

Fellowship of Reason

December 2004 Newsletter "Advocating Heroic Engagement with Life"

Volume 6, Number 12

International Section (Received by all local chapters)

Mission Statement

The Fellowship of Reason®, Inc. (FOR) is an open, benevolent, and vital rational moral community in which we celebrate our lives, our freedoms, and our philosophy of reason. We study ethics.

The Will to Community

By Martin L. Cowen III

I went to pick up my two-year-old son from school. I did not see him in the playground, so I asked the playground monitor. "He's climbing over the top of the rope ladder," he responded. Oh, my God! My 2-year-old toddler was 8 feet off the ground, 100 feet from the monitor, climbing a rope netting and crossing over the top to go down the other side.

I went to the equipment and watched Alexander's little legs swing over the top trying to reach the high rope on the other side of the equipment. His legs were too short. Alexander retreated down the face of the net, safely.

I was concerned for Alexander. My wife called the teacher and the teacher agreed that Alexander should be spotted and that he should not go over the top. He could still use the equipment.

I watched the playground monitor for a week. No spotting.

My choices included these: (1) complain more loudly; (2) withdraw Alexander from school; or (3) **become the playground monitor myself.**

I chose option 3. I chose to make and to nurture the community that is Counterpane Montessori School.

Community Defined

A community is an intentional, enduring relationship between two or more people. A friendship, a marriage, a family, and the Fellowship of Reason are all communities.

When two or more people form a community, a third entity, the community, comes into existence. The community is their joint project. A friendship, a marriage, a family, and the Fellowship of Reason are all entities distinct and different from their members. My wife and I exist as separate individuals, but our marriage exists, too, as our creation.

Why Make and Nurture Community?

Communities are formed to serve various human needs: psychological visibility, education, efficient division of labor, the creation of meaning, self-improvement, the fulfillment of the human function of procreation, commerce, and trade.

I have mentioned four communities—friendships, marriages, families, and moral communities.

In each of these communities—friendships, marriages, families, and moral communities—the constellation of values held in common is vast. Other communities, like yacht clubs (a common interest in boating) or motorcycle clubs (a common interest in motorcycling) or schools (a common interest in the education of one's children) or bridge clubs (a common interest in bridge) or fitness clubs (a common interest in fitness) or running clubs (a common interest in jogging) or homeowner's associations (a common interest in maintaining the neighborhood) or villages (a common interest in police services) or states (a common interest in good government) or countries (a common interest in national defense) share only one or a few values.

Because the constellation of shared values is so spectacular, we tend to value friendships, marriages, families, and moral communities more highly than we do our running club, for instance. We are willing to work harder to maintain these primary communities. We tend to tolerate difficulties and pain associated with our primary communities better than one-issue communities that are easily replaced.

A friend, a wife or husband, a child, and a moral community are very difficult to replace, if at all.

The Failure to Choose Community

Some people do not choose to make or to nurture community.

People with an outsized asset

People with an outsized asset or virtue may think they need not seek community. Billionaire Howard Hughes did not need to make or to nurture relationships. He could buy all the “friends” he wanted. Some beautiful women need only “be” in order to have attention. Artistic geniuses, sometimes too, are surrounded by fawning sycophants. The big boss in any business is never lacking for somebody with whom to talk.

The need to make and to nurture community may be overlooked by people with an enormous asset.

People without knowledge

As a child, adolescent, young adult, adult, or mature adult I have never been instructed that community is something after which one ought to strive. I suppose that most others are like me and have not been *instructed* in the value of friendship, marriage, family, or moral community.

Learning to be a friend, to be a husband or wife, to be a parent, or to be a member of a moral community is a learn-as-you-go proposition for the most part.

Some people never learn.

The Community Instruction Manual

How to be a good friend? How to be a good wife or husband? How to be a good parent? How to be a good member of a moral community? All of these are great themes for essays, books, or classes. And, in fact, all *are*, except for the last.

Here are some ideas about the last theme—How to be a good member of a moral community?

Know why you are there

Among reasons for community I have mentioned these: **psychological visibility**, **education**, **efficient division of labor**, **the creation of meaning**, **self-improvement**, the fulfillment of the human function

of procreation, commerce, and trade. You may have your own reasons for community.

