Howdy! Well there’s lots of good news in the Atheist movement. For starters, a local level Atheist activist in Dubuque, Iowa has been subscribing to our online TV show archives, and then airing them on public access TV in Dubuque! So our public access TV show, the Atheist Experience is now on the air in two major cities, on two different sides of our nation. Score!

2006 was a really good year for the ACA. One good thing that we’d like to brag about here at the ACN editing home-office is the fact that 2006 was the first year in ACA history in which an official ACA newsletter was published for each month in that year. This was one important goal for your newsletter team when we re-started the ACA newsletter. That it would be put out more often, more consistently, and with higher quality than any other local Atheist group newsletter around. It is our pleasure to do this work.

This just in: The founder of the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers, Kathleen Johnson is now serving in Iraq, in combat zones. Thanks to the No God Blog at: www.atheists.org/nogodblog.com, Atheist Community News became aware of this recent message from Kathleen:

“I’ve learned real quick that no place here is truly "safe". We’ve been hearing constant gun fire and explosions since we got here, but just a few days ago, our base was on the receiving end of a rocket attack that impacted in an area that myself and coworkers had occupied just a few minutes before. We were darn lucky, too - that particular attack hurt a bunch of people and killed at least one. And then a couple of nights ago, myself and another soldier got pinned down outside our building when we received machine gun fire from outside the fence (my building is close to the wall with the city of Baghdad on the other side), and I can tell you that having bullets whizzing over your head for several minutes definitely gets your attention (it was night, too, so we could actually see tracer rounds). Unfortunately, we didn't get to return fire because it wouldn't have done any good - all we had on us were our pistols, and the fire was coming from an area that was simply too far to hit with a pistol. But, I'm happy to report that I never once felt any compulsion to call on any mystical man-in-the-sky for assistance!”

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This is Robert Swango, an Atheist activist in Tucson, Arizona, and the chief organizer of the Tucson Atheists: atheists.meetup.com/59

In this photo, he’s holding the sign he recently held at several locations in Tucson, including in front of a church. His goal is to educate the public, and more importantly, young people. The message is clear and simple, and apparently a bit firm for some. In this issue we feature a news report about Robert, and his amazing trip through the legal system where he lives, and how he has emerged victorious. We also discuss other local-level individual Atheist activists who are making news, and attracting media attention to the Atheist cause and movement, using inexpensive methods. Thanks to Robert for this awesome photo.

Congratulations to ACA Board Member Don Rhoades! Don has given five gallons of blood to The Blood and Tissue Center of Central Texas. We have a blood drive every month and a half, and we encourage everyone who can donate, to follow Don’s example, and give give give! That helps humanity in a way that money can’t buy. People using science to help people.

Starting in February 2007, the ACA will be moving its regular Sunday meetings to the small upstairs room of Ventana del Soul community center. The location is 1834 East Oltorf St., just Southeast of downtown off I-35. See their map for directions. The ACA Lecture Series will continue to be on the first Sunday of every month at the Austin History Center throughout 2007.

We are trying Ventana del Soul on a trial basis for three months. We hope to explore having a different style of meeting than we are able to have in a restaurant setting. There will still be time to talk informally with other ACA members, we will devote some of our time to a more structured meeting, small presentations, and discussions about ACA events and issues. People will still be able to get food at Ventana del Soul as they have a cafe downstairs. In fact, we encourage people to eat there. When you buy food from their cafe, you can notify the cashier that you are attending a meeting of the ACA at the event. Part of your food purchase will then go to offset the expense of the room rental. This will help keep the ACA’s expense to a minimum. We invite feedback from ACA members on this change. We hope that the change will help members feel more involved with the group.

