



The Secular Circular

Newsletter of the Humanist Society of Santa Barbara

www.SBHumanists.org

MARCH 2025

Please join us on Zoom for our March speaker presentation...

From the Solar System to the Most Distant Galaxies: 2-½ Years of Discoveries with the James Webb Space Telescope

Our Program: Since its first images were released in July 2022, JWST- the largest telescope ever placed in space—has given astronomers an unparalleled view of the cosmos from the solar system to the most distant galaxies ever observed. Often referred to as “the successor to Hubble”, this telescope is demonstrating why space telescopes are so important to advance our understanding of the universe.

In this talk we'll take a tour of what astronomers have learned so far from JWST, and what these discoveries tell us about our place in the universe. Dr. Freedman previously spoke to HSSB in September 2018 ([A Matter of Some Gravity: What Newton Never Knew About Gravitation](#)) and in May 2022 ([Seeing Into The Cold: The Story of NASA and ESA's James Webb Space Telescope](#)). So much has been discovered since then! It's time for an update.

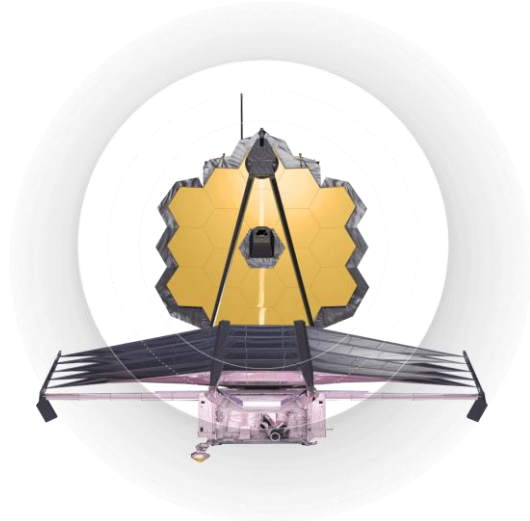
Our Speaker: Roger Freedman is an emeritus associate teaching professor in the Department of Physics at UCSB. He is the co-author of several physics and astronomy textbooks which are used across the U.S. and around the world. In addition to his ongoing work on conventional textbooks, he is co-creating a series of comic book stories designed to help physics students improve their problem-solving skills.



Saturday March 15, 3:00–4:30 pm Pacific.

On Zoom:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88193881833>



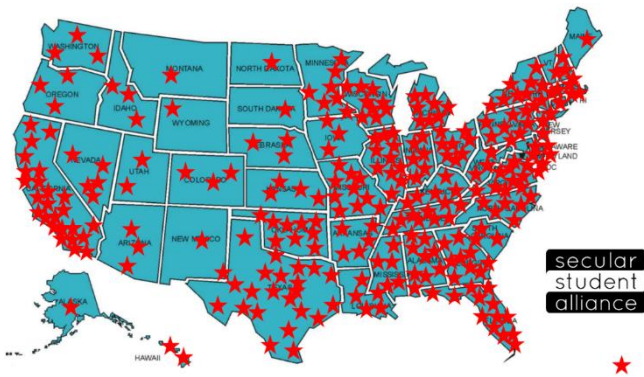
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Kevin Bolling Religion in Schools: The Battle Over After-School Proselytization

By Robert Bernstein

Kevin Bolling is Executive Director of the Secular Student Alliance (SSA) and he gave a wake up call for what is happening to undermine secular education in the U.S. now.

The SSA is the only national non-profit dedicated to working with students on atheist and Humanist issues. It has student chapters from elementary school through college. It was founded in 2000 and has a presence in every state.



Their main focus is on college campuses. There are many faith-based ministries on college campuses. One campus has 120 such ministries! Versus only one Secular Student Alliance.

Public schools in the U.S. are supposed to provide secular education. This is not so in many other countries. Christian Nationalists are organizing to destroy our secular system of education.

Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos in Trump's first term declared that she wants to use U.S. schools "to build God's Kingdom."