In the Fellowship of Reason we find people of like-mind. For us, like-minds means people who are interested in ideas, in learning new ideas, in using reason to guide our lives, and in enjoying human achievement in the arts, music, philosophy, science, and letters. A common characteristic that we all seem to share is that we feel we still have something, if not a great deal, to learn.

We find pleasure among people who share our interest in ideas.

Know what your community needs

While our community has monetary needs, because our Board of Trustees is so frugal and our membership so generous, those needs are currently being met. Our long-range hope to have a building that will house our many activities will require new levels of membership and fundraising.

Our community exists in our many activities: FORum, potluck, movie night, pub night, hiking, swamp trip, white water rafting, Reason Runners, FOR Symphony, movie outings, theater outings, Toastmasters, philosophy tapes, Invisible College, book club, non-fiction book club, and Philosophy Café. That’s 17 weekly, monthly, annual, or ad hoc activities!

The things we do imply what we need. We need performers for FORum. We need hosts for potluck. We need participants for all our many activities.

We also need leadership. There are 5 members of the Board of Trustees. We need volunteers for offices, directorships, and coordinators. We need somebody to make coffee for FORum. If we don’t have an activity you want to coordinate, invent one. Most of our activities were invented by their coordinators.

Finally, we need audiences. Our performers enjoy presenting to a large crowd. Show up. Be supportive. If you don’t like something, rather than complain, why don’t you do it yourself the next time? It’s easy to complain. It’s hard to perform.

Thank you for willing the existence of this community, the Fellowship of Reason.

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Local Section: Atlanta Chapter Calendar and Contact Information

December Birthdays

December 5	Carolyn Hadaway
December 21	Bill Greene
December 22	George Sossenko
December 22	Frank Jenkins
December 25	Marianna Long
December 27	Leanna Ampola
December 29	Andrew Stallard
December 30	Mike Brady

January Birthdays

January 18	Vera Norman
January 30	Mark Sulkowski
January 31	Sally Hull

FORum Schedule and Tentative Theme

- Sunday, January 2, 2005 **Personal Mission**
- Sunday, February 6, 2005 **Mythology and Mystery**
- Sunday, March 6, 2005 **Heroes**
- Sunday, April 3, 2005 **Growth**
- Sunday, May 1, 2005 **Friendship**
- Sunday, June 5, 2005 **Science**
- Sunday, July 3, 2005 **Freedom**
- Sunday, August 7, 2005 **Personal Performance**
- Sunday, September 4, 2005 **Education**
- Sunday, October 2, 2005 **Leadership**
- Sunday, November 6, 2005 **Market Place of Ideas**
- Sunday, December 4, 2005 **Community**

Themes listed are tentative and subject to change. If you wish to contribute to a specific theme, call Martin 770-471-9800 mlcowen@yahoo.com

Adult Education

1st Sunday at High Noon

Begins at noon before FORum David Ziebell facilitator. **Not in January. Resumes February 6, 2005.**

FORUM, January 2, 2005: 1st Sunday

Begins at 1 p.m. SHARP!

Remember: Time limits will be vigorously enforced!

Theme: Personal Mission

Hospitality—**Dan Barber**

Historian/Timekeeper

Welcome—

Celebration of Freedom—*****Needed*****

Celebration of Visitors—

Celebration of Each Other—

Celebratory Announcements—

Celebration of Literature—**Allison**

Celebration of Personal Mission—**Theresa Barber**

Celebration of Talent—**Jerry Pease**

Oratory—**Martin Cowen "Intermediate Missions and Gradualism"**

FORum—**President Chris Snider**

Announcements—

Closing Quotation—

Reason Runners (and Walkers)

Every Sunday morning at 8 a.m., except FORum Sundays, at the southwestern corner of Piedmont Park on 10th Street, Atlanta. Breakfast at Flying Biscuit (corner of 10th and Piedmont) follows at 9 a.m. non-runners (cheerleaders) welcome!

RSVP Martin 770-471-9800 mlcowen@yahoo.com

Invisible College

Special edition on Thursday, February 3, 2005, 7:30 p.m. Alex Hall, Ph.D. Vera's house.

