

Vol. XXXV No.10 October 2021 A Publication of the Capital District Humanist Society Connecting the Secular Humanist Community of Upstate New York, Western Massachusetts, and Southern Vermont

# Sunday, October 10th at 1 pm Passing the Global Espionage Torch:

### How Britain Helped the US Expand its Eavesdropping Capabilities

In March 1945, British code breakers left England for an around the world communication tour. The group traveled through the hot spots of the British Empire before ending up in Washington, DC. A colorful map was drawn depicting this journey. Sixty-eight years later, Edward Snowden leaked a National Security Agency (NSA) map depicting signals intelligence (SIGINT) and fiber optic cables around the world documenting the shift in hegemonic power. This lecture shows how Britain passed the global espionage torch in communication intelligence to the United States while cooperating through the UKUSA "Five Eyes" alliance that is comprised of the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Kristie Macrakis is a historian and author. She holds a Ph.D in the History of Science from Harvard University and is a professor in the School of History, Technology and Society at Georgia Tech in Atlanta, where she teaches courses on history of science, Nazi Germany and the history of espionage.



**Kristie Macrakis** 

Her numerous books include <u>Surviving the Swastika: Scientific Research in Nazi Germany</u> (Oxford, 1993), <u>Science Under Socialism: East Germany in Comparative Perspective</u> (Harvard, 1997), <u>East German Foreign Intelligence</u> (Routledge, 2010) and <u>Seduced by Secrets: Inside the Stasi's Spy-Tech World</u> (Cambridge, 2008) (Translated into German, Czech and Slovak and a History Book Club Selection). She has written for, or her work has been reviewed in the Washington Times, Newsweek, Nature, Science, American Scientist, the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung *and* Focus as well as many newspapers. She is also the author of the acclaimed popular magazine article: "The Case of Agent Gorbachev." American Scientist, 2000.

Current paid CDHS members will automatically receive an invite to the meeting via e-mail. Anyone who is not a current paid member of CDHS can request an invitation by sending an e-mail request to: webmaster@humanistsociety.org.

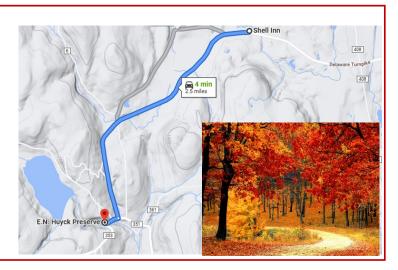
# Our October Social: lunch, leafpeeping and hiking

A lunch event is planned for Saturday, October 23rd at the Reinhart's Shell Inn, located in scenic Rensselaerville. This could possibly be a threefold activity: lunch, leaf-peeping on your drive to and from the restaurant and, if Roland is interested in leading, a short hike on a nearby trail after lunch.

1.Lunch at 12:30, ordering off the menu.

2. Hike at 2:00 at the Huyck Preserve. (weather permitting)

Please contact Dee Portzer if you will be joining us.



### **Capital District Humanist Society, Inc.**

Established 1986

Find us on Facebook at http://www.facebook.com/ CapitalDistrictHumanistSociety



CDHS is affiliated with: The American Humanist Association (AHA) Center for Inquiry (CSI) Humanists International (HI) The Secular Coalition for America (SCA)

### Recap of our September Speaker's Talk

Laurie McNeil is a professor of Physics at the University of North Carolina. Her talk was titled, "Good Vibrations — the Interplay of Music and Physics." -an explanation of how music works in terms of the physics.

She started with the question, "what is musical sound?" For the musician, it's about things like notes and pitch. For the physicist, it's sound waves and frequency. Whereas musicians speak of timbre, physicists would put it in terms of frequency spectrum. A musical sound consists of multiple frequencies, the amounts of each create what we call timbre. Different instruments playing the same notes are differentiated by their timbre.

McNeil discussed in turn various categories of musical





instruments,

delving into the physical aspects of how they produce sounds. Stringed instruments do so by modulating speed as determined by the tension and mass density in the strings, producing different sound wave patterns. A shorter string produces a higher note; also achievable by tightening the string (increasing tension) or using a thinner string (decreasing mass density).

