

April 2, 2012

Northwest Freethought Coalition of Reason

Dear Ron (and company),

In the name of academic liberty and free inquiry, and for the purpose of promoting among young people the love of the sciences and the broader liberal arts, I would be interested in debating a representative of your organization before a high school audience in a secular setting. I propose the title, *"Naturalism or Theism: Where Do the Facts of Science, History, and the Insights of Human Experience Point?"* At the outset both of the above terms would certainly need to be clearly defined. Would you have an interest in such a joint venture?

I am the Pastor of Zion Lutheran Church in Snohomish Washington. I am well acquainted with the positions of Stephen Hawking, Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Michael Shermer, and other leading humanists. And I wish to challenge the assertions of your organization that humanism (broadly speaking) has a corner on rationality and is supported by the latest scientific knowledge, especially in terms of cosmology. In turn, I invite your presenter to intellectually challenge my arguments in favor of God's existence. The public debate over such a foundational question could greatly enhance among budding adults both intellectual curiosity and the scientific spirit of following evidence wherever it leads. I would expect such an exchange (perhaps an hour with Q & A) to be vigorous, yet civil and respectful.

I have yet to approach the public schools on this matter since the request for a school assembly invitation will be stronger when I have a debate team already assembled. I envision the possibility of other such events in school districts across our region in the future. I would be pleased for the public as well to attend this event. Would you agree to work with me on this matter?

Sincerely,

Gary Jensen, Pastor

Zion Lutheran Church

311 Union Avenue

Snohomish, WA 98290

The following morning I got a phone call from Jim Corbett, another representative of the organization, expressing on their behalf, their enthusiasm as an organization for putting on a debate together under the theme I proposed. The e-mail below follows after our phone conversation.

11:17 AM (1 minute ago)

Mr. Golf mrgolf@mrgolf.com

to me, foxheart1, Robert

Dear Pastor Jensen,

It was really a pleasure to chat with you this morning about planning a debate on Humanism and Theism. I will look forward to meeting with you on Monday, April 9<sup>th</sup> at 10:00AM to discuss some of the parameters of the event (date, time, format, etc). As I mentioned, it is not 100% certain that I am going to be the representative from the Humanist side, but I am hopeful to be the “designated hitter,” though I promise the use of the word ‘hitter’ is purely metaphorical.

I have participated in this type of debate on several occasions, and it is always exciting and interesting to share the different perspectives from which we view the world. I am sure this event will be the same.

I have included the address and phone number below of the Starbucks where we will be meeting, so there is no confusion.

Thanks for your invitation to participate and I am sure I speak for my fellow-Humanists when I say we are all looking forward to a great event.

Sincerely,

Jim Corbett

[425-879-0012](tel:425-879-0012)

**Starbucks:**

1.4809 132nd St SE  
Everett, WA 982086241  
[425-338-1327](tel:425-338-1327)

I got your e-mail Jim, and I too look forward to our get-together. If I have any say in the matter, I am eager to work with you. Looking forward to Monday.

Gary Jensen