



Americans United for Separation of Church and State

3337 S. Bristol, #251, Santa Ana, CA 92704

On the web at www.au-oc.org Email us at orangecountyau@yahoo.com

Program Announcement

Jim Armendaris—Orange County Human Relations Commission

January 20th 2:00 p.m. at the Irvine Ranch Water District

Religious Hate Crimes in Orange County

January 2007

Volume 3, Issue 1

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At our January meeting, the Orange County Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State will present James Armendaris of the Orange County Human Relations Commission.

He has been with the Commission since 2001 as a court/community mediator and trainer in the Dispute Resolution Program. In 2006 he transitioned to the Community Building Program and collaborates in the production of the annual Hate Crime Report, is a member of the Victims' Assistance Partnership, conducts various trainings in the community, and works on

Police/Community relations.

In addition to discussing the hate crime situation in Orange County he will talk to us about what a hate crime is and what to do if you see a hate crime in progress or believe you are victim of a hate crime.

Jim will be bringing copies of the latest Hate Crimes Report for everyone. From this we will be able to learn what the state of hate crimes is in the County and whether or not the trends are good or bad. After all the OC Human Relations Commission has been following this for 10 years now.

Jim will also talk about the Victims Assistance Partnership for victims of hate crimes.

As well as being an opportunity to learn about this important issue we will be able to get an understanding of why hate crimes go unreported. This is an important topic for us as we should be at the vanguard of protecting our community against crimes of hate. One way to do that is to become involved in the Orange County Hate Crimes Network which meets quarterly.

I hope to see everyone there!



Come to this meeting and learn how you can help our community, promote understanding and acceptance for all people, and develop a climate in which we are all enriched by each other.

January 16th is "Religious Freedom Day", and by proclamation calls upon Americans to "observe this day through appropriate events and activities in homes, schools, and places of worship."

The day is the anniversary of the passage, in 1786, of the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom.

If you have students in school, ensure that they are observing this date—but it should be remembered that this is celebrating our most important civil liberty from the First Amendment.

Don't let the religious right take it away!

Message from the President—Steph Campbell

The 2006 War on Christmas now seems to be over—at least until next year and so hopefully we can look at some more important issues.

We had a good meeting in November in which we combined both our year in review and the 2007 planning meeting. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who participated—and especially those who are following up with help on turning all the ideas into concrete plans for 2007.

As you know, we will be covering hate crimes in the January meeting and will have an excellent presentation from the Orange County Human Relations Commission. In March we will be having Irvine School Board member Gavin Huntley-Fenner who will be exploring the role of religion in secular

schools.

We are very excited that in May we will be bringing Michael Newdow to Orange County. He is the individual who has challenged “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance and will be bringing us up to date on the legal status as well as some other litigation with which he has been involved.

We are also planning on tabling at various events as well as working on coalition building with other organizations and will continue to work on promoting the First Freedom First campaign. I think we can expect that 2007 will be an exciting year for the chapter and I hope all of our members will be a part of our activities.

—Steph Campbell

New AU Activist Group

Do you know what your local City Council and School Board are doing? Are after school activities being fairly administered? Does your elected official disparage members of minority religious faiths or try to impose their vision of morality outside secular law?

You can be part of the solution by getting involved with your local City Council and School Board meetings. Find out where and when they meet at our website, <http://au-oc.org/activism.htm>.

On February 17, our activists group will meet to learn how to work with local government to protect the First Amendment and religious freedom. We will meet at the Irvine Ranch Water District, 15600 Sand Canyon in Irvine at 2:00 pm. We hope to see you there.

Letters To The Editor—If you'd like to write a guest editorial, share your views or respond to a newsletter article, please send your submission to the address or email on Page 4.

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Look at the former leader of the Christian Coalition, Ralph Reed. He told his people to use stealth in their campaigns for school boards. “Don't reveal the truth until after you have been elected, then you can implement the conservative agenda.

In the final analysis, it's not religious belief that should concern us today, it's saving our country from extremists so we can all live in religious peace as established by our founding fathers.

Make no mistake, we are in a religious war. We have been at war for decades. If the rightwing wins, and separation of church and state

is no more, we will see a country torn apart by religious strife. If one religion becomes dominate and is joined to the government, our Constitution will be voided and replaced with the Bible. We will have our own unique religious police and all non-Christians would be smart to leave the country if this should happen; a holocaust could happen again right here.

I hope my fears are wrong, but if the right wing does take control of our country (and that is the stated goal no matter what they say in public.) there would be no place in America for non-Christians

The first step to counter the current trend is to elect politicians who clearly support the separation of church and state.

Next, force our local, state and federal governments to enforce separation of church and state the way our founders intended.