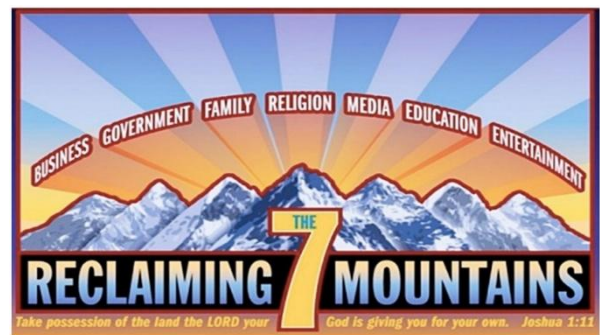
Linda McMahon is his current Secretary of Education. As with DeVos, she is totally unqualified for the position. As with DeVos, her mission is to abolish or diminish the Department of Education. McMahon is for 'school choice' and vouchers. She wants to privatize financial aid. Students will never be able to pay off their student loans. By design.

Vouchers are just bad, Bolling explained. No study shows beneficial outcomes. Vouchers divert money from public schools. Private schools don't have to abide by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or follow anti-discrimination laws. Vouchers are also a threat to religious freedom, which is why even Texas and Tennessee fought them.

Attorney Michael Farris has gathered wealthy Christians to "take down the education system as we know it today."

Bolling talked about Project 2025 and Agenda 47. Project 2025 came from the Heritage Foundation and is just the latest in their series of extreme right wing plans for their endorsed presidents upon taking power, starting with Reagan. Agenda 47 is the official plan from Trump himself. Both plans call for eliminating the Department of Education. Both plans would also censor what can be taught in schools. Both plans would end protections for LGBTQ+ people. Both plans want to erase any mention of the Climate Crisis and any agencies that would work to solve it or even track it. Notably, they both want to shut down the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which, of course, includes the National Weather Service. Full disclosure: I once worked for NOAA.

Bolling went on to tell us about 'Reclaiming the Seven Mountains': Business, Government, Family, Religion, Media, Education, and Entertainment. This is an evangelical Christian plan that seems to have originated about 50 years ago. It was written into the National Prayer Breakfast this year and is based on Isaiah 2:2 in the Christian Bible.



The Child Evangelism Fellowship which sponsors the Good News Club, started in 1937. It sets up and runs after-school religious clubs in elementary schools. Milford Central School in New York tried to

ban the Good News Club. The case went to the Supreme Court. In 2001, Clarence Thomas wrote the majority opinion: If other clubs are allowed, then so are religious clubs.

The Good News Club is international. Between 3000 and 4000 schools have them. They are evangelical. They put up colorful fliers making it look like fun. Their members wear Good News Club t-shirts to class. They offer rewards for bringing new people and they serve pizza at their meetings.

Underneath is a dark message. It is very Bible centered. Parents have no idea what is going on. They assume it must be OK if it is happening in school.

The mission of Good News Clubs is to convert children to fundamentalist Christianity and to encourage them to proselytize to their peers. Children are told they they have dark and sinful hearts. They are born that way and they deserve to die and go to hell if they don't do as they are told by the Good News Club.

They are taught that science teachers are 'fools' and are servants of Satan for teaching evolution or teaching about the Big Bang.

The Satanic Temple originally called their program, 'After School Satan'. Chapters were only started where there was a Good News Club to push the point that if one group is allowed, then so should be the other. Equal freedom for all religious organizations.

Bolling showed a Faith Nation clip from the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN).

The Satanic Temple (TST) teaches about nature and science. June Everett got involved with TST when her child was terrified by the Good News Club talk of burning in hell (and even their dog burning in hell). Both clubs are protected by the 2001 Supreme Court ruling.

One Christian leader admitted that some of the Good News teachings are dark and scary. But he noted that is the word of God and they have to be true to it.

The After School Satan Club (ASSC) will only go in if invited by a local person. In contrast, Good News

Clubs go in even if they are not invited. In once case 8,000 signatures were collected to keep out ASSC. Bolling is good with that; the controversy just raises their visibility! Proselytizing is not the goal of ASSC. They are not trying to convert anyone to Satanism. Instead, they focus on teaching free inquiry and rationalism.

EDUCATING WITH SATAN

- The After School Satan Club does not believe in introducing religion into public schools and will only open a club if other religious groups are operating on campus.
- ASSC exists to provide a safe and inclusive alternative to the religious clubs that use threats of eternal damnation to convert school children to their belief system.
- Proselytization is not the goal, and ASSC is not used to convert children to Satanism.
- After School Satan Clubs will focus on free inquiry and rationalism, the scientific basis for what we know about the world.
- ASSC prefers to give children an appreciation of the natural wonders surrounding them, not a fear of everlasting other-worldly horrors.