The ACA would like to thank a certain ACA member who shall remain nameless here, for his recent, generous donation to our building fund. This donation, along with previous donations from him and other ACA members moves us closer to making “our place” a reality. If you’d like to help in that effort as well, please contact our ACA Treasurer, at treasurer@atheist-community.org.
Dear Editor, November 21, 2006

I heard from a reliable media source that Atheism is in the news more than ever before. I thought about that for a moment. I have been here in Rockport for nineteen years and I have not read one word in the local papers or heard anything on the radio or on TV. And that includes national news. Well, there was that time that Tom Brokaw said there were "no atheists in foxholes". I understand that some secular groups were asking for an apology. They never got one. There are many, many thousands of military atheists. The highly respected and decorated soldier who gave up his football career to fight in Afghanistan was an atheist. He was killed in the line of duty. His name was Pat Tillman. These days a soldier can have ATHEIST put on his or her name tag. A while back when my late husband was in the Air Force, he was only offered, "No Religious Preference" put on his name tag. Times have changed.

I guess I did watch some news show last year about the greeting, “Merry Christmas” and how it was not favorable to the phrase Happy Holidays. According to some sources, the old greeting excluded Jews, Buddhists and the Muslims and the even the Wiccan, Pagans and the Atheists who celebrate Solstice. That made sense to me. In all the years I have lived here, it’s like Atheism doesn’t exist. I was talking in passing a few years ago with a family counselor. During our talk I realized that she was unable to say the word. She used a euphemism like "not religious". She could not bring herself to use the A word.

I heard an elderly woman one day as she left a store. She was yelling fairly loudly and was saying, “The Atheists want to take over the world.” I could only surmise that she couldn’t find a Christmas card that said “Merry Christmas”. I really wasn’t sure why she got upset. I have met many people in my neighborhood and in town, at the stores and places I volunteer. There does seem to be some fear. I believe that fear comes from ignorance.

I read that Atheists are feared and hated and misunderstood more than minorities and homosexuals in this country. On TV sitcoms there might be a black star married to a Vietnamese woman with a Puerto Rican landlord who are always mixing it up with a gay neighbor. But there is never an Atheist stand-up comic that lives just down the hall. It has taken me years for some people to accept me and realize that I am a good person. I volunteer in my community. I vote in every election. I have strong moral values. I practice the teachings of Christ by treating all others as I want them to treat me. But that is the extent of my practice.

Atheists and Atheism has taken place in this exchange, so we’d like to give a big salute in text form, to Lynne Wright of Rockport, Texas! Here is the first letter she wrote, that started it all:

An ACA member in Rockport, Texas wrote a letter to the editor to the local paper there, the Rockport Pilot, and the letter got printed. What has resulted is a series of back and forth letter writing between Atheists, their supporters, and Christians over the last few weeks. A lot of discussion about Atheists and Atheism has taken place in this exchange, so we’d like to give a big salute in text form, to Lynne Wright of Rockport, Texas! Here is the first letter she wrote, that started it all:

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Music Review by Joe Zamecki  Artist: Larry Gallagher  Album: Can I Go Now?  ***  1/2

Produced by Paul Shriver and Larry Gallagher, released August 2006. Thanks to Rob Riddell for assistance in writing this review.

Larry Gallagher is a San Francisco songwriter with two albums under his belt, and his latest is the subject of this review. “Can I Go Now?” is a collection of creative, bold, and heady songs that I think intellectuals will love. Larry explores a wide variety of musical styles from jazz to folk to psychedelic rock, to hypnotic Middle-Eastern rhythms, in a style that can best be described as calmly irreverent and cleverly light-hearted. These are original, tightly written, and those priests are being sent out around the world to do just that.

Well America’s largest Catholic archdiocese is about to pay out $60 million to settle 45 lawsuits brought on by Catholic clergy members sexually abusing people in the Los Angeles area. That was over the misbehavior of only 22 priests. Just imagine how much more sexual misconduct is taking place right now, since that church still has thousands of clergy members in action around the world. Hell, they even started a school of exorcism in the Vatican, to train priests in exorcism, and those priests are being sent out around the world to do just that.

The fact that people are getting some justice in the courts of America and beyond, is good news, and shows progress in the human race. That’s just 60 million more dollars out of the hands of that cruel organization. A drop in the bucket, if you will, but that’s been happening a lot more lately, and a lot of drops add up. Score one for the innocent! Ex-Catholics unite!

