



# Utah Humanist

*Promoting Humanism in Utah since 1991*

January 2024 [HumanistsofUtah.org](http://HumanistsofUtah.org) Vol 40 No 1 Copyright Humanists of Utah 1991-2024

**H**umanists of Utah is a Chapter of the *American Humanist Association (AHA)*. 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*

Official publication, AHA

[Americanhumanist.org](http://Americanhumanist.org)

## President's Message

Greetings Everyone and Happiest New Year!

With the ending of 2023 and the beginning of a new year, my thoughts are heavily focused on hope and possibility. Many of us are happy to see 2023 go. It has been a hard year and it feels like the past several have been on

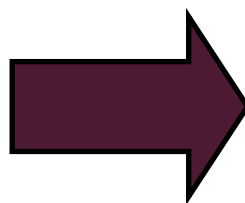


repeat for difficulty. It's interesting though, for some reason, I feel tremendous hope for this new year. It is an election year which offers opportunity for change and for voices to be heard. It offers the potential for personal changes and growth in our own lives. It offers a hard reset for some in the mindsets

they have and want to change. It creates opportunity for reflection, call to action and for reclamation of voice and personal power. Sometimes change of perspective is all that is needed to truly affect how we see the world.

*(Continued on page 2)*

***Come back to in-person meetings!***  
January 21 (third Sunday) 1 pm  
Salt Lake Library Meeting Room C  
David Parrott Great Salt Lake Institute (intro pg2)



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Friends, we are standing at a pivotal time in history. Really and truly we are. Our country is in political chaos and we are witnessing loud voices of discontent, hatefulness and full blown lies. It is understandably overwhelming. Our call to action is to really pay attention to what is truth and what are

*...the moral responsibility is to work toward ethical treatment of all living things, moral accountability and for all of us to strive toward making the world a better place. Work these principles into your resolutions...*

lies. To speak reason and truth to those we know and to push for the honesty and integrity in our families, communities, local and state governments and in our country. We need to be the helpers that Mr. Rogers admonished us to look for in times of crisis.

We need to raise our voices, even it they shake, so that those who are looking for helpers can find us.

As always, the moral responsibility is to work toward ethical treatment of all living things, moral accountability and for all of us to strive toward making the world a better place. Work these principles into your resolutions, plans, daily lives and so forth. 2024 is full of possibilities and hope. It really is. We have the choice to show up in this endeavor and the Humanists of Utah will be right in the mix of doing what we can in making the world a better place: one person, one place, one meeting, one message at a time.

My friends, I see you. I see your happinesses, your wins, your struggles, your pains, your victories and your potentials for a better life in this beautiful world of ours. Even though life is heavy and loud, there is so much beauty and goodness that surrounds us all. Sometimes, we just need to take a

quiet walk around to see the scenery.

I invite you all to fight the good fight with me and to cause "good trouble" as beloved John Lewis asked. I would love to see you in person at our monthly meetings at the downtown city library. Bring a friend, everyone is welcome. We have a great year planned ahead for you all - filled with opportunities, fun, friendships, learning, activism and most importantly, connection.

I send my love and friendship with you into this new year and hope that it finds you healthy, happy and filled with possibilities.

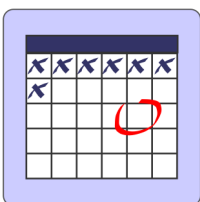
Kindest regards always, Melanie White-Curtis

## Meet our Speaker Jan 21

Dr. David Parrott, Associate Director, Great Salt Lake Institute, Westminster College, is interested in the interactions between plants and the microbes they share the soil with. He is specifically interested in those interactions which might help in better understanding how plants tolerate



drought or high soil salinity. As the Assistant Director of Great Salt Lake Institute, Dr. Parrott has a profound curiosity for the halophilic bacteria and fungi found in and around Great Salt Lake, and is also interested in the practical applications those microbes might lend themselves to. Dr. Parrott teaches a variety of biology classes including cell biology, plant biology and microbiology.



David Parrott GSLI	Jan 21	1 pm	Salt Lake Library
Darwin Day 2024	Feb 10	1-5 pm	Thanksgiving Point

We, as Humanists, Honor Thomas Paine  
Lauren Florence



In 1776 the U.S. Continental Congress declared Independence, but didn't succeed in getting independence. By December, with so many losses and winter weather, the patriots were losing heart. Thomas Paine, trying to keep the passion alive,

wrote a pamphlet titled *The American Crisis* released on Dec. 19, 1776; from which the familiar words come: "These are the times that try men's souls...The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country; but he that stands by it now, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman."

