



# The Utah Humanist

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**H**umanists 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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## Chaplain's Corner

### Age of Overwhelm

Humanists aren't very good at avoidance.

When you believe only in reality, turns out you have no choice but to face it.

I believe that we humanists need to find healthy ways to fulfill the roles of religion. For example, religion helps groups cooperate at a powerful level (that's a topic for another column), for better and worse. That is likely a primary reason why religion evolved.

I believe that purpose and meaning are easy to find as humanists. Every night I listen to the song "Saturn" by Sleeping At Last, with the refrain, "How rare and beautiful it is to even exist". When talking to the religious, one of my favorite questions to answer is, "If there is no afterlife, what is the purpose of this life?"

The answer is obvious! All of it! This life has all the meaning! Humanists believe in Life BEFORE Death, as Harvard Humanist Chaplain Greg Epstein emphasizes. That's another of my favorite humanist summaries.

I believe the purpose of life is to show up to it. We can practice facilitating the flow of feelings and experience and make the most of it.

In this column, I'd like to share a few thoughts about what the hardest human task might be: finding and providing comfort. Specifically, I want to talk about big picture, global comfort.

At a fundamental level, when we are hurting, we want to feel better. There is nothing more urgently real than pain, both physical and emotional. That's what pain is for, a warning system to get our attention.

Small, everyday pain is relatively easy to manage, usually with relationships. We are social primates designed to find comfort in each other. Even a hug can help us feel better. Talking through our feelings helps. In addition to helping us process, the demonstration that someone else cares does tremendous good. We need to feel like we matter, and that those we care about will show up for us when we need them.

(Continued on page 4)

### Inside This Issue

What Time Is It? .....	2
Outraged!.....	2



# What Time Is It?

On March 14, 2022, the United States Senate passed the “Sunshine Protection Act” which would make Daylight Savings Time effective the year around (it has not been passed by the House of Representatives yet, and its introduction to Congress occurred when the earth was being impacted by a solar flare, which may have had some effect on the Senators’ thinking processes). The purpose would be to eliminate the changing of our clocks twice a year, but it has other implications that we should consider, such as how we got started on Daylight Savings Time in the first place.



Before radio communication and the creation of time zones, local time keeping was done by sun reckoning. Noon was 12 o’clock, when the sun was at its highest point in the sky (zenith, or midday), which was halfway between sunrise and sunset. This worked well as long as you stayed in one location, but once you travelled either east or west, your watch would not agree with local time. This became a real problem with the advent of transcontinental railroads, which would constantly have to correct their clocks to local time.

In 1878 Sandford Fleming proposed a system of 24 worldwide time zones, allotting 15 degrees of longitude for each zone (to make a total of 360 degrees). The Prime Meridian that was selected was marked at the Royal Observatory in Greenwich, England. In December of 1884, the International Prime Meridian Conference in Washington, DC., codified this system, which is still in use

*(Continued on page 3)*

# Feeling Outraged

I couldn’t make a submission to the newsletter last month. A lot has happened in the last month since then and I’m finding it hard to write anything positive. I feel like I could just launch into a lengthy diatribe about a whole lot of subjects. I guess what I’m feeling is a lot of outrage about what’s happening to our democracy here in the United States where it is under attack by Republicans and Donald Trump. If that isn’t bad enough, we now have Russia’s Vladimir Putin invading Ukraine which is threatening democracy on the world stage. Plus, this war brings us closer to a world war with the possibilities of a nuclear exchange. And what do we get from the same Tucker Carlson, Republicans and Trump, praise for Putin and garbage and lies about the Ukraine not being a democracy.

During the last few years people have been reticent to call someone a traitor. But this recent praising Russia and Putin for invading the Ukraine is a traitorous act or at least unamerican. I feel like every day that goes by, I become more disdainful of these traitors and don’t mind saying that I hate them. There I said it.

