



NEW Year 2008 Message

"HUMANISTS AND NON BELIEVERS NO LONGER HAVE TO PUT UP WITH RELIGIOUS SUPPRESSION AND DISCRIMINATION OR ANY OF ITS INVASIVE EFFECTS."

...In LAW and in Theory

Now **YOU** can help to make it so.... IN PRACTICE

The difference (that is only just being realised) starts with the establishment of two things:

1. NEW Human Rights Laws. Part Two of the Equality Act 2006 prohibit[s] discrimination against a person because they do not hold a religion or belief and DCLG guidance on the law warns against unintentional 'indirect discrimination' [which] occurs when provisions, criteria or practice, that are applied generally, result in people of a peculiar religion or belief (or lack of religion or belief) being put at a disadvantage.
2. The BHA Local Development Project (LDP). Using a small amount of Government money (the first ever directed towards Humanism), the BHA set up facilities for a fulltime office worker who would provide information about local government departments dealing with these issues. More importantly she has established a communications network between people throughout the country who would be called LDP volunteers. We have two in Berkshire so far. YOU could be another. After initial training these Humanists approach the appropriate equality / diversity officers of local authorities and assist in doing whatever they can in applying the act, as well as collate information for local councillors. These obviously can act more widely and effectively (but need pushing). So far the changes have been just the start of establishing first time contacts between Humanists and bodies of all sorts where the local authority has called upon the religious leaders to supply representation but rarely has there been representation for people with NON religious beliefs. The most important of these is probably the bodies responsible for delivering FUNDING help to the community and initial investigations are being carried out on behalf of Berkshire Humanists.

The BHA LDP project has a Yahoo group e-mail networking facility – open only to the volunteers, but does produce a newsletter and reports in the BHA News. Please ask to be sent copies. The predominant news from around the country is, as in Berkshire, the establishment of LINKS and pathways to FULL membership of SACREs (Standing Committees on Religious Education) and Interfaith Forums. All of this is GOOD NEWS for Humanists and the editor can only hope that it spurs on our members and adherents to volunteer to be a Humanist representative on a public body. However do not wait to be asked!! Volunteer and let us know what success or difficulties you have been having so that we may all share the load and reinforce our positive thoughts from real experience and not imagined difficulties. N.B. You do NOT have to attend meetings or pay subs to do all this!!!

A most important implication of the policies is to SUPPORT SOCIAL COHESION and spread good practice wherever it springs up. This is the thought behind the conference on March 15th to be held in Wokingham: 'What do Parents and Grandparents want from Religious Education in schools?' Please ask to be sent a sheet of mini flyers (sample enclosed). Proper versions will be circulated in January. WE NEED YOUR HELP IN MANY WAYS.

What the Church doesn't want you to know about its Successful schools

Religious proselytisers crowded with glee when the latest primary school league tables were published. They showed a 22% per cent rise (to 66%) in the number of "faith schools" in the top 200 best performers. The Church immediately claimed that this was due to their "religious ethos". But independent research has shown that in almost all cases, the

success is due to the grossly biased entry criteria that such schools can deploy. Many "faith schools" are filled with middle-class children, whose parents are prepared to jump through the hoops the church sets for them to get a place. The children from less wealthy families living nearby, whose parents cannot play this dishonest game, are severely disadvantaged by this system. And what the myth-makers forget to tell you is that "faith schools" performed much less well in an alternative league table that took account of deprivation, special needs and children speaking English as a second language. When measured by those standards, just 30 of the top 200 places on the "contextual value-added" measure went to religious schools.

A Visit to the Archives

Fancy learning more about the origins of the BHA movement? How the campaign for Secular Education fought and lost the battle for RE in the 1944 Education act? -about the Humanist Housing Association? The Humanist Counselling movement? All BHA archives (unless you have some to donate) are now held at 'The Bishopsgate Institute London Library. It is on the Bishopsgate and is just down Bishopsgate Road from being opposite to Liverpool Street Station. Ask for Steff and you get a very friendly welcome.

REInspired A LOCAL supply of R.E. Teachers or a faith proselytiser?

How can we compete?

Who are REINSPIRED? - formally known as 'The Churches Together in Earley and East Reading' (CTEER) Schools Work Project was established in 1996. It is a Charitable Trust, a plc with 6 trustees. For the work there are six primary school coordinators, (three of whom are employed by the trust) and ~ 50 volunteers plus (soon) a Project Director. All the present workers are Christians who attend either the churches that make up CTEER or have children or connections with the schools they work in. All workers in schools have a CRB Disclosure. The Trust seeks to encourage local churches to relate to local schools and so works in a limited area. REINSPIRED seeks...

- To be a resource for schools in the achievement of their educational goals.
- To foster their growth as institutions that support and encourage the spiritual development of all their members.
- To enable pupils to develop spiritually in collective worship and other contexts.
- To enable pupils to understand and perceive the relevance of Christian spirituality in today's world, and discover what they can learn from it.
- To provide positive opportunities in R.E. for pupils to learn about and to learn from Christianity.
- To offer pastoral support and care to school communities.
- To enable churches, schools and pupils to value and respect people of different faiths alongside Christianity.
- To encourage members of other faith communities to offer schools similar opportunities to learn about and to learn from their religion.
- To help churches be shaped and transformed by their engagement with schools

BHA has been asked about the significance of REINSPIRED. How widespread are these trusts in the country? We have written to them offering our help, but can they help us? Let us hope that the new BHA Faith Schools Officer can help.

Preparing for Darwin Day: Bicentenary coming

David Williams has recovered from his operations and is preparing a talk for our February 10th meeting on Biology and Darwin.



Hopefully he will show that Darwin's theory has continuing and important relevance today. The meeting will be at David and Ann's house in Wokingham.

Meanwhile for those with the internet try:

THE ENGLISH WAY <http://www.darwinshrewsbury.org/>
or THE WORLD WAY <http://www.darwinday.org>

REMINDERS

1. Contact social Sec 01344-456025 to confirm (or otherwise) attendance for Jan 12th Meal.
2. **YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE** [with hopefully DONATION for development]. Also needed are Registration and Preference forms. Everyone should return them, contact will cease unless you tell us what you want to receive.
3. You can help the Humanist movement locally from your armchair, but we cannot help you without your views.

Annual Festive Meal

Date:
Saturday 12th January 2008

Time:
12:15 for 12:30

Location:
Bluebeckers, Bath Road, Hare Hatch, Reading, RG10 9SB

Directions:
Take the A4 between Reading and Maidenhead. BBs is almost opposite the Wyvale Garden Centre.



RSVP:

Pam Johnson
Tel: 01344 456025
Email: yespamj@yahoo.com

Payment:

Payment after your meal and in accordance with your order.

Bluebeckers at The Hare

Occupying a prominent position on the A4 at Hare Hatch near Twyford, the building dates back several hundred years and has been renovated to provide a comfortable stylish interior, including a conservatory, whilst also retaining the character and originality of the building's period features

Two outdoor terraces afford an opportunity for al fresco dining, one of which boasts a children's play area.



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