The victory of the ensuing Battle of Trenton restored the colonials' confidence in their cause.

"Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered," Paine wrote, "yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly: it is dearness only that gives every thing its value."

*"Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered,"*

# Get Involved!

## Plan a Service Project

Plan and organize a HoU service project! Do you know of an organization that needs help? Give members, family and friends an opportunity to contribute. If you are interested in planning or working on a service project, contact Wayne at [wwilson@xmission.com](mailto:wwilson@xmission.com).

## Join a Discussion Group

Start a discussion group on contemporary topics like criminal justice, un-housed people, body autonomy, local climate change, (no religion or politics!) informed by a selected podcast series, film, fiction or non-fiction book. Be part of a monthly virtual group to share, meet and hear other members. Contact Wayne at [wwilson@xmission.com](mailto:wwilson@xmission.com).

## Contribute to the Newsletter

Write an article or submit an item to be included in Utah Humanist, contact Deon at [deongines@gmail.com](mailto:deongines@gmail.com).

## Suggest a Speaker

Bring a topic to the HoU meeting. Talk to Wayne at [wwilson@xmission.com](mailto:wwilson@xmission.com).

## Red and Green

Wayne Wilson

The December 10,23 edition of 60 Minutes reports that one of our reddest states has some of the most progressive initiatives to ameliorate climate change. Governor Mark Gordon notes that Wyoming currently has some of the country's largest wind farms and they are planning, with the help of a \$500 million investment from Bill Gates, to build a next-generation nuclear reactor. They are also ambitiously working on carbon capture methods.

The project that most interested me is well underway. Flaming is one of the enduring processes that wastes tons of methane (natural gas.) Just

driving around, you can see chimney stacks that are continuously flaming. Coal fired power plants, oil refining plants, etc. all have them. If they didn't burn the natural gas, it would just go into the atmosphere where it is much more powerful greenhouse gas than CO<sub>2</sub>. Governor Gordon explained that they are building small electrical generators on top of the

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wells that produce enough electricity to power data centers; large warehouses of computers and network equipment that are then rented out to businesses. They turn

out to be very beneficial in

several ways: 1) the data centers have a reliable source of electricity, 2) "regular" data centers are a strain on conventional power grids, and 3) the excess natural gas is used instead of just being burned.

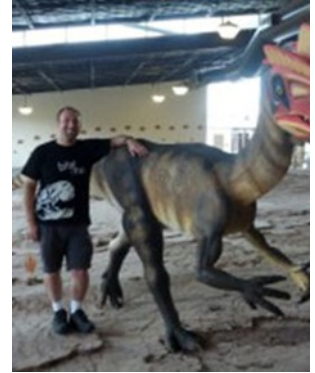
Moving away from fossil fuels is a process, not just a flipping of a switch. Careful planning and management of the move makes a lot of sense. You can [view the episode and read a transcript here](#) .

## Join us for Darwin Day! Free!

Jerry Harris PhD

Earth and Environmental Science, Utah Tech

"I prefer living in environments where there are lots of rocks sticking out of the ground, and not covered with masses of vegetation, and especially when full of fossils. St. George is perfect for me!"



Thanksgiving Point, Museum of Ancient Life

Display tables 1 pm

Dr. Harris 2pm

Door prizes 3pm

Birthday cake 4pm



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**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!**

**D**isclaimer: The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of HoU nor the AHA. Reprinting of articles is permitted for humanist groups promoting the interests of humanism if attribution is properly stated.

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# Every Person in Utah Should Have the Inalienable Right to Death

Kathi Geisler

Dec. 10 marked the 75th anniversary of the “Declaration of Human Rights,” which enshrines numerous inalienable rights to everyone. One of them is life, as stated in the Declaration of Independence. But what about the right to death? Should a mentally competent adult in pain, dying from a terminal illness, have the right to choose “medical aid in dying” to end suffering? They do in ten states and Washington, D.C. but not Utah, although a 2015 Dan Jones & Associates Survey indicated more than half of Utah residents support this compassionate option.

In January 2022, Rep. Jennifer Dailey-Provost introduced HB0074, legislation seeking to legalize medical aid in dying in Utah. HB0074 had a hearing but despite strong testimony from supporters, did not move forward.

