

✧ ✧ Upcoming AOF Events ✧ ✧

➤ Free Movie Night!

Fridays, Aug 6 and Aug 20, 2021, 7pm – 10pm

Twice a month, [Reason Center](#) (RC) and AOF host a **Free Movie Night** under an excellent [MPLC License](#). We can't announce the title, but we can sneakily hint.

The first movie (Aug 6) will be a 2019 action thriller about an heiress (Noomi Rapace) needing protection when her life is in danger. A bodyguard and counter-terrorism expert helps her, but a kidnapping puts them on the run. The second (Aug 20) is undecided.

How can you attend? You'll need a personal Netflix account + a personal computer with the [Google Chrome web browser](#). If you don't have these we apologize -- please be patient until we have a regular movie venue. Else, here's how to join us:

1. Open your Chrome web browser right now and install the Netflix TeleParty Extension. Get it at: <https://www.netflixparty.com/>. (Really, do it *now*, don't wait till movie night!)
2. Just before show time, fire up the Chrome browser again and go to the very special Netflix Movie TeleParty link, which will appear on the [AOF Events Calendar](#) about a half hour before showtime.
3. **Click that link.** The Movie TeleParty page will open. Log into Netflix (if not logged in already). At the top right of the browser frame check your "Extensions" list. Find the letters **Tp** in red. You may need to click on the letters.
4. The movie party should begin. You'll be watching it along with the rest of us. As it plays we can chat on the side of the screen and make silly, snarky comments.



Free Movie Night was made for Reason Center members, but non-members are welcome too. RC *may* beg a small (voluntary) donation to cover costs. To become a supporter, see <http://reasoncenter.com/donate/>. Membership is a measly \$5 a month and is tax deductible if you itemize. And the perks (like this one) are a thrill ride.

Location: A Netflix TeleParty link, see above.

Contact: See <http://reasoncenter.com/contact/> or email "programs (at) aofonline (dot) org".

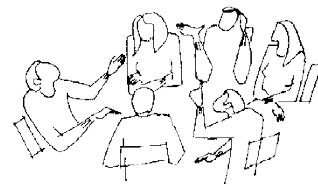
Two Free Movie Nights occur each month, and you can suggest your own fave flick for next time. How cool is that?

➤ Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday, Aug 10, 2021, 7pm – 8pm

It's an AOF planning meeting, mainly for AOF directors & officers but open to all. These happen as required, and are more fun than they sound. Honest.

Join us, meet the Board, and keep an eye on the shenanigans. We love visitors. We have cold drinks. And maybe you'll have some good ideas.



Note, this will be an actual in-person meeting, so be sure your vaccinations are current, or wear a mask. Also the home has cats; please do not be allergic.

Location: Home of Ken Nahigian & Ruth Rezos, 9570 Harvest View Way, map: <https://goo.gl/maps/e2s3igXYVcif47Q67>.

Contact: See <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>.

Bring your ideas for AOF, your strategies, your suggestions for events and activities -- most of all, your volunteerism. Hand that help are wonderful.

➤ Twenty Years of Freethought Day

Sunday, Aug 29, 2021, 2pm – 4pm

This year, [California Freethought Day](#) will celebrate its **twentieth anniversary**, wow. Who expected it to come this far? Not us! But in fact, the catalyst for this annual celebration dates back hundreds of years.

Join David Diskin, chair of the California Freethought Day Planning Committee, in a retrospective that begins in 1692. He will talk about its shocking roots, the beginnings of Sacramento's local celebration at the Sacramento Courthouse, and how it evolved into what it is today: the nation's [largest annual event celebrating freethought](#).

Be ready for a ride.



Location: Online event (you must be used to this by now). Teleconference Link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89966739745?pwd=T1U5cVR2T005Q2RTNlhJcGhTUvlydz09>.

Contact: Email "programs (at) aofonline.org" or "Chair (at) FreethoughtDay (dot) org".

The Sac Freethought community has ideas in the works! Get to know fellow nonbelievers - social activities and community involvement await you. Share your ideas at <https://www.aofonline.org/contact>.

✧ ✧ Other Upcoming Events ✧ ✧

➤ Sacramento-area Online Meetings

Other local groups are now meeting by online teleconference. Attend from the comfort of home, for free.

