sources. It simply means that we are vigilant enough to question it before we decide whether or not we agree with it. All the information we receive is useful in the process of helping us make up our own minds. As we allow ourselves to sit with the things we learn, measuring them alongside our own inner sense of the truth and our own experiences, we find that making up our minds is a joyful process of integration that grows us into stronger, smarter,

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Reconnecting with Friends

When fate brings old friends back into our lives, there is always a reason.

Every person that passes through our lives makes a contribution to our life stories. There are those who play large roles and make deep impressions, but sometimes a brief special appearance before life takes them in another direction creates a meaningful connection. It is a rare gift when they suddenly reappear in our lives after a long absence. With the worldwide pandemic, this reset the dynamic of relationships in a major way. Social distancing has been very tough on most of us and we have had to get creative, work harder than we thought, and be vigilant in maintaining our relationships with others. Social media helps in many ways but it isn't the same as being in person with those you love.

Though the world may seem full of more people than we could ever know, we are often drawn to people with similar energy, which brings us together time and time again. On first meeting, the characters in our life stories may seem familiar. We may know each other from past lives or perhaps we merely recognize the energy of a kindred spirit. But when fate brings old friends back into our lives, there is always a reason. They may act as messengers, reminding us of a part of ourselves we have forgotten to nurture. They might appear to give us a chance to react in a new way to an old situation. They may even bring up unresolved issues so that we may complete them, giving us the chance to move forward on our life path. Whether old friends, previous romances, or once and future partners, their reappearance is more than mere chance. They may never know what they bring into our lives, but the renewed contact is a gift. Have you thought on how you want to rekindle relationships as the restrictions are lifted? Or even once things are healthy and becoming more familiar to our visions of normalcy?

Maybe you are meant to initiate contact by seeking out old friends, new friends or even revisit how you deal with people as a whole. If old friends come to mind or into your dreams, use their appearance as an excuse to get in touch. If an old song or movie reminds you of them, reach out to share the gift of renewed contact. Wherever you fall in the circle of connection and reconnection, be sure to look beyond the surprise

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Own Mind Treasures From Our Past

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more engaged human beings.

Keep fighting the good fights in learning, standing up for your beliefs and always striving to be better than you are today.

Kindest regards, and have a blessed day.

—Melanie White-Curtis
President, Humanists of Utah

Friends

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of the moment to enjoy the deeper gift that this revelation brings. As my grandma always used to say, a stranger is just a friend you haven't met yet. Be safe, my friends, but be prepared for a new world that we can all create as the world gets healthier and back on track. But in the meantime, cards, emails, waving and all of those soft touches are delicious to the lonely and only take a moment to do.

—Melanie White-Curtis
President, Humanists of Utah

Deeply Religious Man

The fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. He who knows it not and can no longer wonder, no longer feel amazement, is as good as dead, a snuffed-out candle. It was the experience of mystery—even if mixed with fear—that engendered religion. A

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When we became adults, we added layers to our inner child... but he/she is still in there.

Deep within each of us lives the child we once were. For most of us, our inner child lies hidden beneath the layers we've put on in order to become adults. In our rush to put on grown-up clothing and live adult lives, we may have forgotten the wisdom and innocence we possessed when we were children. In meditation, we can connect with our inner child and reclaim/revisit what we have forgotten.

You can start by finding a photo of yourself as a child to look at for a few moments. School photos often work well to help you connect with this part of you. Sit in a relaxed position, close your eyes, and start taking deep breaths. Set the intention that you are going to connect with your inner child. Wait for an image of yourself as a child to appear in your mind's eye. See your grown-up self hugging your inner child. Listen to what your inner child has to say. Perhaps your inner child wants to give you the answer to a question that you've been mulling over. After all, you never needed to look outside yourself when you were a child to know how you felt or what was true for you. You always knew the answers. There also may be an ache from a childhood wound that you can now heal by talking to your inner child and offering them the wisdom and perspective that comes with maturity. Or maybe you've merely forgotten how to see the world with childlike wonder and hope, and your inner child would like you to remember how. Tell your inner child that you love them and will keep them safe. Embrace your inner child and tell them that you are always there for them. Allow your inner child to always be there for you.

Using meditation to connect with your inner child is very useful, but you can also connect with your inner child even when you aren't in meditation. Treat yourself to a playdate, ice cream, or a walk in the park. Let yourself laugh and play more. Give yourself permission to be as wise as your inner child so you can stop focusing on what isn't important and start living as if every moment is precious. Your life will be filled with more laughter and fun. This is ever so important now, with how heavy the world is. There is so much trauma, drama, fear and uncertainty right in our faces on the daily that it can feel suffocating. Whimsy can help. Find what fun things genuinely cause you to smile and to feel happy - even if it is just for a moment....and DO MORE OF THAT!

