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**Saturday  
 October 15th, 2016**

**Monthly Chapter  
 Meeting/Conference**

**First Unitarian Society  
 900 Mt. Curve Drive  
 Minneapolis**

**Doors open at 9:00 a.m.  
 Program 10:00 a.m.-5:00**

***HUMANISM:***

*A better life for all through  
 education, democracy, free  
 speech, reason, and science,  
 without reliance on arbitrary  
 dogmas, revelations, and  
 faith.*

***Chapter Meeting / Conference:***

***The Future of Humanism: New Voices for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

***Saturday, October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2016  
 10am-5pm (doors open at 9am for registration)  
 First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis***

This month, our regular chapter meeting is being enfolded into an all-day conference on *The Future of Humanism*. Humanists of Minnesota, the American Humanist Association (AHA), the Humanist Institute and Black Freethinkers are collaborating with First Unitarian Society (FUS) which is celebrating 100 years of humanism as a congregation with the installation of their first humanist minister, John Dietrich, in 1916. While Unitarian humanism—religion without god—remained central to FUS throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and became a subgroup within the larger Unitarian Universalist Association, secular humanism came into its own with the growing “unchurched” demographic of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and the rise of the “nones” in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This “Future of Humanism” conference will consider what the 21<sup>st</sup> century portends for the contemporary humanist movement as it continues to adapt to the changing social and cultural realities of our time. The morning’s plenary session will feature a distinguished panel of scholars and authors from around the country who will each lead break-out sessions in the afternoon. A buffet lunch will be served mid-day. The event will conclude with a wine and cheese reception and book signings with the various guest authors.

**Guest Speakers**

[Anthony Pinn](#), Rice University, Religion and Humanities, AHA Board member

[\(Writing God's Obituary\)](#)

[Phil Zuckerman](#), Pitzer College, Sociology and Secular Studies

[\(Living the Secular Life\)](#)

[Chris Stedman](#), Yale University, Humanist Chaplain [\(Faithiest\)](#)

[William Hart](#), Macalester College, Religious Studies—African-American Religion, Ethics and Politics

[Sonita Sarker](#), Macalester College, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and English

**Moderators**

Stephanie Zvan, Producer of AHA’s Humanist Hour Podcast, blogs at

[Almost Diamonds](#)

David Breeden, Senior Minister at First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis,

blogs at [Quest for Meaning](#)

*(Conference, Continued on page 4)*

## PRESIDENT'S

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Many in the secular movement are well aware of the “New Atheism” that emerged a decade ago when Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens each wrote scathing books about religion. Their brash critiques brought national and international attention to atheists as well as more scrutiny to the latent but growing demographic of “nones”—those who have little to no interest in traditional religion. The story often missed in the narrative of the new atheism, however, is that quietly and steadily people have been moving away from religious dogmatism and traditional theism in very significant ways since the beginning of the twentieth century. And one of the key early leaders in that movement was John Dietrich.

Dietrich was part of a small but growing cadre of clergy and intellectuals at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century who had lost their “faith” and embraced an intellectual approach to religion by way of scientific empiricism and philosophical naturalism. Having started his ministry in the Reformed Church in 1905, Dietrich was charged with heresy early on in his career. Instead of fighting

the charges, he resigned his position and found refuge among the Unitarians—first in Spokane, Washington and then in Minneapolis at the First Unitarian Society. There his theology further evolved and he began to articulate and champion a religion without god through his “Humanist Pulpit.”

Up until this point in time “humanism” as a distinct world-view had not yet been articulated. Of course, various materialist and naturalist schools of thought had existed since antiquity across the globe. These have been enumerated, for example, through the seminal works of Jennifer Michael Hecht, *Doubt: A History* and Gerald Larue, *Freethought Across the Centuries: Toward a New Age of Enlightenment*. But none of these earlier philosophies in the end captured the zeitgeist of the rapidly changing times. How then did “humanism” emerge as the pre-eminent naturalist philosophy of the new century?