- **Wednesdays, August 4 & 18, and Sept 1, 7pm – 9pm: What's Your Story?** Meet other freethinkers, atheists, agnostics, nonbelievers and humanists in the Sacramento area; discuss beliefs and philosophy, and what led you to this place of mind. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84976409310?pwd=YmlTWTVqcVM5TmFrVjFrQkU2c1I1Zz09>.
- **Monday, August 9, 5pm – 7pm: The Clergy Project.** Ex-minister Charles Hill (now current Communications Director for The Clergy Project) will discuss challenges faced by professional clergy who no longer believe what they're preaching and how The Clergy Project provides a safe place. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/186729414>, or see <https://www.meetup.com/RfR-Sacramento-CA/events/279827003/> for details.
- **Tuesdays, August 10 & 24, 7pm – 9pm: Porch Talk.** A gathering on a virtual front porch, a chat on topics of the day. Topic ideas are welcome. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86401692746?pwd=NWhrdHpEellNblRiR0w4RGtmQ2ZLUT09>.
- **Wednesdays, August 11 & 25, 7pm – 8pm: Black Lives Matter and Me.** Talk, read, watch videos; discuss social justice, reforms, privilege and power. Meeting link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82590278514?pwd=K1pzaXA0dGVESzlvS1UcEs4RnE2UT09>.
- **Monday, August 16, 6:30pm – 8:30pm: Book Club.** Discussing *Just Six Numbers: The Deep Forces That Shape The Universe*, by Martin Rees. Bring thoughts & ideas about the book to discuss, and suggestions for next time. See details at: <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/276329706/>.
- **Thursday, August 19, 7pm – 9pm: Recovering from Religion Virtual Support Group.** Providing personal support to individuals as they let go of religious beliefs. Share your story or just listen. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82268955990>, or see <https://www.meetup.com/RfR-Sacramento-CA/events/pjqkmsyccmbvb/> for details.
- **Saturday, August 28, 7pm – 9pm: Wine, Cheese, and Litera-cheer.** Share your thoughts about any book of choice, one you like or one you hate, one read recently or long ago. Just be nice (focus on the "cheer"), and BYO wine & cheese. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89985395691?pwd=UE11cFRSL2RoSDF0NzdFTzdSVGVlQT09>.

➤ Morning Hikes

Saturdays, Aug 7 & 21, and Sept 4, 2021, 8:30am – 10:30am

Work those stems! Join freethinker friends for easy hikes in the area, locations to be announced (and suggestions are welcome). For details, see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/calendar/> and click on one of the Saturday Morning listings, or send your ideas to Muhannad at <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/members/328699576/>.

➤ Blasphemy Breakfast in Folsom

Saturday, Aug 14, 2021 10am – 11:30am

It's the new Blasphemy Breakfast in Folsom! Come join like-minded friends for a delicious breakfast near home. Just walk in and look for our smiling faces in the far back area on the right.

Location: Mel's Diner, 13399 Folsom Blvd, Folsom, 95630, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/meudZvW9v5hms6t67>.

Details: <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/279411929/>.

➤ Blastphemy Breakfast in Rocklin

Sunday, Aug 15, 2021, 9:30am – 11am

Do you like to hang out with local like-minded people? Want a chance to get to know FANs in smaller groups? Or do you just get hungry on Sunday mornings? Join us for what we call our "Blasphemy Breakfast", not that we blaspheme that much, but related topics are known to come up.

Location: Mel's Diner, 6708 Lonetree Boulevard, Rocklin, 95677, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/oDE1h3Y4Zp5fQzjo7>.

Details: <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/279556734/>.

➤ Coffee & Community at a Local Park

Sunday, Aug 15, 2021, 10:30am – 12 noon

Join us for a get-together at Eastern Oak Park. Bring your own coffee or beverage, snacks, and a lawn chair. We will find some shade and just chat.

Location: Eastern Oak Park, 3127 Eastern Ave, Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/PuaFGLjEgGxiKpzB6>.

Details: <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/278670108/>.

Can't make it? Attend online: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87468875186?pwd=dGkxTXY5a2p3cTFPTmx2MU95ZWpnUT09>.

➤ Sacramento Skeptics in the Pub

Friday, Aug 27, 2021, 6:30pm – 9:30pm

Attend in person this month. It's a social meeting for the Sacramento Area Skeptics. New skeptics welcome!

Location: Sac City Brews Neighborhood Tap House, 3940 60th St, Sacramento, 95820, map at

<https://goo.gl/maps/S4WYzwn5c6kqTyrC8>.

Details: <https://www.meetup.com/sacskeptics/events/svctmsycclbkc/>.

➤ Still more Sacramento Area Events

New events pop up all the time, and plans change. So please keep checking the Sacramento Coalition of Reason events calendar at <https://unitedcor.org/event-calendar-2/>.

You can help. Here's how.

Support Reason Center

Reason Center opened in July 2014, hosted hundreds of events, accrued twelve partner organizations, then went into hibernation. Its mission was to support a social and intellectual community for freethinkers, contribute to society through education and community service, advance the civic understanding and acceptance of freethinkers, and uphold the separation of religion and government. All good work.