I suppose it’s not a good idea to express openly one’s hatred of another person or group of people. But I also believe that some people are deserving of a large helping of hatred. And they keep giving us new reasons to despise them, like the recent news that the wife of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas’ wife Ginni was part of the Jan 6<sup>th</sup> insurrection efforts.

I must admit that these feelings are made worse by a feeling of helplessness to do much about anything going on out there. So, one way I going to try to be a little helpful is donate to an organization doing humanitarian work. I noticed during a couple news segments a Chef I’ve seen on television before. His name is Jose Andres who is using his organization “World Central Kitchen” to help feed the displaced Ukrainians during this time of great need. I plan to give to this organization soon.

—Bob Lane



# What Time Is It?

*(Continued from page 2)*

today. It is the basis for all geographic data, even the GPS navigation system used by our cell phones today. The system was adopted by the railroads in the US in the late 1800s, and in 1918 Congress passed the “Standard Time Act,” which codified the boundaries for the US time zones. Time zone boundaries were adjusted slightly to avoid splitting population centers into different time zones. If you resided in the center of a time zone, your solar noon (zenith) would coincide with your clock time (Standard Time); if you lived on the western edge of a zone, your solar noon would be about ½ hour later than Standard Time, and likewise the solar noon occurs ½ hour earlier at the eastern edge of a time zone.

All this seems good; you can get a pretty good idea of what time it is by observing the position of the noonday sun, regardless of what season of the year it is. Your internal biological clock is pretty well synchronized with solar time. Then some folks (probably golfers) decided that the extra daylight on long summer days could be utilized by setting your clocks ahead, forcing you to get up earlier to utilize the evening daylight, and thus so-called Daylight Savings Time was born (for some reason people can't just get up earlier to capture these extra hours without setting their clocks ahead). However, not all states went along with this; Utah stayed on MST year around up until the mid-sixties, while California went on DST in the summer, years prior to Utah. The move to Daylight Saving Time became standard in the USA in 1966, with the passage of the “Universal Time Act” (only Arizona and Hawaii opted out). When it first was implemented the clock time changes occurred on the last Sunday in April and the last Sunday in October; this has shifted over the years to the second Sunday in March and the first Sunday in November, so we are on DST most of the year.

Recognizing the inconvenience and problems of resetting clocks twice a year (and the increase in accidents and sleep disruptions that

accompany this), the “Sunshine Protection Act” has now been introduced in Congress, as previously mentioned. But isn't this a silly way to solve the clock resetting problem? Let's consider the implications of this proposal:

1. Noon (midday) would completely lose its original meaning: the center of each time zone would have solar noon occurring at 1 pm all year long. If you reside on the western edge of a time zone (for example, in the Salt Lake Valley) solar noon will occur about 1:30 pm in the afternoon. Sunrise will occur an hour later than Standard Time, even in the winter months, so that during most of December sunrise will occur about 8:30 am on clock time (and even later if you live near our eastern mountains). This means sending children to school in low light conditions, with all the traffic hazards that come with this.

2. Our internal biological clocks, which are important in regulating our sleep cycles and other physiological functions, will be permanently out of sync with solar time. This may seem trivial, but recent studies have shown many unsuspected effects can result from disruptions of our internal biological clocks; these internal clocks have evolved over millions of years of human evolution and have mostly been ignored as factors relating to our health and well-being.

In conclusion, going to DST the year around seems to be a strange way to solve a problem that was created unnecessarily to begin with. Daylight Saving Time doesn't save a second of daylight, and Arizona and Hawaii still stay on Standard Time the year around, and seem to do just fine (as we did in Utah until the mid-1960s.) If a person wants to capture that extra daylight from long summer days there is no need to set the time earlier on your clock (or the rest of the country's clocks, for that matter); just set your wakeup alarm an hour earlier and leave the rest of our clocks alone!