She noted that as a wave propagates across a string, portions of it move up and down while others (nodes) are stationary. The frequen-

cies are in whole number ratios; required for the ear and brain to perceive a distinct pitch. Each standing wave has its own frequency, the ratios between them corresponding to musical intervals, or octaves. For example, a 3:2 ratio is a perfect fifth; a 4:3, a perfect fourth.

For wind instruments, it's a matter of pressure waves in an air column. Note that a flute is open at both ends, a clarinet closed at one end, thus creating different resonances in their air columns. The shape of the tube matters too. A brass instrument has one closed end and a conical bore. Its valves are used to change the tube length.

In the case of percussion, it's vibrations of rods and membranes. McNeil pointed out that an ordinary drum doesn't produce pitch, but a kettle drum does, because the air in the basin changes the resonant frequencies to make them closer to whole number ratios. Understanding all of this is, of course, not necessary for the enjoyment of music.

The Q&A included some discussion of how differences among instruments in the same class can produce different sound quality, the classic case in point being the Stradivarius violin. But Fred Levine observed that the quality of the player can matter more than the quality of the instrument, and a skilled player can make even a lousy instrument sound good.

In concluding her talk, McNeil quoted Duke Ellington that "if it sounds good, it IS good." A recording of the presentation can be found at: https://youtu.be/SxIoPz3N5vY

Recap by Frank Robinson

### Our November Social—November 21st at 2:30

## The Thanksgiving Play

We'll be gathering to see this play at the Sand Lake Center for the Arts.

Written by a Native American, the play is cool and provocative and edgy.

Good intentions collide with absurd assumptions as a troupe of terminally "woke" teaching artists scramble to create a pageant that somehow manages to celebrate both Turkey Day and Native American Heritage Month.

Arts Center is located at 2880 NY 43, Averill Park

Tickets are \$18 for general admission seating. Go to slcacpt.square.site to purchase tickets. If you have questions, please contact Dee Portzer. We'd love to have you join us an



You are invited to join a Zoom session hosted by the Edinburgh Humanist Society on October 4th (2:30—4:30 EDT)

### 'Climate Change: COP 26 – last chance saloon or step on the way?



COP26 is the 26th meeting of United Nations world governments ('conference of the parties') to discuss, and deliver, action to tackle the climate emergency. Nations will come together to discuss commitments made at and following the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Tom Ballantine, the Chair of Stop Climate Chaos Scotland will explain the background to this important meeting which is to be held in Glasgow in November. He will set out the views of SCCS on what we should be looking for from the Conference to achieve the necessary emission reductions and justice in how we get there.

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland is a diverse coalition of over 60 civil society organizations campaigning together on climate change. The Humanist Society of Scotland is a member of the coalition."

You can join this event by joining the Zoom session indicated below.

Meeting ID: 946 1646 9290 **Passcode: 637925** 

### Robert Jeffress: There's "No credible religious argument" against Covid vaccines

Pastor Robert Jeffress of the First Baptist Dallas in Texas has spent much of the past few years defending all things Trump during a slew of appearances on Fox News. He blames Satan for things that make his side look bad and just makes things up when he's got nothing else to say, but when it comes to vaccines, he's been one of the more reasonable voices among unreasonable white evangelicals. His congregation is a Southern Baptist mega-church. He said that he and his staff are neither offering nor encouraging members to seek religious exemptions from the vaccine mandates. "There is no credible religious argument against the vaccines", he said via email. "Christians who are troubled by the use of fetal cell line for testing of the vaccines would also have to abstain from the use of Tylenol, Pepto-Bismol, Ibuprofen, and other products that use the same cell line if they are sincere in their objections.



Jeffress is saying what the Conway Regional Health System in Arkansas said earlier this week if people are citing their faith to avoid the vaccine because they believe it's an endorsement of abor-

tion, as distant as it may be, then they should stand by their convictions and avoid all drugs/medicines developed through the same cell lines.