At the bottom of this page is my first music review for this publication. An Atheistic song on the album is what drew me to the CD. My qualifications to do music reviews are as follows: I’ve been a musician all my life, and a drummer in half a dozen bands here in Austin. I’ve played live on Sixth Street more times than I can remember, starting in 1988, and now I’m playing in two bands simultaneously: The Lewis Clark Cook Expedition, www.lewisclearkcook.com, and The D B Martin Group, www.myspace.com/dbmartingrup. My old band, The Murder Mystery broke up recently. :o(

Anyway there’s some great Atheistic music out there, and I hope to do more reviews. If you have one, send it! I’d love to review it. JRZ

The ACA Building Fund

We have a building fund, and if you’d like to help the group buy a building, please donate to that fund. It’s important to specify which fund you’d like your donation to go towards, in this case, the Building Fund. Also if you know of a building in good condition in Austin that’s for sale, with a storefront, on a busy Austin street, let us know. We’ll check it out.

Michigan Atheists Mourns the Loss of Lois Brooks

From Michigan Atheists: “Our dear friend, Lois Brooks, dies peacefully in her home in the care of hospice this morning, Tuesday, December 12, 2006. Lois had been an Atheist activist for over twenty years and served on the Michigan Atheists State Board of Directors as an advisor and historian.” Lois and her late husband Bob were busy Atheist activists and really helped our movement greatly. They will both be missed.

University of Texas at Austin Freethought Group Returns

We understand that a member of the ACA who’s also a student at UT Austin has re-formed the campus freethought group there. Bravo!
Thursday Jan 4  7:30 p.m.  Happy Hour at Ninfas in North Austin
Sunday Jan 7 events.
12:15 - 1:45 p.m.  Lecture: TBA -
4:30 - 6:00 p.m.  Atheist Experience TV Show, Host: Matt Dillahunty Co-host: Russell Glasser
Thursday Jan 11  7:30 p.m.  Happy Hour at Ninfas in North Austin
Saturday Jan 13  2:00 - 3:30 p.m.  Non-Prophets Internet Radio Show - The live broadcast of the Non-Prophets. Past episodes can be heard via Podcast.
Sunday Jan 14  11:30 a.m.  Regular meeting at Romeo's
1:30 - 3:00 p.m.  Board Meeting Immediately follows the regular meeting. Check weekly meetings for place.
4:30 - 6:00 p.m.  Atheist Experience TV Show, Host: Matt Dillahunty, Co-host: Jeff Dee
Thursday Jan 18  7:30 p.m.  Happy Hour at Ninfas in North Austin
Saturday Jan 20  10:00 - 11:00 a.m.  ACA Blood Drive Poll up your sleeves for community service.
Sunday Jan 21  11:30 a.m.  Regular meeting at Romeo's
4:30 - 6:00 p.m.  Atheist Experience, Host: Matt Dillahunty, Co-host: Tracie Harris
Thursday Jan 25  7:30 p.m.  Happy Hour at Ninfas in North Austin
Saturday Jan 27  2:00 - 3:30 p.m.  Non-Prophets Internet Radio Show
Sunday Jan 28  11:30 a.m.  Regular meeting at Romeo's
4:30 - 6:00 p.m.  Atheist Experience TV Show, Host: Matt Dillahunty, Co-host: Don Baker

ACA Event Details

----Lecture Series We hold our monthly lectures at the Austin History Center, at the corner of 9th St. and Guadalupe St. They start at 12:30pm in the “Reception Room.” Admission is always free, and it’s open to the public. As of press time, we don’t have a lecture planned for January. If you know of a good lecturer or if YOU have an interesting topic to talk about to the group, please e-mail us at: info@atheist-community.org or call and leave a message at our voicemail number: (512)371-2911 Past lecturers include several members of the ACA, like your editor. :o)

----Board Meetings This month’s ACA Board meeting will be held at Romeo’s Italian Restaurant, right after the regular meeting. That usually means the board meeting starts around 1:30pm. All ACA members are welcome to attend, and we invite you to and we also invite you to speak up about issues of concern to you, but only board members may vote at those meetings. Current board issues include funding for this newsletter and whether to meet at Ventana Del Soul again.