The turbulence of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century certainly helped set the stage. In Europe the foundations of traditional theistic religion were being bombarded from all sides. A new biblical scholarship was taking hold in the academic communities undermining a literal view of sacred texts. Revolutionary economic and political ideas, such as those espoused by Karl Marx, challenged the very social structures and religious scaffolding of Western Civilization. In addition, the publication of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* introduced a profoundly new way of thinking about our humanity.

Meanwhile philosophers and theologians struggled to articulate a new way of making sense of the world. Auguste Comte, perhaps the first philosopher of science and founder of sociology, established a Religion of Humanity in France as an attempt at secular religion to supplant the function of theistic religion. He influenced other philosophers and freethinkers of the time including the social activist and atheist, George Holyoake who first developed the concept of secularism in Britain. In Germany Ludwig Feuerbach, another philosopher and budding theologian--turned atheist, debunked Christianity and god through his writings and essentially helped spur the use of the term “humanism.” His critics in England used the term as an epithet to disparage the ungodly materialist and naturalist worldview emerging among social reformers and intellectuals of the mid-nineteenth century. ([See Joseph Blankholm, \*Secularism, Humanism, and Secular Humanism: Terms and Institutions\*](#))

The freethought movement in the United States was on its own course. While Robert Ingersoll was the “Great Agnostic” traveling the lecture circuit in the late nineteenth century, Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson had wide influence as unconventional naturalists, philosophers and writers in American culture. As Susan Jacoby recounts in her book, *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism*, the nineteenth century is replete with reformers and freethinkers (both women and men) who rattled the social, political, economic and religious bastions of the country. Often it was the unorthodox Unitarians and Universalists who with their reasoned approach to religion welcomed these freethinkers to their pulpits.

By the time John Dietrich got to Minneapolis, people were ready to listen to this religious intellectual expound on pressing issues of the day—evolution, birth control, world government. Dietrich’s congregation met at a couple different theaters on Sundays in downtown Minneapolis to accommodate audiences that regularly exceeded 1,000. Over the course of his tenure at First Unitarian Society (1916-1938), Dietrich helped coa-

(President, Continued on page 4)

# Announcements

## DISCUSSION GROUPS ETC.

**2nd Friday 5:00 p.m.**, *Humanist Happy Hour St. Paul*, Green Mill Restaurant & Bar, 57 Hamline Ave S.

**4th Friday 5:00 p.m.**, *Humanist Happy Hour Minneapolis*, Salsa a La Salsa--2841 Hennepin Ave., Mpls.

**2nd Friday 10:00 a.m.**, *Coffee and Current Events*, Loring Park Dunn Bros., 329 W. 15th St., Mpls.

**2nd Saturday 10:30 a.m.**, *Blasphemers' Brunch*, Pizza Luce, 800 W 66th Street, Richfield

**2nd Sunday 11:00 a.m.**, *Sunday Assembly*. 514 Lowry Ave. NE, Minneapolis.

**1st Sunday, 9:00 a.m.-noon**, *Lake Superior Freethinkers monthly meeting*. Radisson Hotel Duluth, Viking Room. For information contact Bill van Druten, (218) 724-4176.

**1st Sunday, 10:00 a.m.**, *Central Minnesota Freethinkers, St. Cloud Coffee Social*. Check their website for details: [cmfreethinkers.org](http://cmfreethinkers.org) or contact them at [info@cmfreethinkers.org](mailto:info@cmfreethinkers.org)

**Mondays, 5:00-6:30 p.m.**, *Atheists for Human Rights Happy Hour*, Ol' Mexico Restaurant, 1754 Lexington Ave., Roseville (just north of Larpenteur). Tables on terrace level. Call Paul Craven, (763) 788-8918.

**1st and 3rd Mondays, 6:30 p.m.**, *Freethought Toastmasters Club*, Larpenteur Estates Party Room, 1276 Larpenteur Ave. W., St. Paul. Contact George Kane, [nup@minn.net](mailto:nup@minn.net) or (651) 488-8225.

**2nd & 4th Mondays, 5:00-7:00 p.m.**, *Freethought Dinner Social*, Davanni's, 8605 Lyndale Ave So, Bloomington. Call Marilyn Nienkerk, (612) 866-6200.