Jeffress is like Pat Robertson that way. Every now and then, he says something sensible and it's shocking. Neither man deserves special praise for saying one right thing when they have dedicated their careers to spreading other forms of misinformation, but in the case of Jeffress this week, good for him. He got this one right. Hemant Mehta in patheos.com (09/20/21)

### Indiana county rejects \$3 million health grant after COVID-19 conspiracy theories sway council vote

If ever there was a clear-cut demonstration of why the response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been such a catastrophic failure in so many U.S. states, the county council of Elkhart County, Indiana, just provided a good example. This week the northern Indiana county voted to reject \$3 million in federal funds requested by its own health department after local residents deluged the council with conspiracy theories about COVID-19 and the federal government's supposedly sinister role in combating and containing it. As reported by the Associated Press: The Elkhart County health department had sought the grant to hire staff members to provide education on chronic diseases to Black, Hispanic and Amish residents over a three-year period. The county council's 6-0 vote on Sept. 11 against accepting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention grant, however, had some health leaders saying the council was swayed by what they view as false information and conspiracy theories.

The money sought by the health department was intended to pay for the hiring of six badly needed new health care staff and was solicited in direct response to a health needs survey of the county's two major hospitals, which had found the county's Black, Hispanic, and Amish residents weren't getting enough information relating to preventable health conditions such as diabetes, cancer, and heart disease. However, the health of their community was the last thing on the minds of several residents who showed up at the county's council meeting on Sept. 11. Instead, the focus of these residents was on conspiracy theories, expressed in paranoiac rants about the federal government's role in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. The catalyst for this bizarre performance was apparently a single line in the federal grant application that stipulated local health officials agree to work with the CDC to track the number of local COVID-19 infections and assist their efforts to contact trace and quarantine infected residents.

www.dailykos.com/stories/2021/9/19

# Responding to "DNA is a program, and programs demand a programmer"

You may find this article by Bob Seidensticker from *patheos.com* (09/03/21) rather interesting.

Here is the link: https://www.patheos.com/blogs/crossexamined/2021/09/responding-to-dna-is-a-program-and-programs-demand-a-programmer/



# Texas abortion opponents are upset someone is taking advantage of their bounty hunter law

A Texas doctor is being sued under the state's new abortion vigilante law, and the anti-abortion groups that pushed the law are not happy about it. "On the morning of Sept. 6, I provided an abortion to a woman who, though still in her first trimester, was beyond the state's new limit," Dr. Alan Braid wrote in *The Washington Post* on Saturday: "I acted because I had a duty of care to this patient, as I do for all patients, and because she has a fundamental right to receive this care." "I fully understood that there could be legal consequences," Braid continued, "but I wanted to make sure that Texas didn't get away with its bid to prevent this blatantly unconstitutional law from being tested."



Men in Arkansas and Illinois quickly filed lawsuits against Braid under the new Texas law, which allows anyone, anywhere, to go after anyone who "aids or abets" a woman getting an abortion. Felipe Gomez of Illinois filed his suit as a "Pro-Choice plaintiff" seeking to get the law declared unconstitutional. Oscar Stilley, who describes himself in his complaint as a "disbarred and disgraced former Arkansas lawyer" on home confinement for "utterly fraudulent federal charges," wants that \$10,000.

"If this is a free-for-all, and it's \$10,000, I want my \$10,000," he told *The New York Times*. "And yes, I do aim to collect."

This is just a tiny fraction of the circus Texas Republicans invited with this law, but they're somehow surprised and unhappy about it.

According to the legislative director of Texas Right to Life, which lobbied for the bounty hunter law, neither of these lawsuits is a valid attempt to save innocent human lives. "Both cases are self-serving legal stunts, abusing the course of action created in the Texas Heartbeat Act for their own purposes."

Laura Clawson in dailykos.com/stories/2021/9/21/

# Preacher: Let's endorse candidates since the Johnson Amendment days are "Over!"

It can be easy to forget that Nebraska preacher and false prophet Hank Kunneman of One Voice Ministries, a Christian nationalist who has used his platform to promote conservative politicians, has a wife, Brenda, who was equally awful.

Over the weekend, while hosting a conference full of conspiracists like Kate Kerr and Lance Wallnau, Brenda Kunneman told the crowd of pastors that they should ignore the (still legal) Johnson Amendment and have no fear of endorsing candidates from the pul-



pit. In theory, that should result in their churches losing their tax exempt status, but Kunneman knows the IRS isn't enforcing its own rule.