----Happy Hour! We meet for Happy Hour at Ninfa’s on E. Anderson/183, which is just west of I-35 by about a block. It’s on the Northbound side of 183. If you’re coming north on I-35, be sure to take the 183/St. Johns exit, go through St. Johns, and then left onto 183 Northbound, under the overpass. Ninfa’s is famous for their Tex Mex and Margaritas, aka Ninfaritas, but spending money there is not required.

----Regular Weekly Meetings Sundays at 11:30am at Romeo’s Italian Restaurant on Barton Springs Rd. just West of South Lamar. We usually meet inside near the bar. When we have board meetings, we move out into the patio area outside. Romeo’s is simply beautiful. Starting in February though, we’re going to be meeting at Ventana Del Soul on East Oltorf, for a three month trial non-lecture meeting period. Check the ACA website for updates, and please let us know what you think about the proposed change. Your input is needed. editor@atheist-community.org

----TV Show The Atheist Experience is our TV show. It airs on Time-Warner Cable, public access channel 10, from 4:30pm - 6:00pm every Sunday. It’s a live call-in talk show, and we invite ACA members, as well as the rest of the cable-viewing community to call in and talk Atheism with us. This is another form of outreach to the general public, so we enjoy getting challenges from religious callers. Guests are listed above in the calendar. The website for the show is www.atheist-experience.org The TV show now also has a blog: http://atheistexperience.blogspot.com

----Online Radio Show The Non-Prophets is our online radio show. It airs live every other Saturday. please feel free to tune in live at http://nonprophets.goddns.org and visit our archive to hear recent episodes.

----Public Demonstrations Once in a while, we grab picket signs and cameras and hit the pavement in public on issues of importance to us. Usually these can’t be scheduled far in advance, so announcements about demonstrations will likely only be heard at regular membership meetings. Our one regularly scheduled annual picket is our protest of the National Day of Prayer ceremonies and rituals which happen yearly at the Texas State Capitol.

----Outings We like to go to places as a group, and see some wonderful things, like a field trip. Recently, we took a cruise on Town Lake together. This month we’ll be having a Winter Solstice Party at the home of one of our members, Mike Swift. If you have an idea for an outing, please let us know. There are many wonderful things in Austin for a happy group like ours to go see. We are fun loving people!

The Atheist Community of Austin
PO Box 3798  Austin TX 78764  Voicemail: (512)371-2911  Website: www.atheist-community.org
As of February 10th 1997, our small group was recognized by the Secretary of the State of Texas as the Atheist Community of Austin Inc. Our ten year anniversary is coming soon, and if you’d like to help us celebrate it, and have some ideas about how we should do that, please let us know. Ten years! Woohoo! Party!

The Atheist Community of Austin is affiliated with four national freethought groups. This entitles our group and our individual members to certain benefits from each national group. Some benefits include reduced membership rates with those groups, reduced prices for products from those groups, and reduced national convention registration rates.
On October 1, 2006 a tally of votes revealed that a great majority of member groups want to hold the annual Atheist Alliance International convention the last weekend in September 2007 instead of the traditional weekend that Christian's refer to as "Easter." The AAI 2007 Convention which will take place on the east coast. Pre-convention activities will start on Thursday, September 27. The convention will end the afternoon of Sunday, September 30, 2007. www.atheistalliance.org or: 1-866-HERETIC

The American Humanist Association’s next national conference will be June 7-10, 2007 in Portland, Oregon. We’ll get you more info about that when we get it. The American Humanist Association’s Washington DC office:(800) 837-3792 or: americanhumanist.org

---David L. Kent

### Saved in DUMBO: Satire at St. Ann’s Warehouse pokes fun at demons & hellfire.

By Javona Rizzo for The Brooklyn Papers October 28, 2006, reprinted here with permission, a bit late, but better late than never.