If "RC" is ever to return, it depends on people like you. Please stand up for Reason Center, because it stands up for you. Please visit ReasonCenter.org to set up a monthly or one-time donation,

Support AOF

You can support AOF *without spending a dime*. How? When you purchase goods at Amazon.com, simply use this link: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/68-0325762>. Bookmark it now! Prices & service will be the same, but AOF will receive a small kickback for whatever you purchase. Sweet!

Suggest a Meeting

Know a compelling speaker, have a great meeting idea? Tell the AOF Program Committee! Go to <http://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>, click "Program Committee" in the drop-down line, and enter your thoughtful suggestion. (Reasonable honorariums paid to speakers.)

Volunteer? We suggest it meekly. See <http://www.aofonline.org/learn/committees.html> for opportunities.

✧ ✧ Secular Holidays ✧ ✧

➤ World Friendship Day

Sunday, Aug 1, 2021

[World Friendship Day](#) (aka International Friendship Day) is the first Sunday of August, which floats, like the friendships in our lives, and can be a day from Aug 1 through Aug 7.

We humans are social creatures. We recognize the value of friendship, the invisible thread connecting our hearts. In 1935 the US Congress proclaimed World Friendship Day as a time to celebrate this humanist sentiment.

Since then other nations across the world have adopted the idea of Friendship Day, honoring it on the first Sunday of August every year, making it truly international.

How can you acknowledge Friendship Day? Call on your friends, invite them for food, embrace them, exchange cards and flowers, gift them with a [friendship band or bracelet](#), or mark the day with programs celebrating human camaraderie.

Note, some groups and nations celebrate Friendship at other times of the year, with different customs and different emphasis. For instance:

- National Friendship Day is the first Sunday in August
- Women's Friendship Day, the *third* Sunday in August
- International Friendship Month is February
- Old Friends / New Friends Week is the third week of May

Remarkably constant amid this diversity is idea of the celebration of our connections. Everywhere, people express love for their friends and cherish their presence in life. For more, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friendship_Day.



➤ Ingersoll Day

Wednesday, Aug 11, 2021

Ingersoll Day marks the birthday of [Robert Green Ingersoll](#), honoring the life and work of one of the most noted freethinkers in US history. Ingersoll was also the most successful orator in nineteenth century America, heard by more

Americans than any human before the advent of motion pictures and radio. A leading political figure, he campaigned against slavery and for the rights of women and minorities. They called him the "Great Agnostic." He attracted huge crowds to lectures that criticized religion and promoted freethought. Walt Whitman and Mark Twain greatly admired him.

Celebrate Ingersoll Day with a visit to [the Robert Green Ingersoll Birthplace Museum](#), or by reading excerpts from [the Complete Works of Ingersoll](#).



"When I became convinced that the universe is natural, that all the ghosts and gods are myths, there entered into my brain, into my soul, into every drop of my blood the sense, the feeling, the joy of freedom. The walls of my prison crumbled and fell. The dungeon was flooded with light and all the bolts and bars and manacles became dust. I was no longer a servant, a serf, or a slave. There was for me no master in all the wide world, not even in infinite space. I was free -- free to think, to express my thoughts -- free to live my own ideal, free to live for myself and those I loved, free to use all my faculties, all my senses, free to spread imagination's wings, free to investigate, to guess and dream and hope, free to judge and determine for myself . . . I was free! I stood erect and fearlessly, joyously faced all worlds."

-- Robert Green Ingersoll, "Why I Am an Agnostic"



Not yet an AOF member? Please join us!

Atheists and Other Freethinkers is a 501(c)(3) non-profit association, FEIN 68-0325762, incorporated in 1993. Meetings are free and open to the public. AOF also hosts civic service projects, dinners, movies and parties! See what awaits you at www.aofonline.org.

AOF President: Prolific Pamella Rivera
Vice-president: Marvelous Mynga Futrell
Secretary: Rapid Ruth Rezos
Treasurer & Registrar: Kinetic Ken Nahigian
Webmistress: Palpable Pat Kelley
Program chair: Super Susan McLean
Facebook page: Keen Kaeleigh Pontif

Directors at large:
Roger Zabkie, Fran Evanisko, Linda Ostrofsky (Jetta),
Kaeleigh Pontif, Christine Tweet

How to Contact AOF:

- Call 916-304-3796 (voicemail)
 - Or write to PO Box 15182, Sacramento, CA 95851-0182
- Or visit <http://www.aofonline.org/contact> to e-message us.