SSA formed an alliance with ASSC. ASSC is entirely run by parents and teachers. SSA chapters are run by students. SSA offers resources such as scholarships and materials. ASSC is classified as a church under IRS rules. [note: HSSB has supported an SSA scholarship for the past couple of years. We receive the benefit of adding the scholarship applicants' contact info to our non-member mailing list. -ed.]

'Released Time' was one of the scariest things we learned in Bolling's talk. Even though religion cannot be taught in public school, many public schools create the same effect through Released Time. School time is set aside for students to be sent off campus for religious indoctrination.

Back at school, all teaching stops during this time. The Supreme Court case *Zorach v. Clauson* in 1952 allowed this. Lifewise Academy is one of the largest Released Time projects. Lifewise refuses to divulge its curriculum. It claims to do background checks. It is very conservative and teaches only the Christian Bible. A Google search turned up a group called, [Parents Against Lifewise](#).

Bolling then took questions and comments.

Judy Flattery said that she experienced Release Time in elementary school. She now wonders if maybe Release Time is what had her parents feel okay with

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sending her to public school, considering all they ever experienced were Catholic schools (or maybe they just wanted to protect her from the harsh treatment they received from some of the teacher/nuns!).

Judy Flattery also noted that, as a student at SBCC, her daughter was regularly approached by evangelical groups, but never by any secular group.

Wayne asked about Katherine Stewart. Bolling said she wrote a book about the Good News Club (*The Good News Club: The Religious Right's Stealth Assault on America's Children*). Judy Flattery said that Katherine Stewart had been a local mom who had spoken to HSSB about her Good News Club concerns. Judy Fontana said Katherine Stewart let everyone know the real mission of the Good News Club and successfully kept them out at that time...

However!!! A quick check on the internet after Kevin's talk shows that **Good News Clubs are all over south Santa Barbara County.**

For details see the [Good News Clubs](#) website. The home page says, "Child Evangelism Fellowship®...is a Bible-centered, worldwide organization of born-again believers who are intentionally sharing the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ with children... Over half of the children who attend our programs come from non-believing or unchurched families...each club includes a clear presentation of the Gospel and an opportunity for children to trust the Lord Jesus as Savior. Every club also includes strong discipleship training to build character and strengthen moral and spiritual growth. All children are encouraged to attend a local church."

According to the website, Good News Clubs are currently meeting at **ALL of the the following schools** in our area. There are no After School Satan Clubs here. The Good News Clubs are free to attend.

Santa Barbara: Adams School, Cleveland School, Foothill School, Roosevelt School, Vieja Valley

School, Washington School, Hollister School, and Hope School

Carpinteria: Aliso and Canalino Schools

Goleta: Brandon School

Lompoc: La Honda STEAM Academy

Solvang: Solvang School!!

Ojai: Topa Topa Elementary (Ventura county) Note that ASSC is offering their program in Ojai to counter the Good News Club at Topa Topa Elementary School. No ASSC is offered in Santa Barbara County.

Ron asked why ASSC puts Satan in their name. Bolling said it is to be intentionally provocative. To create enough protest against them that they are kept out along with the religious groups.

Dave Flattery noted that having Satan in the name allows them to be classified as a religious group! Bolling explained that they don't actually believe in God or Satan. They do want to provide an alternative to the religious groups. To be friendly, kind, rational and scientific.

Judy Flattery noted that The Satanic Temple also has a Baphomet statue that they mobilize to install wherever the Ten Commandments are displayed on public grounds. They usually succeed in getting both removed.

Judy Flattery asked how they keep continuity of the SSA chapters if they are student run. What happens when the leaders graduate?



Bolling said that is a huge issue. Especially after COVID. But they are doing better than other progressive organizations.

They are reaching about two million students in the U.S. California has been slow to recover. But Texas has new chapters starting all the time! They give out pins to new members so they can see they are not alone.