All the evils in the world are currently housed in St. Ann’s Warehouse, conveniently organized and explained on a walking tour to save you and your friends from eternal damnation. Lead by a demon tour guide, you walk through the “Hell House,” which features rooms depicting social evils and bad decisions. You enter scenes of teenage abortion, a school shooting, gay marriage and more until you are ultimately greeted by Jesus. As you laugh at the demon’s comments and strange social relativism, you may also feel queasy as you watch a girl’s rape and a student kill his classmates, leaving you to take a step back and ask yourself: this is just a joke, right? According to research provided by the producers of “Hell House,” Les Freres Corbusier, actual hell houses — created by the controversial Rev. Jerry Falwell — began popping up in the U.S. in the 1970s. Evangelical churches in the Midwest and South would put on these performances every October, hoping to show people how the evils in the world will lead them to an eternity in the fiery pits of hell, but with the helpful message that it is not too late to accept Christ into their lives and ultimately be saved. It wasn’t until 1995, however, that they became more popular. Rev. Keenan Roberts of the Abundant Life Church of Christ in Denver took over and created “The Hell House Outreach Manual.” This handy packet provides detailed instructions so anyone can stage a “Hell House.” It has everything you need to know, from costumes to recipes on how to make the most convincing blood: “Try mixing white corn syrup with red food coloring.” Although Les Freres Corbusier’s production, directed by Alex Timbers, is more of a satire than an attempt to convert non-believers, much of the text is straight from the manual, and there are some unsettling parts of the show. You first start to cringe while waiting for your tour to start. You’ll read some of the selected pages from Roberts’s manual, including this tip about the gruesome teen abortion scene: “Do your very best to buy or purchase a meat product that will resemble as much as possible pieces of a baby that are being placed in the glass bowl for all to see. It sounds horrifying; but the more real you can make the meat look, the more powerful the impact will be on every person who goes through.” Les Freres Corbusier is a Manhattan-based theater company that describes its mission as “combining historical revisionism, multimedia excess, found texts, sophomoric humor and rigorous academic research.” The organizers of any given “Hell House” — traditionally a pastor or church group — are allowed permission to modernize some of the scenes so they are more suited to a particular location and its audience. More of an avant-garde theater group than a band of evangelical Christians, Les Freres Corbusier certainly does this by nailing its portrayal of the young Brooklyn hipster generation. Over lattes, talk of Jon Stewart and a bowl of edamame, the characters of Sam, Rachel and Lance discuss spoofing fundamentalist religion through comedy. “Wait, wait, wait,” says Sam. “Fundamentalist religion and belief systems! You’re talking about weighty, serious issues here. They shouldn’t be treated mockingly. To be honest, guys, I’m kind of over irony.” The three friends pause awkwardly, then burst into laughter. They give each other high fives right before they are dragged away by some pesky demons.

What level of hell do you think the hipsters will end up on? To find out, Brooklynites should visit “Hell House” and repent! At the end of the suffering — and after meeting Jesus, of course — you get to celebrate saving your soul with a sing-a-long hoedown. The happy, smiling Christians will give you some juice and a powdered donut, and you will once again be at peace with the world.

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Book Review

The Jesus Mysteries: Was the "Original Jesus" a Pagan God?

by Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy, (New York: Random House, 2001), pbk, 343 pp., notes, bibliography, photographs, index Reviewed by ACA Member David L. Kent

{Amazon.com for $11.20. Some readers may prefer an alternative, since Amazon donates heavily to Republican candidates. I have had good experience with abebooks.com, an inventory of over 70,000,000 books worldwide, where you can order new and used books from the bookstore of your choice, depending on condition, price, shipping and handling charge preferred. Amazon offers used copies of this book for $7.80, abebooks from $7.95.)