**1st Tuesday, 11:30 a.m.—1:00 p.m.**, *Freethought Lunch*, Dragon House, 3950 Central Ave. NE, Columbia Heights, MN. Call Marilyn Nienkerk, (612) 866-6200.

**3rd Wednesday, 11:30 a.m.**, *Freethought Lunch*, Dragon House, 3950 Central Avenue NE, Columbia Heights. Call Bill Volna, (612) 781-1420.

**2nd Thursday, evening**, *Rochester Area Freethinkers (RAFT)*, Downtown Rochester Public Library, Meeting Room A. Contact Jim Salutz, [jsalutz@aol.com](mailto:jsalutz@aol.com) or (507) 280-8012.

## OTHER EVENTS

**Second Wednesday, 7 p.m.**, *Humanists of Minnesota* Board of Directors meeting. Open to all members. Contact Audrey Kingstrom at [akingstrom@comcast.net](mailto:akingstrom@comcast.net).

**Thursdays, 7:00 p.m.** (during school year), *Campus Atheists, Skeptics and Humanists (CASH)* general meeting. 3rd floor Coffman Memorial Union, 300 Washington Ave. SE, Minneapolis. Contact [cash@cashumn.org](mailto:cash@cashumn.org).

Check out our Meetup events at <http://www.meetup.com/humanism-166>



## Fall Highway Cleanup

**October 8th**

**10:00 a.m.—noon**

Time again for our semi-annual highway cleanup. This is a great opportunity to show Humanists at work in the community. We pick up trash between mile markers 38 and 39.5 on I-35W in Circle Pines. A big turnout means we finish sooner and have more time to socialize, so please consider volunteering.

We meet at the Holiday station/store, located at exit 36 of Interstate 35W at Highway 23 (right turn from 35W northbound). This is the last exit on 35W going north, five miles before it joins 35E, and is about nine miles north of 35W and I-694.

We'll meet in the parking lot on the north side of the building. I will bring the trash bags and orange vests, so all you need is appropriate clothing and shoes, and possibly gloves, sunscreen, and insect repellent.

We are usually finished by noon and invite you to join us for lunch and good conversation at Matthew's Family Restaurant. 2 South Pine Dr. Circle Pines, MN 55014. Here is a link to a google map of the 2 locations:

[Holiday station to Matthew's restaurant](#)

If you have questions, call me at (651) 319-2753 or email me at [smithbranca@gmail.com](mailto:smithbranca@gmail.com).

## Support Humanists of Minnesota! Painlessly!

*Do you shop at Amazon.com?*

*If so, Amazon will donate some of their profits to Humanists of Minnesota! Just use the following URL to enter their website when you shop there (note: though the charity listed is the AHA, the funds will go to HofMN):*

*<http://smile.amazon.com/ch/41-1570800>*

"Humanist Views," our weekly Cable program, airs at **6:30 p.m. Mondays** on MTN Channel 75.





***The November Elections Could Determine Your End-of-life Options....  
and it has Nothing to do with Hillary or Donald!***

***by Rebecca Thoman, M.D. , Compassion and Choices, Minnesota***

The people we send to St. Paul will be the ones to determine whether Minnesotans have a full range of options at the end of life, including medical aid in dying. Legislation to authorize medical aid in dying made progress last year and will be re-introduced in 2017. However, since candidates want to know what's on your mind right now, let's take advantage of this opportunity to educate these potential future lawmakers.

Every seat in the Minnesota Senate and House of Representatives is up for election this year. Candidates are already door knocking, holding fundraisers and participating in forums. Each of these avenues is an opportunity to introduce the conversation. Many candidates won't know much about medical aid in dying, so you can provide them with the facts.

Tell them why you support end-of-life options, and share these five good reasons why they should too:

- Every person should be able to make end-of-life decisions that are consistent with their values and best for their families.
- Aid in dying commands long-term, bipartisan support among American voters. A 2015 Gallup poll puts support at 68%.
- Aid in dying has been practiced for a combined thirty years in four states without a single documented case of abuse, coercion or disciplinary action of a provider.
- In states where aid in dying is authorized, studies show that end-of-life care improves.
- Aid in dying is entirely optional. No individual, including doctors and other health care professionals, would be required to participate.