"The Johnson Amendment came along to say, 'Well, if they want to keep tax exempt status, then they're going to have to keep their voice out of the political sphere. They're not going to be allowed to put any of their money to endorse anything political. They can say who they personally {as} as pastors endorse.' By the way, they have threatened that Johnson Amendment so poorly, it's so much, so bad, that it has pushed pastors into a corner that even the Johnson Amendment didn't even call for because people are terrified that they'll get an audit by the IRS for daring to touch anything in the pulpit. Now, I'm just going to say, 'Those days are over. It's over.'" She added that no one should worry because the nation was "founded as a Christian nationalist form of government."

That's a lie. Obviously. Any historian who didn't get their degree from a Christian diploma mill could tell you the founders religion and politics separate for good reason and nothing Kunneman is saying would be recognizable to them.



### Your favorite scamvangelists are bragging about their private jets again

Listening to televangelists brag about their private jets never gets old. It's an obvious sign of their personal wealth as well as their hypocrisy: They always want *you* to give for the greater good, but they don't want their followers to notice how much they're enriching themselves. If everyone calls them out on it, they simply insist God wants them to be wealthy and that private jets are necessary for their ministries, no matter how flimsy that argument may be.

The two worst culprits of this are Jesse Duplantis and Kenneth Copeland. Copeland, of course, famously said in 2015 that he needed a private jet to avoid flying in a "long tube with a bunch of demons." (He's avoided those demons, apparently, on more than 143 flights to a ski resort in Colorado since the year 2000.) He also asked his followers to donate \$2.5 million for upgrades and even more for storage space.



Duplantis was more recently called out for taking a \$14,000 one-hour private flight that would've cost normal people \$200, then saying he needed the plane to spread the gospel, even though he used that same plane for 16 personal vacations to Hawaii.

Both of these men recently appeared on Copeland's recent "Victorython" (to raise money for his ministry) where the subject of their planes came up again. Duplantis celebrated having his personal plane and being a multi-millionaire while claiming that an increase in donations would speed up the return of Jesus.

".... I honestly believe this: That the reason why Jesus hasn't come is because people are not giving the way God told them to give. You see what I'm saying? I mean, when you understand, you can speed up the time.

Copeland followed up with his own justification for needing private planes: there is no that there is no vaccine mandate for those..... You don't get into this situation; "we're not gonna let you fly unless you get vaccinated". Well, to me, that's the Mark of the Beast.

In March 2020, Copeland insisted that COVID was finished. He even spit on it and said the virus was destroyed. And then just last month he said it was destroyed again. Getting the shot then should be irrelevant to someone like him. But he's treating it like some unreasonable demand that's why refusing to acknowledge the existence of COVID and refusing to protect himself and others against the spread of the disease of the virus is now a point of personal pride for him. He can't get in a plane because he would have to be vaccinated, which would mean admitting that he got protection against the disease that he claimed to have eradicated more than a year ago.

Hemant Mehta in <a href="https://friendlyatheist.patheos.com">https://friendlyatheist.patheos.com</a>

Eleven CDHS members and guests met at The Crossings of Colonie on Tuesday, September21st. We brought our own lunches and enjoyed the sunny, blustery day with great conversation in congenial company.

After lunch some folks took a refreshing walk on

After lunch some folks took a refreshing walk on the park's paths. If you'd like to be added to the **Lunch Bunch** list send an email to Rosina Ansaldo. Her contact

information is in the Directory of Members. If, where, or when we meet next month will depend on what COVID-19 is up to.





# Jim Bakker and Mike Lindell sold Bible pillows for kids during a fake "telethon"

Two of the most famous Christian grifters of our time united this week for a "telethon" to defeat "cancel culture." During an episode of his show earlier this week, televangelist Jim Bakker invited MyPillow MAGA cultist Mike Lindell to speak about their planned event to raise money for....well, themselves. And what are they selling? Bible pillows for kids. They spend all day, every day, trying to get people to give them money.