If a writer were to attempt to convert non-believers, much of the text is straight from the manual, and there are some unsettling parts of the show. You first start to cringe while waiting for your tour to start. You’ll read some of the selected pages from Roberts’s manual, including this tip about the gruesome teen abortion scene: “Do your very best to buy or purchase a meat product that will resemble as much as possible pieces of a baby that are being placed in the glass bowl for all to see. It sounds horrifying; but the more real you can make the meat look, the more powerful the impact will be on every person who goes through.” Les Freres Corbusier is a Manhattan-based theater company that describes its mission as “combining historical revisionism, multimedia excess, found texts, sophomoric humor and rigorous academic research.” The organizers of any given “Hell House” — traditionally a pastor or church group — are allowed permission to modernize some of the scenes so they are more suited to a particular location and its audience. More of an avant-garde theater group than a band of evangelical Christians, Les Freres Corbusier certainly does this by nailing its portrayal of the young Brooklyn hipster generation. Over lattes, talk of Jon Stewart and a bowl of edamame, the characters of Sam, Rachel and Lance discuss spoofing fundamentalist religion through comedy. “Wait, wait, wait,” says Sam. “Fundamentalist religion and belief systems! You’re talking about weighty, serious issues here. They shouldn’t be treated mockingly. To be honest, guys, I’m kind of over irony.” The three friends pause awkwardly, then burst into laughter. They give each other high fives right before they are dragged away by some pesky demons.

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Godless in Tucson

Atheists--the least-trusted group in America--speak out

By SAXON BURNS, posted Nov. 30, 2006

I understand the good Christians, because I used to be one," said Tucson Atheists organizer Robert Swango. "When religious people start interfering with our form of government, when they are telling the schools that the children have to say a pledge that says 'under God,' they have crossed a very, very important line," said anti-theist Ingrid Saber. Justice was served Tuesday, Nov. 21, in the hearts and minds of a small band of atheists. The trial in Tucson City Court of one of their own on an assault charge had dragged on in a utilitarian room for 2 1/2 hours.

The encore spontaneously prompted Ison to throw a 2-liter bottle of Coke at the atheist. When asked why he put himself in these potentially dangerous situations, Swango said it was for the good of the young. "It's for the kids, the children--they're not coming after me," he told the Weekly. "And the adults, they just don't know any better. And, besides, good Christians, they just give me the thumbs up and just stop and try to witness to me. I understand the good Christians, because I used to be one." The court case was a small victory for atheists in a much larger war, as groups of like-minded freethinkers struggle to find footing in a country where religion is "in." It's difficult to ascertain the number of atheists in the United States with any certainty, but cited figures ranging from 3 percent to 8 percent of the population. However, a study released at the University of Minnesota released a study in the 2006 issue of the American Sociological Review that found atheists have the honor of being the least-trusted minority in America.

University researchers surveyed more than 2,000 households by telephone and found that 39.6 percent of people selected atheists from a list when prompted to say which group doesn't share their vision of American society. That beat out Muslims (26.3 percent) and homosexuals (22.6 percent), two other minorities revered by segments of the population. Similarly, the survey found 47.6 percent of respondents would not approve of their child marrying an atheist, ahead of Muslims (33.5 percent), African Americans (27.2 percent), Asian Americans and Hispanics (both 18.5 percent), Jews (11.8 percent), conservative Christians (6.9 percent) and white people (3.3 percent). However, when asked about the lines people who have "foundings to rest on a view of" atheists as self-interested individuals who are not concerned with the common good. So-called 'New Atheists' have been stirring up trouble, too. In the November edition of Wired, prominent freethinkers Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris discussed their recently released books, The God Delusion and Letter to a Christian Nation, respectively. In his Wired interview, Dawkins advocated for less tolerance of religious myths, which he believes are disempowering the human race. Let's not forget the seemingly endless battle over teaching intelligent design--aka creationism--in public school science classes, which many atheists are naturally opposed to. And the fight rages on over the words 'under God' in the Pledge of Allegiance, inserted more than a half century ago to highlight the difference between righteous Americans and amoral Soviet pinkos. (Oddly enough, the original pledge of a Baptist named Francis Bellamy in 1892.) Then there's the president, who wraps his faith around himself like a mink stole. A Nov. 19 Associated Press story quoted George W. Bush as saying he had taken "a moment to converse with God" after he emerged from a Vietnamese Catholic basilica during a visit to Hanoi. But it was his father who is believed to have uttered one of the most famous quotes about atheists in American society, while campaigning for the presidency in 1987. Atheistic journalist and activist Robert Sherman attributed the statement to him after he asked Bush whether he recognized "the equal citizenship and patriotism of Americans who are atheists." "No, I don't know that atheists should be considered as citizens," Bush said, when asked about his views at a meeting of the Southern Arizona chapter of the Center for Inquiry, a community for the godless. The Weekly phoned Saber about a day after she whispered her phone number at the meeting. She said people she had met in local atheist groups were "pretty gentle and fearful"--gentle, because they're insensitive creatures; fearful, because of what happened to Swango. "I think they're surprised, those who know what I'm going to do, that I'm doing it," Saber said. "But Robert needs some help." She was referring to her plan to hold a "If You Feel Creepy, Shed Godizm" sign in the same spot where Swango held his months earlier, in a show of support. Saber, like Dawkins, doesn't want to invent the concept of other people deceiving. This was already realized by human beings long before any atheist ever showed up." She put some of these frustrations to paper when she wrote a poem called "Preaching Leeches" and distributed it to friends and acquaintances before Swango's trial:

Godless in Tucson

Another point of contention for Saber is the notion that women have a subordinate role in the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions. Still, according to a 2001 report from The Pew Research Center, nearly half of the women in a mixed-sex group of more than 2,000 said they went to church once a week, compared to one-third of the men. Saber attributed the higher numbers to a "If You Feel Creepy, Shed Godizm" sign in the same spot where Swango held his months earlier, in a show of support. Saber, like Dawkins, doesn't want to invent the concept of other people deceiving. This was already realized by human beings long before any atheist ever showed up." She put some of these frustrations to paper when she wrote a poem called "Preaching Leeches" and distributed it to friends and acquaintances before Swango's trial:

These leeches are trained to distort your good mind
With god myths and guilt trips and traps of that kind.
They work on your head, they work on your heart and your head
Depositing eggs of self-doubt and self-dread.
They work on your children, the little girls most
By age 6 or 7 we'll have them, they boast.
And tell you on TV, distrust your own sense
While crowned and shielded at your great expense.
So guard what they covet. Protect yourself well.
They're in a position to make your life hell.

With god myths and guilt trips and traps of that kind.

By age 6 or 7 we'll have them, they boast.
And tell you on TV, distrust your own sense
While crowned and shielded at your great expense.
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With god myths and guilt trips and traps of that kind.
Atheists Want Church To Pull Plug On Music

Grievance: About this time each year, a town employee unlocks the closet in the front hall of the Jewett City Baptist Church. With the push of a button, the music that’s heard from a large speaker inside the church steeple changes each hour from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., from selections that range from “America the Beautiful” to “Away in a Manger.” It’s been a tradition in the borough for more than a decade. The Connecticut chapter of American Atheists, Inc. thinks it’s time that the tradition either ends or is altered. The organization has filed a complaint with the town and the borough governments claiming the music is too loud. After contacting the resident state trooper, the organization was “shocked” to learn that the borough owns the system that is housed at the church. “This is clearly a violation of the separation of church and state,” said Dennis Peter Himes, director of the state chapter. Borough Warden Cynthia Kafka doesn’t see it that way. “If there is one of the songs that they find offensive, I’ll take it off,” Kafka said. “But I’m not going to get rid of ‘Jingle Bells’ or ‘Santa Claus is Coming to Town because some people don’t like it.” Unsure what to do with some grant money a decade ago, the borough and businesses at the time decided it would be nice to have church bells ringing along Main Street. They bought a sound system to play recordings of church bells. They asked the Jewett City Baptist Church if they could install a large speaker in the church’s belfry and a CD player in a downtown store. The church is centrally located and the steeple is the highest point in the borough. The congregation agreed, and with conditions. The church would not be responsible for the equipment, any complaints or the music selection. Secular music could be played, but “no Elvis.” Bells are supposed to chime at 15, 30 and 45 minutes past the hour, although the timing is about 10 minutes off. On the hour, a selected song plays. More than 400 tunes, most of which are not religious, are available for selection. During the spring and summer, the repertoire includes “Danny Boy,” “Over the Rainbow” and “God Bless America.” In the fall and winter, in honor of Christmas, it includes “Ave Maria,” “Joy to the World” and “O Little Town of Bethlehem.” At 9 each morning during the non-holiday season, a large drum roll precedes the song of the day. The song plays. Secular music could be played, but “no Elvis.” Bells are supposed to chime at 15, 30 and 45 minutes past the hour, although the timing is about 10 minutes off. On the hour, a selected song plays. More than 400 tunes, most of which are not religious, are available for selection. During the spring and summer, the repertoire includes “Danny Boy,” “Over the Rainbow” and “God Bless America.” In the fall and winter, in honor of Christmas, it includes “Ave Maria,” “Joy to the World” and “O Little Town of Bethlehem.” At 9 each morning during the non-holiday season, “Onward, Christian Soldiers” plays. It’s a special request of borough Treasurer and former Selectwoman Virginia Hody. That’s when she makes the quarter-mile walk from her Ashland Street house to her office at Town Hall. Norwich resident William Russell, an atheist who alerted the state organization to the chimes, visits the borough a couple times a month to see a relative and help her with her banking. The first notes of “Onward, Christian Soldiers” make him cringe. “It’s against the Constitution,” he said. “It needs to be silenced.” On Friday, Russell said he can hear the bells at least 2 miles away. “I’ve been a member of that church for more than 30 years,” he said. “I can hear them, even when I’m 2 miles away.”