Then make The Ask: Minnesota is considering a law that would allow terminally ill, mentally capable adults to self-administer medication for a peaceful death if their suffering becomes unbearable. Will you support legislation to authorize medical aid in dying for terminally ill Minnesotans?

You can also send an email to the candidates. Find whose running here in your district:

<http://candidates.sos.state.mn.us/>

Don't know what district you live in? Find it here: <http://www.gis.leg.mn/iMaps/districts/>

Send us feedback. If you have a conversation, please let us know where the candidate stands at [www.CompassionAndChoices.org/Ask-the-Candidate](http://www.CompassionAndChoices.org/Ask-the-Candidate).

Thanks for doing your part. Ω

*(Conference, Continued from page 1)*

While the conference is free, donations to cover costs are encouraged and most welcome—especially for lunch and refreshments. Childcare will be provided upon request for infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers. Camp Quest will provide morning programming for both elementary age kids and teens. A supervised game room will be available in the afternoon. (Watch for a separate meet-up post for kid activities.) Ω

*(President, Continued from page 2)*

lesce scientific empiricism and progressive values into the well-defined world-view of humanism through his lectures. Other ministers and non-theists followed suit and started using the term “humanism” also. In 1933, Dietrich and over two dozen other philosophers, intellectuals and liberal ministers signed the first [Humanist Manifesto](#). In the decades to follow, distinct secular humanist organizations emerged across the country.

Humanism was never meant to be a static worldview. Hence at this juncture when First Unitarian Society celebrates 100 years of humanism with the installation of John Dietrich as minister in 1916, it is an apt occasion to think about humanism going forward. Our collaboration with FUS for the conference *The Future of Humanism: New Voices of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* promises to be an enriching and provocative day. I hope to see a lot of you there! Ω



### September Chapter Meeting

## *“The Increasing Socio-Economic Inequality in the U.S. and the Role of Finance”*

*Summarized by Nathan Curland*

About 60 members and friends attended the first Humanists of Minnesota chapter meeting of the new season to hear Professor Karen Ho, an anthropologist from the University of Minnesota, talk about how the culture of Wall Street has affected the economics of the United States (and the world) and led to increasing economic inequality.

Dr. Ho began by quoting facts about this disparity, noting that inequality has surpassed the level of the

Great Depression. Quoting [Thomas Piketty](#), she told us that between 1977 and 2007 the top 1% captured 70% of the increase in income. Furthermore, by 2010 the top 20% of households owned 90% of all the privately held wealth, whereas the net value of the bottom 40% was negative. Her thesis is that the central influence on these trends has been the Finance sector.

As an example, she referenced the mid-1990 restructuring of AT&T which resulted in a net loss of 100,000 jobs. Not only did the price of AT&T stock go up but so did that of bank stocks! The reason being that the investment banks expected there to be more such deals from which they would profit handsomely.

At the time, in order to get a better idea on how Wall Street operates, she went to work for Deutsche Bank for a year and then followed that up with three years of research. What she found is that Wall Street engages with public corporations via a stock-dominant view on how to organize the corporation. This view is based on liquidity and “short-termism”. How to get most “value” out of the corporation, now. This culture is transferred to the corporation’s culture via stock options rather than salary and benefits with those in upper management getting the bulk of the advantage and incentive.

Investment banks recruit “the best and the brightest” from elite universities and put them in positions to “make the deals”. Rather than looking for careers with a given company, investment bankers see their jobs as having “expiration dates”. They are compensated to push through the deal and then go find a job at another bank, leaving the problems that arise from their actions to someone else to cope with. The quality of the deal is not important.

Corporations used to be beholden to multiple stakeholders (shareholders, employees, customers etc.). Therefore, they needed to balance multiple goals. Safety net items such as health care and pensions were built on the “scaffold” of the corporation.

In this new culture, publicly financed corporations are beholden only to shareholders with the single goal of shareholder primacy. This culture is characterized by continual restructuring and change. The majority of public corporation owners are finance institutions and funds. These new corporations use their profits to buy back shares and create dividends rather than investing in R&D and expanding their core business. In the post-WWII era the average lifetime of a corporation was 75 years; today it is 15. With the dismantling of the corporation, the social scaffold has been dismantled. The rise of 401Ks, for example, is the outsourcing of a safety net to the finance industry.