—Art King



# Chaplain's Corner

(Continued from page 1)

But I want to talk about big pain. The overwhelming pain of others. In our current connected, media saturated world, we are overwhelmed with pain, everyone's pain at the same time. I know most of us are heartbroken over Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Ukraine is such a powerful, vivid example of the injustice of war, as Putin targets civilians and places of refuge. It hurts to realize that though Ukraine is getting the most attention right now, the world is constantly filled with the horrors of injustice and suffering. More humans are enslaved now than at the height of what we think of as the slave trade, for example. We know all about Ukraine, but fewer are aware of the probable genocide of Uyghurs in north-western China.

I saw a darkly humorous and depressing map titled "Western Media When Tragedy Hits". North America, Europe, and Australia are colored green signifying "24-hour coverage, celebrity songs, lit up monuments". The Middle East is labeled brown, "A hopeless situation, just pray". South America and the entirety of Asia are colored yellow, "Nobody wants to be sad all day". And Africa is black with the label, "Literally do not care".

There is an uncomfortable degree of truth to this map, but not because we are bad people. The actual issue is, we care so much that it overwhelms us, and then we shut down, so we find ways to cope. Plus, we are evolved to care most about members of our in-group (our empathy actually maxes out at a single tragedy! As they say, one death is a tragedy; a thousand deaths is a statistic.)

So, what do we do? How do we maintain caring every day, and increase our ability to face the truth, both of tragedy and hope? I suggest we Perspective, Practice, and Pause.

*Perspective.* I have spent the last five years as a Chaplain in hospice, prison, and the hospital. My primary job has been to help people cope with decline and death. I'm a bit surprised by how often patients will tell me how hard they imagine my job is. My response: "All of this is true whether or not I am looking at it, so I might as well do what I can to help." I think this is the

humanists perspective. Yes, there is an overwhelming amount of suffering in the world, but it is happening whether or not we are looking, so avoidance does no good. It is our responsibility to face it and help how we can.

*Practice.* Our compassion and emotional regulation is like a muscle that gets stronger with practice. "Growing edge" is a helpful term when it comes to increasing our capacity. If we are in our comfort zone, we don't grow because we aren't challenging ourselves. If we are beyond our abilities, we get overwhelmed and damage ourselves and others. The "growing edge" is the place where we are challenged enough to increase our capacity. I think about experiencing difficult emotions as an "emotional workout" and that perspective has helped tremendously. I have the privilege of this being my full-time job, but the practice of emotional fortitude works for us all.

*Pause.* This is the practice that will help you do the others. I repeatedly hear that most people cope through compartmentalization, just not thinking about the hard, sad truths. Unfortunately, this carries a cost in our bodies and our relationships. Instead of compartmentalization, I suggest a practice of dosing, which I call "walking to the edge of the abyss". When reality is overwhelming, we can look at it, and then assess how much we are able to engage with it. Some days, we might be able to face all of it, and still function. Other days, we may need to be gentle with ourselves. We can pause by looking at what is real and saying "Yes, there is a world of suffering. I see it, and will engage more when I can." This gentleness will provide rest as we work to increase our ability to engage more productively.

As humanists, we understand that reality is all that we have, exquisite and beautiful and agonizing and precious all at once. We have a unique ability and responsibility to provide an example of facing the suffering of the world head on and helping to better the world. But we also must remember to care for ourselves while doing so.

—Jared Anderson



**H**umanists 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!**

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**Key Contacts:**

Melanie White-Curtis—385-495-3786  
 melaniewhitecurtis@gmail.com  
 Wayne Wilson—801-561-0406  
 wwilson@xmission.com

**Website:**

<https://HumanistsOfUtah.org>

**Newsletter Contributors:**

Melanie White-Curtis  
 Laruent Beuregard,  
*HGP, March 2022*

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The AHA is dedicated to preserving individual rights and promoting nationally the philosophy of humanism.

Membership brings you the *Humanist* magazine and *Free Mind* newsletter six times a year.

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**Humanists of Utah**  
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- ◆ *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 in person  
meetings are CANCELLED  
again until further notice  
Due to the Pandemic



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P.O. Box 1043  
West Jordan, UT 84084