The last step is for the millions of moderate Christians to teach their members and their communities how to recognize those who misuse the message of Jesus for their own benefit

Friends ... we are as close to a right wing religious coup than at any time in our history. ☸☸☸

Some time ago I began to compile my observations on religion and my religious journey so my children can understand my history as a Christian. As my writing continued I discovered a deeper concern about Christianity that goes far beyond my family. The war being waged by the right wing religious extremists has already taken the Republican Party, the White House, and part of the Supreme Court, and they are having an incredible success in all branches of our military. Their goal is a Christian Nation.

With more evangelical Christians in Congress, it is becoming easier and easier to pressure our politicians to look the other way on matters of separation of church and state. We expect politicians to rely on their religious beliefs when doing their job, which in a democracy, requires compromise. Fanatic Christians are unable to compromise.

It worries me that most people simply laugh off the crazy or exaggerated statements made by the TV preachers and the other self styled religious leaders. It's time we take them seriously! Most Christians can't believe that a Christian leader would deliberately say and do things that Jesus would condemn.

Yet there are many egotistical Evangelical ministers who shamelessly use the Bible to propel themselves into operating megachurches for the benefit of their own bank accounts. They teach about the Jesus that best suits their goals and they are quick to share what "God" has revealed to them

to increase the inflow of money. When some are caught stealing or worse, they rely upon "forgiveness" to save their fortunes.

Most recently Pat Robertson said God would not answer the prayers of people in Dover, PA because they rejected the inclusion of "Intelligent Design" in science class. (It is a religious belief - not science) And now he claims it was God's wrath that struck down Israeli Prime Minister Sharon. Where does he get these gems? Is he one of God's chosen communicators?

Our Founders warned us about the excesses of religious zealots. That is why they gave us a secular republic and established the principal of separation of church and state, even though many of them were Christians. It was to protect politicians from religious pressure and to protect religions from government interference. This is what has made our country great. This is what the religious right is trying to destroy so they can control all of us.

"Onward, moderate Christian soldiers" by U S Senator John C. Danforth in the June 20, 2005 issue of the Long Beach Press-Telegram is the most intelligent article I've ever read by a Christian minister and should be read by everyone calling themselves Christians. Who knows, had I met Rev. Danforth, I might have remained a Christian. Well, probably not, but I certainly have the utmost respect today for those Christians following Danforth's principals.

Moderate Christian leaders believe in a God of love and allow their

followers to make their own decisions as to how they vote. These leaders do what ministers are supposed to do for their members and society as a whole; they don't lead a mob down Pennsylvania Avenue screaming for politicians to give them special favors.

The more aggressive denominations, such as the right wing fanatics who seek to control our lives according to their narrow view of Christianity; the group that now controls the Republican Party, including the Christian Reconstructionists who want to replace our Constitution with their Bible, are a group of people we should actually fear. They want to destroy the public schools. They are also responsible for many of the text books used by those parents who home school their children. The Reconstructionists believe Democracy is heresy, public schools are satanic and that stoning isn't just for the Taliban anymore. And they have more influence than you think—see the July/August 2006 issue of Church and State.)

During several decades, right wing opportunists have been organizing in order to offer politicians large voting blocks of Christians in exchange for pushing their narrow and sometimes vicious agendas. THIS MUST STOP. TV preachers are part of this unconstitutional enterprise.

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We're on the web
at www.au-oc.org

Americans United-OC Chapter
3337 S. Bristol, #251
Santa Ana, CA 92704



January

20 – AU General Meeting—Religious Hate Crimes (Irvine Ranch Water District, Multi-Purpose Room at 2 pm)

February

17 – AU Activist Group: How to Monitor your School Board and City Council (Irvine Ranch Water District, Multi-Purpose Room at 2 pm)

March

17– AU General Meeting—Explore the role religion has in our secular education system (Irvine Ranch Water District, 2 pm)

Every Month

AU-OC Steering Committee
1st Thursdays, 7:00
Call 714-299-4551 for information and location

Keep Up To Date with Americans United-Orange County

Along with our newsletter, we keep people informed with what's going on in the fight to preserve separation of church and state as well as our events through the web site at www.au-oc.org and also through our Yahoo! Group. If you're not on the Yahoo! Group, send an email to us at: au-oc-subscribe@yahogroups.com. We meet at the Irvine Ranch Water District, 15600 Sand Canyon Ave., Irvine on the 3rd Saturday at 2:00 pm.

Irvine Ranch Water District neither supports nor endorses the cause nor activities of organizations which use the District's meeting rooms that are made available as a public service.

Join or Renew Today!

Basic membership is \$25 and includes an annual subscription to Church & State magazine. We are a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, and donations beyond the \$18.00 value of the subscription to Church & State magazine are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. Email any questions to orangecountyau@yahoo.com; to join or renew, complete this form and mail to the chapter at: 3337 S. Bristol, #251, Santa Ana, California 92704

New Membership Renewal Membership Special Donation

\$25 **\$50** **\$75** **Other** _____ **Amount Enclosed:** _____

Name _____

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