Upcoming Events of Interest to Humanists

Submitted by Diane Krohn & Melanie Jacobsen

- March 1: Andrew Ross Sorkin. *Inside the Minds of Today's Changemakers*. UCSB Arts & Lectures event. [Andrew Ross Sorkin](#)
- March 2, 10 am: Peter Hale. *Epicurus and the Art of Happiness*. Greek philosophers spoke of science, politics and individual character. Only Epicurus spoke about achieving happiness. Come appreciate his relevant teachings from 2000 years ago. [LOUUC-Goleta](#).
- March 9, 10 am: Rev. Jonathan Young. *The Enduring Flame*. Join LOUUC in celebrating their 40th anniversary and appreciating the generosity that has supported Live Oak through four decades of caring service. [LOUUC-Goleta](#).
- March 16: Joe Horine. *Evidence, Interpretation and 'Truth' in Cinema Classics*. Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles. [Joe Horine](#)
- March 23, 10 am: Rev. Jonathan Young. *The Wisdom of Rumi*. The most-read poet of our time is a 13th century Sufi mystic. Come reflect on timeless lessons about yearning for meaning and celebrating the essence of life in the writings of Rumi. [LOUUC-Goleta](#).
- March 30, 10am. *Flower Communion-Worship Ministry*. In 1923, Norbert Capek introduced a new ceremony to his Unitarian Church in Czechoslovakia. We will mark this UU tradition by celebrating a *Flower Communion* (giving and receiving our spring blossoms). This reminds us of our shared gifts and the love present in our community. Bring a flower to place on the altar for the communion. [LOUUC-Goleta](#).
- April 5-7: Summit for Religious Freedom, convened by Americans United for Separation of Church and State. The conference is in Washington, D.C. and virtual. [Summit for Religious Freedom 2025](#)
- April 17-20: American Atheists 2025 National Convention, Minneapolis, MN. [American Atheists 2025 Convention](#)
- April 20: Katherine Stewart: Inside the Movement to Destroy American Democracy.

Center for Inquiry West, Los Angeles. [Katherine Stewart](#)

- June 27-29: American Humanist Association 84th Annual Conference, Chicago, IL. [AHA 84th Annual Conference](#)
- July 18-20: Scopes Trial Centennial Conference, Chattanooga, TN. Hosted by the Center For Inquiry and the Freedom From Religion Foundation. Featuring Richard Dawkins, Dan Barker, Annie Laurie Gaylor, Katherine Stewart, Robyn E. Blumner, and more! [Scopes Trial Centennial](#).

Have you seen our HSSB Version of *Inherit The Wind* based on the Scopes Trial?
[Watch it Here!!](#) It's Great!

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To Join or Donate to HSSB: Annual Membership dues - \$36 for an individual, \$60 for a couple, \$100 for a Society Supporter, and \$300 (or more) for a Society Patron. Dues payments and other donations can be made via PayPal (Paypal.me/SBHumanists), check or credit card. Include your name and contact information when submitting payments. Make checks out to *Humanist Society of Santa Barbara* and mail to Mary Wilk, P.O. Box 30232, Santa Barbara, CA 93130. mwilk722@gmail.com. Dues, donations, & payments can be remitted via this PayPal QR code. At the PayPal site, select 'Send' then log into your PayPal account to complete the transaction. Watch our speaker videos on [YouTube](#). Subscribe to our [Meetup](#) page to be notified of upcoming events.



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Humanist Society of Santa Barbara
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HSSB Calendar

Tuesday March 11, 5:00 pm. HSSB Board Meeting. Members always welcome to attend.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83592300667>.

Saturday March 15, 3:00 pm. Dr. Roger Freedman. *From the Solar System to the Most Distant Galaxies: 2-1/2 Years of Discoveries with the James Webb Space Telescope.*

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88193881833>.

Tuesday April 15, 5:00 pm. HSSB Board Meeting. Members always welcome to attend.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83592300667>.

Saturday April 19, 3:00 pm. The current plan is to view the movie *God & Country* about Christian Nationalism followed by a panel discussion. Possibly at Live Oak UU plus Zoom.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88193881833>.

Tuesday May 20, 5:00 pm. HSSB Board Meeting. Members always welcome to attend.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83592300667>.

Saturday May 24. Timothy C. Hale, Esq. National expert in successfully litigating cases against churches and other organizations that sexually abuse children.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88193881833>.