

other view

Secularism puts faith in shared humanity

BY JUSTIN SCOTT
Eastern Iowa Atheists

 **A**s a born and raised, lifelong Iowan, I read with great interest the December column by Archbishop Thomas Zinkula regarding the "Journey of Faith." While I respect his position as a leader within the Archdiocese of Dubuque, I feel compelled to offer a counter-narrative.

I write this as someone deeply rooted in this region. I was born and raised in Maquoketa, later moving to Manchester, where I graduated

from West Delaware High School. My connection to the area goes back even further; my great-grandfather grew up in Fulton, just south of Dubuque. He was a WWII volunteer who survived the Battle of the Bulge and the taking of the Remagen Bridge, returning home to serve as a union president at Clinton Engine Works in Maquoketa for three decades.

He fought for freedom, and today, I exercise that freedom as a proud, unabashed atheist. For more than a decade, I have worked to promote a secular worldview and secular values across Iowa. My perspective is simple: I reject holding a belief

in something that cannot be — and continually has not been — demonstrated. Furthermore, I hold the conviction that if humanity were to wake up tomorrow with no organized religions — specifically the Abrahamic ones — we would be better off. We would progress faster, unencumbered by ancient dogmas.

Archbishop Zinkula writes of a "secular culture that often discourages faith of any kind." I must respectfully, but firmly, disagree.

Secularism does not explicitly discourage faith; it redefines it. It encourages a profound faith in our shared humanity. It posits that the struggles we face are for us to

solve together, not to delegate to the divine. It encourages faith in oneself — the realization that you are not "broken" or born a "sinner," but are a fallible creature "blessed" by the messy, beautiful process of evolution.

This positive vision is alive and well in Dubuque. Groups like the Dubuque Area Humanists have done incredible work introducing residents to secularism, providing community without church, and proving that you don't need a deity to be a good neighbor.

Archbishop Zinkula speaks of a journey. But speaking from personal experience, and looking into

the eyes of my three happy, moral children who live without fear of hellfire, I know this to be true: Sometimes the best "Journey of Faith" is the one that ends with no faith at all.

Justin Scott is a lifelong Iowan and the founder and director of the Eastern Iowa Atheists. A husband and father of three, in 2017 he delivered Iowa's first-ever secular Statehouse invocation (aka "atheist prayer"), titled "The Holy Trinity of Science." For more than a decade, he has been an outspoken and unapologetic fighter for the complete separation between religion and government — especially in public schools.

letters to the editor

Wisconsin rural schools face funding crisis

MOLLY MANGAN
Star Lane, Cassville, Wis.

On Jan. 18, the Telegraph Herald printed a letter from Travis Tranel, the Wisconsin Assemblyman from the 49th District. In the letter, he blamed higher property taxes on Gov. Tony Evers' extension of an optional \$325 per student tax levy cap for local school districts. In reality, it is the Wisconsin Legislature's decision to *freeze* school funding from the state for the next two years that has created a funding crisis for local schools.

The state has chronically underfunded public schools, with annual increases that lag behind inflation. Evers' action simply allows districts to assess an extra \$1 per day per student without going to referendum. It's not enough to keep districts

afloat, and we are seeing frequent referendums in our rural area. Schools cannot even count on the frozen state funding levels, as \$350 million gets diverted from districts to fund private vouchers.

Wisconsin legislators are shirking their responsibility to ensure that children are receiving an equitable and quality education, all while sitting on a \$4.6 billion dollar surplus.

Education used to be the great equalizer in America. Anyone who worked hard and studied could succeed. However, we do not have equal opportunity of quality education when it is dependent on the means of the local community. Rural areas, with low population density and lower incomes, cannot produce the same resources as wealthy suburbs. The state's role is to be an equalizer.

When state leaders abdicate their responsibility, it creates a new generation of individuals left behind.

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- All letters must be accompanied by the author's street address and telephone number(s). The street name is published; street numbers and phone numbers are not.
- Maximum word count: 250.

Get over the 2020 election

JEFF MEYER
Mount Alpine Street, Dubuque

In regards to Donald Trump's ongoing obsession with the 2020 election — get over it! We've got much bigger problems in the here and now.

View current events through the looking glass

JANET NEUMEISTER
University Avenue, Dubuque

Minneapolis is being terrorized by highly paid armed ICE thugs who are hired with no background checks and minimal training, if any. They randomly and inhumanely detail anyone with brown skin — legal citizens, children and off-duty police officers.

They shoot a White woman three times as she is trying to drive away from them and deny her any medical care as she is dying, yet they somehow claim that it's her fault she was killed.

They manhandle and pepper-spray peaceful protesters.

A White man is killed, and his crime was videotaping their activities. He was a legal gun carrier, but the gun didn't come out of his pocket until they took it and shot him with it after pepper-spraying him. Then they shot him at least 10 more times.

It feels like we have descended into "Wonderland," where black is white, white is black, and the queen (king) is running around screaming, "off with their heads!"

I just hope we can recover and, once again, become a nation of freedom and compassion.



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