These constant cycles of restructuring, reorganization and layoffs has led to massive outsourcing and to the “Gig Economy” where the “gig” is only the job with no safety net scaffolding. There is more flexibility but also more insecurity: the great “risk shift”. Jobs have therefore gone from “careers” to “field work”. The historic path of rising up the corporate ladder has been dismantled.

These trends, along with state funding also being dismantled, have had serious impacts on the millennial generation. From 1978 to 2015 college tuition costs have increased by 1300%. Since 2000, parents have had to spend more on their children after age 18 than for the ages 0-18. In the meantime, children of the privileged have formed invisible social networks that gives them connections which permit them to get ahead.

In the Q&A session that followed, Prof. Ho was immediately asked on how to solve these enormous problems. As a cultural anthropologist, she really wasn’t in a position to provide answers. However she did point out that there are movements to find some solutions such as organizational associations to provide a social safety net. Some questions to ponder are: Will public corporations die under their own weight? Will more private companies be the trend? How can this new culture be shifted?

After the meeting, about half the assemblage stayed for a pizza lunch organized by Mark Thoson. Ω





*Opinion:*

## **“Groupthink”**

*By Harlan Garbell*

"Groupthink" can occur within a social group when the desire for conformity in the group leads to norms that individual members of the group are expected to adhere to. This can result in dysfunctional decision-making. Members of the group will try to reach a consensus decision without critical evaluation of alternative viewpoints. *Over time they tend to isolate themselves from outside influ-*

*ences. A group is especially vulnerable to groupthink when its members are similar in background.* (Paraphrasing from a combination of dictionary sources, emphasis added)

Why am I writing about groupthink? Surely, of all the voluntary organizations we can belong to, a humanist organization would probably be the least likely group to be concerned with this problem. Right? In fact, we even provide organization sponsored trainings in critical thinking. Many of us even declare ourselves "free thinkers." Well, as the late comedian Joan Rivers used to say, "Can we talk?"

We all have our own reasons for becoming members, but I suspect having social interaction with like-minded people is high on the list. It's pleasant and comfortable to discuss one's views about politics, philosophy, and current events with people who share our core values. Moreover, we all want to make friends. It helps us cope with the stresses of making a living, dealing with family issues, or illness. We don't want to give our friends, or potential friends, reasons not to like us. As a result, we often routinely reinforce each other's views on issues and events. However, unless we open ourselves up to other viewpoints, this can make us vulnerable to groupthink.

Recently, I have reviewed the media outlets that our organization uses to interface with each other for over the past several months. This includes our monthly newsletter, the organization's website, and our Facebook group. I was somewhat puzzled by the dearth of any discussions among members that have stirred debate or argument. Why is that? Do we really all think alike? Do we exhibit too much "tribal" loyalty to each other? Or, are we just afraid to stick our necks out for fear of being ostracized?

I was prompted to write this opinion piece as a result of a letter to the editor in last month's newsletter. I disagreed with the gentleman who wrote the letter. In my view, his underlying facts were not firmly established to support his argument. *Moreover, I believe that African-Americans are harassed by police to an extent that few Caucasians can fully understand.* Our President, in her article, was asking readers to better educate themselves to the Black experience in America. In this regard, the letter writer missed the central point of the article. That said, I thought it was noteworthy that the writer took the risk of expressing an opinion that he may have known was contrary to the view shared by a substantial majority of our members.

In my opinion, more of us should take the risk of expressing a potentially unpopular position, notwithstanding the possibility for negative feedback. Alternate views can serve to keep us mentally flexible, open-minded, and helps make for a continuous learning organization. However, when expressing opinions it is important for members to always remain respectful and take care that our facts are right.