Medical aid-in-dying bills allow “a terminally ill, mentally capable adult with a prognosis of six months or less to live the option to request, obtain and ingest medication — should they choose — to die peacefully in their sleep if suffering becomes unbearable.”

Thanks to numerous core safeguards and restrictions, as well as regulatory and procedural requirements, there has not been a single instance of abuse or coercion in the 25 years since the first such legislation – the Oregon Death with Dignity Act – was enacted.

Since the representative’s work last year, support towards such legislation is growing. She has done presentations about medical aid in dying at the First Unitarian Church and the Humanists of Utah. Additionally, volunteers from Compassion & Choices, the nation’s largest organization working to expand health care options at end of life, have spoken at local community groups to provide information and resources.



I believe every person in Utah should have the inalienable right to death as well as life and urge fellow residents to join this important movement.

*This article was originally published in Letters to the Editor, The Public Forum, The Salt Lake Tribune, on December 28, 2023. Kathi is a member of HoU*



*On 12/30 the Salt Lake Tribune reprinted an article from the New York Times which told the story of the writer’s personal experience with a family member choosing MAID. [Read the story here.](#)*

## HoU Membership Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

- \$10 Regular Annual Membership, Utah Humanist
- FREE* trial Subscription to Utah Humanist
- \$\_\_\_\_\_ additional contribution to help promote public awareness of humanism (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 and website publication, trial subscriptions, and newsletter exchange with other chapters.*

**Humanists of Utah**

**P.O. Box 1043 West Jordan, UT 84084**

***[Pay online with PayPal](#)***

## It's All Good Enough

Chaplain's Corner by Chaplain Jared Anderson

I believe that video games have helped save my life. Specifically, mobile games that I play on my phone and tablet. I like the genre called Idle RPGs, beautiful games that include the enjoyment of collecting and improving characters, without taking up too much of my time. I always am playing a few of them, checking in several times a day.

When I was at my most depressed after my second divorce, these games established a pivot point in hard days. I would do different things depending on what I felt up for: my foundation was just holding still, keeping myself safe (I spent a lot of time in bed, and actually still do). I would rest as needed. If I felt good enough, I would watch something. And interestingly, it was playing my mobile games that got me to a point where I could get work done. Play is psychologically powerful because it bridges imagination and reality. Play is productive adjacent, because games have their own rules, so we feel like we've done something meaningful while we are also relaxing. Play is especially powerful when we play with others. For me, play that felt productive got my mind ready to do work that was productive.

This is one of the poignant things about being conscious... something seemingly silly and unimportant can be a matter of life and death. One of the most important practices I have developed for my own self-care is to release judgment about what works for me, or about how I work. The secret to change is to realize that change isn't needed, not exactly. I believe we don't so much need to become different as much as we need to be the



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same, differently. Meaning that we can get curious about how we work, and then work to become the healthiest version of how we are naturally.

Healthy behavior isn't so much about what we like as it is our \*relationship\* to what we like. We can have healthy habits around pretty much anything. For example, I really enjoy whisky. I enjoy sipping it when I choose, but I never feel the need to drink it. I recently shifted from always having whisky on hand to only buying it for special occasions. I'm currently readying myself to pivot to only buying alcohol one or two times a year.

It is powerful to add accountability and intention to compassionate curious acceptance.

We can get clear about what we value and what we enjoy, and then ask ourselves what we want to do about what we value and what we enjoy. So in my case, I enjoy whisky, and choose mostly not to drink it. I enjoy video games, but choose not to play video games that take hours to play.

I'd like to get back to saving lives, something that is at the forefront of my mind. My greatest passion is the science of well-being and excellence, especially at the extremes of human experience. That's why I'm so grateful to be able to serve as a Chaplain and Risk Reduction Coordinator in the Army. As I've mentioned before, one of the things I most appreciate about serving at the extremes of human experience is how clear everything gets. And here's the clarity that I want to share in this column: When it comes to saving a life, everything is good enough.

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Let's say you are helping someone work through suicidal ideation, or are struggling yourself. Are you going to judge what stops you? Video game? Good enough. Your favorite snack? Good enough? Stupid television show? Good enough. Tripping over the living room couch? Good enough. When existing feels the most painful to me, I draw on everything I have access to. When I was at my most depressed, I remember seeing previews for a movie or a show and thinking, "That looks interesting. I'd like to be around for that." Good enough.