The Jewett City Baptist Church on Main Street is the target of a complaint by American Atheists Inc. that contends the music broadcast from the church’s belfry is a violation of the separation of church and state. Borough Warden Cynthia Kafka, however, says the music will not be stopped, setting the stage for a possible legal confrontation.

"The moral so far seems to be, it's easy for them to dismiss us by saying that we never complained before. There's the value of complaining. Speak your mind, and fix things. I'm having a similar problem where I live, in North Austin. Almost every day, I have to go home and lock down the church bells, because they're so loud that they're disturbing my neighbors. They're really loudly to drown out the bells. It's only the form of advertising that is routinely forced into our homes, with nothing we can do to stop it. Now I like the sound of bells playing nice music, but I recognize these tunes, as they were forced on me ad nauseam as a child. 'Onward Christian Soldiers' stands out especially, every time. We all know they consider themselves soldiers for their religion, and us the enemy. Whether literally, or figuratively, it's all wrong. I don't want to be anyone's enemy, and I don't think any other ACA member does either. Tunes from songs that announce their warlike intentions hit home, when you understand them, and you can't turn them off, or even turn them down. The fact that a government agency is admittedly taking part in, and supporting the church bells in that way, is a real problem, especially when it comes right into our homes without us having any way to stop it, and that is higher taxes, so that most churches don't have to pay any taxes at all. Most of the other church/state violations occur in public schools, courthouses, and on our cash. There have been and still are lawsuits being pursued on those important issues. But they are not the only important church/state issues, and if the state is involved with pushing religion through the overuse of church bells, that's good enough for me. That seems to be the case in Connecticut. Same thing for lawsuits overdoor to door religious harassment, which I have heard about in the past. When done to the extreme, these otherwise petty problems aren't so petty, and we need to do something about that. What's activism is for. The church near me isn't involved with the government as far as I know, but they're doing enough wrong that something needs to be done.
Athenist Community News
The Newsletter of the Atheist Community of Austin
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The Atheist Community of Austin is a non-profit educational and social organization, founded in 1996 to help Atheists meet other Atheists in the Austin area, and to help the public understand us better. We advocate a rational and necessary separation between government and religion, and a free and open level of religious liberty - to include a real existence of freedom FROM religion. Non-religious Americans make up about 14% of the population, and that's a large enough minority group in America, that it deserves to be heard. So now you hold in your hand an example of the Atheist side of things. You can thank the very valuable cultural and philosophical diversity that exists in our beautiful city, Austin, Texas.