Hemant Mehta in patheos, com (09/19/2021)

### Couple kicked out of Texas restaurant for wearing masks to protect at-risk son

A Texas woman said she and her husband were told to leave a restaurant because they were wearing masks. The couple has a four-month son who has cystic fibrosis. She and her husband were out with friends a couple of weeks ago and were wearing masks as a preventative measure while waiting for food to arrive. Their son was not with them. While entering the restaurant, she and her husband were asked to remove their masks. She believed it was so the staff could check their IDs. "So we did take the masks down for that and we put them back up and went to our table. A few minutes later, after ordering some drinks and an appetizer, a staff member approach their table.

Our waitress came down and sat next to me and said "you know, our manager sent me over here because I am nicer than he is about the situation, but he feels that this is a very political. He does not like the mask. You're going to need to remove the mask if you want to be in here." We explained to our waitress about our son and she really didn't give us any option. She said, "Well if this is something that's going to be an issue, I'm just going to close your check [and you must leave].

today.com (09/21/21)

### \*\*\*

#### **BUT NOT ONLY IN AMERICA**

# Violence emanating from far-right anti-vaccine/anti-mask contingent keeps ratcheting higher

In Michigan, an anti-vaccination fanatic tries to run a county health official off the road at 70 mph. In Germany, a service station attendant enforcing a mask mandate is shot and killed by a customer who objects to the rule. In Japan, an angry anti-vaccination activist sends a faxed letter to authorities threatening a Yakuza "bloodbath" at a coronavirus vaccination center. In Australia, protest crowds featuring an amalgam of neo-Nazis, vaccine conspiracists, and construction workers attacked the headquarters of the local maritime union in Melbourne over a recently announced vaccine mandate.

The threat of violence has lurked just under the surface of most right-wing anti-vaccination/anti-masking protests that have erupted over the past year. But as pressure continues to mount for unvaccinated people to get their COVID-19 vaccine shots, the fanatical ideologues among them are increasingly ratcheting up violence as their form of resistance. And it has become a global problem. The threats have been an ongoing feature of the misinformation-fueled right-wing resistance to pandemic health measures since protests first began breaking out in 2020. The result has been a steady exodus of health care workers from the profession that was observed nearly a year ago.

"Some of our public health officials have been physically threatened, politically scapegoated," said Lori Freeman of the National Association of County and City Health Officials. "Their roles have been diminished, their authorities have been in some cases taken away." At least 248 public health leaders resigned, retired or were fired between April 1, 2020, and March 31, 2021, according to an ongoing investigation by the Associated Press and Kaiser Health News.

Among the threatened officials was Adam London, director of Michigan's Kent County Health Department, who detailed the nature of the threats in a letter to county commissioners. He told them that a woman driving more than 70 mph tried twice to run him off the road. Another person called him an expletive and yelled, "I hope someone abuses your kids and forces you to watch!" London said he had been labeled a traitor to the nation and to liberty, and accused by anti-vaccination fanatics of being a "deep state agent of liberal-progressive-socialist powers that are working to undo the America they love."

The full article can be accessed at: www.dailykos.com/stories/2021/9/22/2053846/-Violence-emanating-from-far-right -anti-vaccine-anti-mask-contingent-keeps-ratcheting-higher



Some of our CDHS members are also members of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster. Please duplicate this letter, or access it from the CFSM website, and share it if a situation warrants it.



### Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster

September 14, 2021

#### RE: RELIGIOUS LIBERTY EXEMPTION CONCERNING COVID VACCINATIONS

Dear Sir or Madam

I am writing as a representative of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster, in support of a member of our congregation,  ${\bf VLAG~BALL}$ 

Please be advised that we have strict guidelines concerning what can enter our bodies. It is a deeply held belief and core tenet of our religion to avoid harmful substances.

### OUR MEMBERS MUST NOT BE EXPOSED TO, OR WORK IN THE PROXIMITY OF, UNVACCINATED INDIVIDUALS.

While some may choose not to be vaccinated, by going out in public, these people are knowingly taking the risk of infecting others with harmful virus particles.

Please take all reasonable measures to help our members avoid contact with these unvaccinated individuals. Perhaps the unvaxxed could be placed in a special area to contain their emissions.

Thank you in advance for respecting religious liberty. Any questions can be directed to me.