I don't think the Humanists of Minnesota are practitioners of groupthink. However, I do believe that all groups can inadvertently fall into this trap, especially if emotions run high during times of societal stress and we hunker down with, what we believe, is our "tribe." If you have an opinion about an issue, even if you feel it may be unpopular with the group, utilize our website or the group page on Facebook to share it with the rest of us. As long as the information posted is factual and well-reasoned, our organization should be strong enough and tolerant enough to accept opposing views, unpopular as they may appear to be. Ω



### ***Highlights from the Board***

*by David Guell  
Secretary*

From the September board meeting:

- The board approved \$50 on Facebook advertising to publicize the Future of Humanism Conference in October.
- Creation of a task force was approved to develop an editorial policy governing opinion pieces and letters to the editor that would appear in the newsletter.

**HUMANIST NEWS & VIEWS****Editor**, Nathan Curland**Editorial Committee** - Brad Bolin, Dale Handeen, Suzanne Perry

Articles, letters, event notices and other writings are welcome. Send to: [editor@humanistsofmn.org](mailto:editor@humanistsofmn.org) with the word "newsletter" in the subject line, or to P.O. Box 582997, Minneapolis, MN 55458-2997. (E-mail submissions are preferred.) All submissions must include the writer's full name, postal address, telephone number and e-mail address. All submissions become the property of this newsletter and cannot be returned. Submission deadline is the 23rd of the prior month.

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**Upcoming Critical Thinking Club Meetings**

*West Metro Chapter. Saturday, October 22nd, 10:00 a.m. to noon: "Minnesota's Emerging Equity Agenda," by Dane Smith, Growth and Justice. Ridge Point Apts. Meeting Room, 12800 Marion Lane W., Minnetonka.*

*Stillwater Chapter. Monday, October 10th, 7:00 p.m.: "9/11 From an Engineering Sandpoint" by Mark Paquette.. Family Means Bldg., 1875 Northwestern Ave, Stillwater.*

*For additional information, visit:  
[www.meetup.com/Critical-Thinking-Club/calendar](http://www.meetup.com/Critical-Thinking-Club/calendar)*

**Maple Grove Discussion Group:**

*Saturday, October 8th, 10:00 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.: "Educating Minnesota Cops, College Costs, and More" with Mike McGee, System Director for Education Industry Partnerships, Maple Grove Community Center, 12951 Weaver Lake Rd, room 124, Maple Grove 55311, \$5 donation. Register at [landfor-sale@visi.com](mailto:landfor-sale@visi.com) or call Laurie at (763) 420-6350.*

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Humanists of Minnesota is a nonprofit educational corporation and has been granted a 501(c)(3) tax exemption as an educational, scientific and charitable organization. Donations to Humanists of Minnesota are tax deductible. HofM is a chapter of the American Humanist Association (AHA) and an affiliate of the Alliance of Secular Humanist Societies of the Council for Secular Humanism (CSH). Address inquiries to the Humanists of Minnesota, P.O. Box 582997, Minneapolis, MN 55458-2997. E-mail us at [president@humanistsofmn.org](mailto:president@humanistsofmn.org) or visit our web site: [www.humanistsofmn.org](http://www.humanistsofmn.org)

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October 2016

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION OR RENEWAL**

Your membership is vital to the growth of Humanism and the Humanist community. Our membership categories are:  
(For categories at RH and above, married couples or domestic partners will be considered as one membership, if you so indicate.)

- (B) Budget, \$25.00
- (RI) Regular Individual, \$40.00
- (RH) Regular Household, \$60.00
- (S) Sustaining, \$100.00
- (P) Patron, \$250.00
- (BN) Benefactor, \$500.00
- (L) Life Membership, \$1000.00
- (T) Trial subscription for 3 months, just ask

\*Full time students at an accredited institution can receive a complimentary subscription

For national or international membership write to:

American Humanist Association  
1777 T Street NW  
Washington, DC 20009-7125  
[www.americanhumanist.org](http://www.americanhumanist.org)

Council for Secular Humanism  
PO Box 664  
Amherst, NY 14226  
[www.secularhumanism.org](http://www.secularhumanism.org)

Please check the appropriate box, complete the information and mail with your check to Humanists of Minnesota, P.O. Box 582997, Minneapolis, MN 55458-2997.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

(for special announcements, blogs etc. Keeps you in touch!)

I would like my newsletter sent via email (  ) (in color!)

Second Member at same address (for RH and above):

Visit our website at:  
[www.humanistsofmn.org](http://www.humanistsofmn.org)