—Melanie White-Curtis
President, Humanists of Utah



Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors

The Search for Who We Are ~Book Review~

I love books that elucidate scientific thinking in terms that I can understand. *Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors*, written by Carl Sagan and Ann Druyan, begins discussing genealogy, a popular subject in this State. How many preceding generations do you have personal knowledge of? Do you know even the names of your progenitors three generations removed? Five generations? Some of us might be able to answer affirmatively, but how about 50 generations or 500 generations? We do not remember these ancestors but they are part of us, our genetic code comes directly from them and their forebears.

Our DNA contains the history of millions of years of evolution. Only a small fraction of our genetic code is actually used to define us as individuals. About 97% of our DNA is “throw-away”, evidence of past tried and failed or no longer necessary experiments. All animals have about the same percentage of nonsense DNA and all share large common sequences of functional nucleotide. This is compelling evidence all organisms can be judged by similarity of current DNA sequences. Modern human’s closest relative is the chimpanzee. “If the sequences of humans and chimpanzees are compared nucleotide by nucleotide, they differ only by 1.7%. Humans and gorillas differ by 1.8%; humans and orangutans, 3.3%; humans and gibbons, 4.3%; humans and rhesus monkeys, 7%; humans and lemurs, 22.6%.”

There are some very interesting insights into the character and life of Charles Darwin in the book. Included are some of Darwin’s contemporary’s criticisms of his work. They rejected his ideas “...not because the evidence was against it, but because of where it led: seemingly, to a world in which humans were degraded, souls denied, God and morality scorned, and monkeys, worms, and primeval ooze elevated; ‘a system uncaring of man.’ Thomas Carlyle called it ‘a Gospel of dirt.’”

A large portion of the book deals with Psychological and Sociological studies of

animals. In the middle of this section there is a fascinating chapter told from the point of view of a young female animal. She describes a typical day for her group that includes a mixture of fear and respect for the dominant male leader. Illicit liaisons with other males are acceptable as long as they are discrete. Indeed, when patrolling near their “borders” an occasional tryst with a male from a rival group is exciting and not particularly dangerous as long as one displays a reasonable amount of discretion. By the end of the chapter I was sure the subject was a modern day big-city gang and it’s social structure. Actually, the basis for the story was behavior of a wild troop of chimpanzees. The implication is clear. Group or gang behavior can be described in a large measure as a throw back to feelings and actions we all possess but have forgotten; a kind of reverse civilization.

The book is a wonderful marriage of traditional and social scientific knowledge presented in terms that most people can comprehend. It is well documented with extensive footnotes and a useful index. There are many quotes from intellectual luminaries spread throughout the work. I highly recommend the book as a pleasurable and informative experience.

–Wayne Wilson

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Humanists of Utah meetings are open to the public and free of any admission charge. A discussion and light refreshments follow the speaker's presentation. Come join us and **bring a friend!**

Disclaimer: The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of Humanists of Utah nor the American Humanist Association. Reprinting of articles is permitted for humanist groups promoting the interests of humanism if attribution is properly stated.

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Deeply Religious Man

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knowledge of the existence of something we cannot penetrate, of the manifestations of the profoundest reason and the most radiant beauty, which are only accessible to our reason in their most elementary forms—it is this knowledge and this emotion that constitute the truly religious attitude; in this sense, and in this alone, I am a deeply religious man. I cannot conceive of a God who rewards and punishes his creatures, or has a will of the type of which we are conscious in ourselves. An individual who should survive his physical death is also beyond my comprehension, nor do I wish it otherwise; such notions are for the fears or absurd egoism of feeble souls. Enough for me the mystery of the eternity of life, and the inkling of the marvelous structure of reality, together with the single-hearted endeavor to comprehend a portion, be it ever so tiny of the reason that manifests itself in nature.

—Albert Einstein

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Membership/Renewal Application

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- \$50 Regular Annual Membership and subscription to the Utah Humanist
 - \$90 Regular 2-year Membership and subscription to the Utah Humanist
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 - \$65 Regular 2-year Membership with email delivery of the Utah Humanist
 - \$20 *Student* Annual Membership and subscription to the Utah Humanist
 - \$20 Annual subscription to the Utah Humanist (I do not want to be listed as a member of **Humanists of Utah**)
 - Please send a *FREE* trial Subscription to the Utah Humanist
 - \$_____ additional contribution to help promote public awareness of humanism
- ⇒ All contributions in excess of the \$20 subscription fee tax deductible.
⇒ *Members* have the right to vote in Chapter elections and participate in Chapter decisions.
⇒ Dues provide for information packets, honoraria to speakers, expenses of newsletter publication, trial subscriptions, copies to libraries, and newsletter exchange with other chapters.

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Notes:

- ◆ *General Meetings* are for all members and the general public. There are no admission charges.
- ◆ *Discussion Group* meetings are open to everyone. A different book or topic is covered every month.
- ◆ *Board Meetings* are planning and business sessions. They are open to all members.
- ◆ Eliot Hall is in the First Unitarian Church located at 569 South 1300 East in Salt Lake City.
- ◆ RE 201 is upstairs in the East Educational Building at the First Unitarian Church.

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All Public Meetings are
CANCELLED until further notice
Due to the Pandemic



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