Sincerely,

Bobo Hors

Bobby Henderson Representative

mail@spaghettimonster.org www.spaghettimonster.org

### Welcome new members Jennifer Tiernan and Al Bellenchia



#### **CDHS Executive Council**

**Executive Director** Don Porterfield Secretary Rosina Ansaldo Treasurer Roland Tozer Programs, Publicity Fred Levine **Publications** Frank H Wind Social Activities Dee Portzer Membership, Telephone Judith McCann Meetup Coordinator Fred Levine Caring Network Rosina Ansaldo Compliance **Kevin Smith** Member at Large Sherry Levine Member at Large Sandy Sussman

#### **Appointed Positions**

Hospitality Mira Peck
Room Arrangements Frank Robinson



MICHAEL J.

The Tyranny

of Merit

What's Boson of

#### BOOK CLUB

The Book
Club is discussing <u>The</u>
<u>Blind Storyteller</u> by
Iris Berent. This will
be followed by <u>The</u>
<u>Tyranny of Merit</u> by
Michael Sandel.

When the weather is agreeable,

we meet at Ridgefield Park (at Park & Ridgefield Streets). When it's drippy, we meet online.

Interested? Put down your book and contact Frank Robinson.



apital District Humanist Society, Inc. PO Box 11209, Loudonville NY 12211-0209 (518) 533-2666 E-mail us at webmaster (at) humanistsociety (dot) org

Visit us on the web at humanistsociety.net

The Capital District Humanist Society (CDHS) is an independent, non-profit (and non-prophet), non-partisan and strictly non-religious educational and social organization for those who share humanist values: commitment to education, rational and free inquiry, democracy, social concerns and fellowship. CDHS is affiliated with the four major humanist organizations - the American Humanist Association (AHA), the Council for Secular Humanism (CSH), the Secular Coalition for America (SCA) and the Humanists International (HI).

There are six types of CDHS member support: Individual, \$50/yr; Family, \$80/yr; Student \$25/yr; Sustaining, \$100/yr; Patron, \$150/yr; Lifetime Member, one contribution of \$1000 or more.

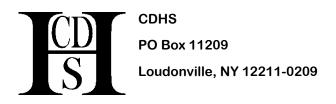
**Members** receive our publication, *The Humanist Monthly,* and vote by mail each September on the make-up of the governing Executive Council. Members are eligible for election to the Executive Council and may also serve as appointed officials. Members are welcome to attend Executive Council meetings.

The IRS recognizes CDHS as a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Therefore, all donations, both cash and materials with established "fair market value", qualify as charitable contributions for income tax purposes.

**Donations** are gratefully accepted to help speed our growth. CDHS is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization under the IRS Code. Financial disclosure information and our annual report are available upon request.

If you know of someone who may be interested in CDHS, please pass this newsletter along or give us the name; we will send a sample copy or two with no obligation.

We value your input. In the best humanist tradition, CDHS has no rigid picture of itself. We ask you to join us, not follow us. What activities and services would you like CDHS to provide its members? Send us your suggestions, questions, and comments.



FIRST CLASS
Address service requested

### CDHS ++ PO Box 11209, Loudonville, NY 12211-0209 ++ (518) 533-2666 https://www.humanistsociety.net Find us on Facebook at http://www.facebook.com/CapitalDistrictHumanistSociety MEMBER SUPPORT FORM Name(s)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 'Phone\_\_\_\_\_\_ Address\_\_\_\_\_ City ++ State ++ Zip\_\_\_\_\_\_ Email\_\_\_\_\_ Fax\_\_\_\_\_ How did you hear about the Humanist Society? All this information will be included in our Directory, which is distributed to members only, unless you request otherwise by checking and signing here [ ] I do not want to be listed in the CDHS Member Directory \_\_\_\_\_ **Levels of Member Support** Annual Payment Date\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_ \$ 50 [ ] Individual Membership [ ] Family Membership \$ 80 [ ] Sustaining Member \$100 [ ] Patron \$150 [ ] Life Member one-time contribution of \$1000 or more [ ] Additional tax-deductible donation Please Make checks payable to CDHS [ } Please send me additional information 8