

## *Leader's Message*

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Recently WHYY presented a two part series on Mormonism. The show was relatively objective and therefore presented a religion with a strange history. While I have trouble understanding how anyone could believe Mormonism's far-fetched story, I have to remind myself how far-fetched older (and therefore more acceptable) the stories of other religions are. And yet all those religions claim a membership in the millions while Ethical Humanism, that offers everyday living without magic as its story, can claim only several thousand members. Obviously the lack of a far-fetched story has not helped us grow.

While we might be proud of our clearheadedness, we ought to also be doing a better job of telling our clear-headed story. In the opening statement that we read on Sunday mornings we talk of faith and a supreme aim of human life. Both of those ideas are heavy, full of connections and connotations that we don't often examine. I guess we could dig into those connotations and with a few obtuse phrases make our story sound rather far-fetched but we don't have to bother. To a world accustomed to far-fetched belief systems our sensible, human-oriented beliefs can sound like the weird story.

We are an Ethical Humanist religious community that is non-dogmatic in its approach to its belief claims. As a result some of our most basic principles go unappreciated or misunderstood by some members who feel free to take them with quite a few grains of salt.

Since I honestly assume that the farfetched stories of some traditional religions are part of the reason humankind has such trouble creating a kinder, better world (they center life in other, unnatural realities rather than in social relations with life), and since I believe Ethical Humanism's sensible, fetching story is our primary tool in making a better world, then members ought to be clear in their understanding of our stated beliefs. We offer a rational vision of involvement with and responsibility for the life around us not with rituals but in the way we live our lives. That is not just a philosophy, it is also a recommended way of living—a guide for the perplexed. The more we understand that way of life, the more confident we can be in recommending Ethical Humanism to others.

In other words, we have a good product (sorry about the use of that capitalistic term) and we ought to spread the word. And since I will be speaking twice in May, I have decided to use those occasions to approach two of our key ideas: intrinsic worth and Adler's statement, "Act so to elicit the best in others, thereby bringing out the best in yourself". They are key to understanding our approach. Intrinsic worth explains our perspective on reality: living is a relationship among equals. And "Act so..." is our recommendation on how to act in those relationships.

Rather than just talking about those core values I want to place those ideas in real life situations and will do that by discussing *The Worth of Useless People and Bringing Out the Best in Capitalism*. <>