

Rationalists of East Tennessee Newsletter
December 2011 – edited by Ralph Isler

Happy Holidays

Announcements:

1. The RET winter solstice party for members and guests will be held on Saturday, December 17th. Time and place have been announced in a separate mailing.
2. Requests for payment of 2012 dues have been sent out. These provide rent for the meeting room at Pellissippi State Community College, expenses for our yearly public meeting, the Freethought Forum Television program, etc. At \$35 for a regular membership and \$15 for students, the dues are a bargain. The fellowship within the group is, of course, priceless. Send dues to PO Box 51634, Knoxville TN 37950, give them to treasurer Eliot Specht at a meeting, or submit them by Pay Pal (see the RET web site, www.rationalists.org, for details)..
3. The board is starting to consider speakers for our public meeting next year and would welcome suggestions from the membership.

Quote of the month: “ Creationism is the theory that Rome WAS built in a day,” – Margaret Mead

RET December 2011 calendar:

Freethought Forum

Every Tuesday 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm

Community Channel of Knoxville – Comcast Channel 12

The free streaming live broadcast can be seen at <http://ctvknox.org/> for those who do not live in Knoxville. These discussions feature “Faithless” Forest Erickson, Larry Rhodes, and Joe Barnhart. They can usually be found on YOUTUBE within a day or so.

Sunday, December 4 – Open Roundtable Discussion

Topic: W(h)ither Democracy?

The gains of liberalism in America over the last century or so are being whittled away by the current electorate’s embrace of conservatism. Public union bargaining rights are being dismantled in several states, legislation aimed at disenfranchising liberal leaning voters has been passed in Tennessee, and laws that that would limit women’s access to birth control methods are under consideration in many places. One Republican presidential candidate would eliminate child labor laws and social security. Congress cowers before a 1% minority of wealthy oligarchs who control 44% of the country’s wealth. Fascism arises only in failed democracies. Is Democracy on the verge of withering away in America? Bring your ideas and comments to a freewheeling open roundtable discussion.

Time and location: 10:30 am – 12:30 pm, Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Bldg., Cafeteria Annex

Sunday, December 11 - Skeptic Book Club

Time and location: 4:00 to 6:00pm, Barnes and Noble Booksellers, 8029 Kingston Pike.

Book: "The Faith Instinct. How religion evolved and why it endures" by Nicholas Wade.

For the last 50,000 years, and probably much longer, people have practiced religion. Yet little attention has been given to the question of whether this universal human behavior might have been implanted in human nature. In this original and thought-provoking work, Nicholas Wade traces how religion grew to be so essential to early societies in their struggle for survival, how an instinct for faith became hardwired into human nature, and how it provided an impetus for law and government. *The Faith Instinct* offers an objective and nonpolemical exploration of humanity's quest for spiritual transcendence.

Sunday, December 18 - presentation

Topic: Paul the Apostle

Speaker: RET member Joe Barnhart will discuss "How Might Karl Popper the Rationalist or John Dewey the Pragmatist Interpret the Visions of Paul?"

Time and location: 10:30 am – 12:30 pm, Pellissippi State Community College, Goins Bldg., Cafeteria Annex

Sunday, December 25 – Reflections Group

There will be no Reflections Group Meeting owing to the holiday.