RSVP Vera 404-577-7968 normcot@aol.com

FOR Toastmasters: \$148 Member Benefit

Special Offer to FOR Members Only

The Fellowship of Reason will refund your Toastmasters® membership dues up to \$148 on the following conditions: (1) you must be a member of the Fellowship of Reason and remain a member until all conditions are completed; (2) join a Toastmaster® club (any club of your choice) after this offer and achieve Competent Toastmaster status; (3) give an Oratory at Forum; and, (4) keep and deliver to FOR your receipts for dues.

If you comply with these conditions, FOR will reimburse you for your actual Toastmasters® dues up to \$148.

RSVP Martin 770-471-9800 mlcowen@yahoo.com

Philosophy Club: 1st/3rd Tuesdays

Philosophy tapes are played to a small private audience in the living room of a volunteer on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month Free. Arrive at 7:30 p.m. and bring a snack or drinks to share (wine?)

RSVP Sally 404-257-0454

Non-Fiction Book Club: 2nd Saturday

Members and friends of FOR, Inc meet 11 a.m. on the 2nd Saturday of every month at Chris and Allison's house to discuss a marvelous book.

The Saturday, January 8, 2005 selection is *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell.

The Saturday, February 12, 2005 selection is *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* by Mihaly Csikszentmihaly.

Fiction Book Club: 2nd Tuesday

Members and friends of FOR, Inc meet on the 2nd Tuesday of every month at John and Beth's house to discuss a marvelous book

Please note: No January Fiction Book Club; Next Book to be Announced; Next meeting Tuesday, February 8, 2005.

RSVP Beth 404-754-7519 beth@groverstudio.com

Potluck: 3rd Saturday

Members and friends of FOR meet on the 3rd Saturday of every month for a potluck supper. Bring something good to eat or drink to share. Our next potluck is Saturday, January 15, 2005 7:30 p.m. at Jim and Leanna's house in Grant Park.

RSVP Leanna 404-633-3522 leeampola@aol.com

Film Night: 4th Saturday

Members and friends of FOR, Inc enjoy a monthly movie night at John's studio using his extraordinary equipment. FOR's next movie night is Saturday, January 22, 2005. Arrive at 6:30 p.m. Doors will be locked for safety! Movie starts at 7:15 p.m. Free.

RSVP John 404-754-7519 john-g@groverstudio.com

Pub Night: 4th or 5th Wednesday

Members and friends of FOR, Inc meet on the 4th Wednesday of every month at Manuel's Tavern at 8 p.m. for adult beverages and adult conversation. FOR's next pub night is Wednesday, December 22, 2004, at 8 p.m.

RSVP Scott 404-964-6697 scott@scottcarper.com

**FOR Symphony: Six Thursday nights in the
2004-5 ASO Concert Season**

Our third concert is at 7 p.m. in Symphony Hall on
Thursday, January 27, 2005.

RSVP Martin 770-471-9800 mlcowen@yahoo.com

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in the columns appearing in
this newsletter are those of the author and not
necessarily the views of the organization. The
Fellowship of Reason, Inc speaks only through its
Articles of Incorporation, the Bylaws, and the
actions taken by the Board of Trustees as a board
and recorded in the minutes of the corporation.

Call for Submissions

Members are invited to submit essays (750 -100- words),
letters to the editor, poems of their own composition and
other matters of interest to the membership for publication
in this Newsletter.

RSVP Martin 770-471-9800 mlcowen@yahoo.com

Membership Information:

- Regular membership: \$35 per year if paid prior to
October 31, 2005
- Contributing membership: \$70 per year if paid prior
to October 31, 2005
- Lifetime membership: \$700 if paid prior to October
31, 2005

Coming in January!

Five Questions with Sam Harris, Author of *The End of
Faith: Terror, Religion and the Future of Reason*,
Interview by Chris Snider.

Contact information:

Visit us on the web at www.fellowshipofreason.com

To talk to somebody about FOR call President Chris
Snider 678-585-0406 editor@scifidimensions.com

A subscription for 12 monthly issues of this
newsletter is \$15 per year.

Fellowship of Reason, Inc. is a Georgia nonprofit
corporation and a tax-exempt 501(c) (3) corporation.

A Holiday Gift from Charter Member Ellen Lewit

Bedtime

Soothing darkness
A blanket tucking in
A world of weary children.

Night

The cool silent night
A black bowl inverted
over a weary world.