One of the most empowering things I've learned about suicide prevention is that we only need to actively practice that prevention for moments at a time. As the Harvard Public Health site summarizes: "Chronic, underlying risk factors such as substance abuse and depression are also often present, but the acute period of heightened risk for suicidal behavior is often only minutes or hours long." (<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/means-matter/means-matter/duration/>) This is why my depression rituals worked. I established practices that got me through

dangerous thoughts. This is more challenging, but I have also trained myself to hold emotional pain gently, without resistance. I can remain calm while in a high degree of distress, because I know I can handle it. I know I'll be ok.



And again, what is true at the extremes is true in the small moments. What we enjoy is good enough. Yes, it is important to be on a trajectory of sustainable well-being, but we can be gentle about what gets us through hard moments. We can be

gentle about what we enjoy. I personally am very good at wonder and delight. I practice gratitude and celebration, and hope we all can get better at it.

*My highest value is efficient approaches to well-being, which when applied to myself means being put to my best use, which includes training myself so that I can be put to even better use.*

Gratitude and self-celebration doesn't cost anything, and dramatically increases the enjoyment of life.

Embracing the whole spectrum of care establishes sustainable and life-giving patterns. With clarity and connection, self-care

becomes even more powerful. My highest value is efficient approaches to well-being, which when applied to myself means being put to my best use, which includes training myself so that I can be put to even better use. So challenge is where I am happiest. At the same time, clarity is important to guide that challenge, and comfort is important to make that challenge sustainable. Even my comfort is guided by efficiency however. My favorite comforts involved presence and mindfulness and gratitude, deeply settling into my day to day life, rather than feeling like I need to escape it. In brief, I value alignment (I have Integritas tattooed to my forearm), and so feel best when my words line up with my actions line up with my values, and when I feel like principles line up with processes. All this adds up to my love for systems theory, seeing the big picture and understanding how the pieces go together, and how they could be tweaked to go better. That's why I think of myself first and foremost as a wellness engineer, even more than a Chaplain. And lest you feel this is all too aspirational, I just confessed to a friend that "I'm currently in a bourbon sugar cereal candy bar LitRPG nap space". And it's good enough.

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That's the delightful complex thing about being human... we humans are all complex and nuanced. One of my favorite assessment questions is what do you think about when you don't need to think about anything? I personally am obsessed about well-being and what it would take to make civilization sustainable. But I also love the simplicity of a good cup of coffee in the morning (sipping it now as I finish this article).

I share about myself to help you get curious about yourself. What is it like to be you? What do you want to do about it? What do you need? I find it helpful to organize compassionate engagement into three categories: comfort, clarity, and challenge. We humans need all three. We need to feel better. We like to understand better. And we all crave living better, at least in our better moments. This framing invites understanding and action: What comforts you? What are you curious about? Most rewardingly, how do *\*you\** work? Why do you do what you do?

What works for you? What challenges do you enjoy? What do you feel naturally motivated to spend your time doing? How does that natural motivation connect to your larger goals? What is the path to caring about what is good for you? For example, I've always wanted to do martial arts, and I've established a jiu jitsu practice for most of the past two years. I love jiu jitsu, which then motivates and pushes me to exercise in other ways that will help me practice what I naturally love in sustainable ways. I'm also kind of obsessed with military training, which gives me other goals and targets.

Another thing that I've learned is that rest is an act of trust, trust in ourselves and trust in

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the process of life and recovery. In fact, I submitted this article later than I should have, in part because I was feeling too sad to write it. I have been deeply enjoying a fantasy series called He Who Fights With Monsters (I get my money's worth from Kindle Unlimited). Get curious about yourself. Be gentle as you are learning. Then apply the discipline and follow through on what you feel is worth investing in. I find it helpful to check in at the level of a week. We all have better and harder days, but it is our week in and week out behaviors and patterns that will both accomplish our goals and establish sustainable patterns of wellness.

I don't play epic role playing games anymore, though my fifteen year old son does, and one of his favorite things to do together is talk about the games he is playing. He recently convinced me to put Marvel Strike Force back on my phone, and it has been a delight to talk about that game together.

It's too easy to judge hobbies as a waste of time or comforts as unhealthy. But as long as our enjoyments and habits are ethical and sustainable, it's all ok, and it's all good enough. The purpose of life is to live it, and the way to live well is to show up, for our relationships, our goals, and our delights. I'm so grateful to still be around to enjoy it all, and glad you are too.