How to Join AOF:

Visit <http://www.aofonline.org/join>, or come to a meeting. We have forms. Lots of them.

AOF's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Atheists-and-Other-Freethinkers/533365556831322>

AOF is affiliated with the Alliance of Secular Humanist Societies (ASHS), Atheist Alliance of America (AAA), American Atheists (AA), American Humanist Association (AHA) and the Sacramento Coalition of Reason (SCoR).

AOF Mission Statement:

"The purpose of Atheists and Other Freethinkers (AOF) is to promote the civic understanding of atheism and the acceptance of atheists in our community. Through educational programs, projects, and publications, AOF will extend secular perspectives, including the separation of religion and government and the right to think and speak freely on these perspectives."

What is a Freethinker? One striving to form opinions of life, religion, politics and philosophy on the grounds of reason and experience, rather than tradition, authority or custom. He or she need not be an atheist, though in a religious society most atheists do tend to be freethinkers.

AOF supports a benign separation of Church and State as the best means to protect the liberty and intellectual commerce of citizens. "... to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries" (James Madison, 1803).

Our vision: to be a venue where secular and unchurched citizens can socialize, dialog, develop friendships and enjoy shared company. AOF does not discriminate on such grounds as race, sexual orientation, age, gender, class, physical debility or (*cough*) religion. We welcome the fair-minded of all political persuasions and preferences. Any who will treat others with respect and dignity may join.

Donations to AOF are tax deductible, and the newsletter is free by email. Please share with sympathetic friends.

Letters, submissions? We love them! See:

<http://www.aofonline.org/read/submission-guide.html>.



Family News and Memoriam

► AOF has learned that former member and director **Don Shirley** died in February 2021 from a head injury after a fall in his apartment.

"This is sad news. ... Don had quite a history in the music scene. [He] had the *most* melodious of spoken voices; I loved talking to him on the phone - no wonder he was a radio guy." ~ Mynga Futrell

"Don was such a nice person and very courageous in expressing his atheism as an African American at a time when that was pretty much unthinkable." ~ Ruth M. Rezos

► Meanwhile other former AOF member/director/president **Paul Storey**, very much alive, greets all his AOF friends from his new home in Seattle, WA. He hopes you will enjoy his new blogs, <https://atheist.life/> and <https://naturalview.org/>, perhaps leave comments, and not throw too many bricks.



Brother Juniper and the legless pig



ONE OF THE great names in the annals of holy foolery is that of Brother Juniper. He was one of St Francis's first followers, and don't be surprised if he turns up again in these stories.

His gifting first came to light when he visited a sick monk and asked if there was anything he could do to make him feel better. The monk replied, "I could really go for some roast pig's foot."

Out went Juniper, found the nearest pig, cut off a foot and cooked it.

It went down a treat with the monk, but not with the swineherd, who was very upset that one of his pigs kept falling over. He went yelling and howling to Francis, who asked Brother Juniper what he thought he was playing at.

Juniper couldn't see the problem. "All feet belong to God," he explained, "and they're much better off becoming a work of charity than they are hanging off the underside of some pig."

St Francis didn't see it like that and sent him to apologize.

Brother Juniper cheerfully explained to the swineherd why this was an occasion not for anger but rejoicing. The swineherd in return explained why Juniper was a gibbering moron, a vicious thief and plenty more besides.

But Juniper was very keen on being insulted, so he hugged the man, thanked him for his charity and asked him to keep up the good work. At which the swineherd was either confused into submission or suddenly convinced he was in the presence of holiness. Because he fell at Juniper's feet, repented, and then took the three-legged pig to the monastery for a slap-up feast for everybody.

So they all ended up happily... apart from the pig.

Please note: No animals were hurt, emotionally or physically, in the telling of this story.

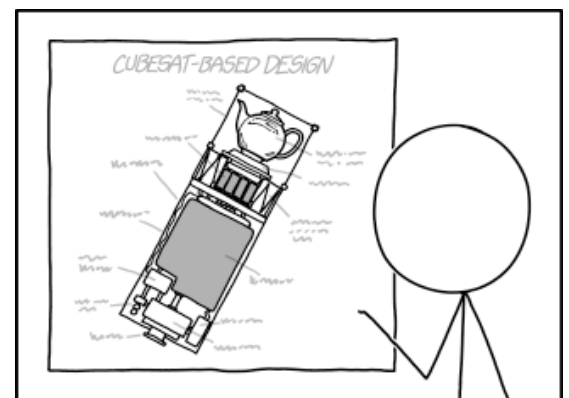
From Ship-Of-Fools.com

Ready to sing? Visit the Babylon Bee Worship Song Generator at <https://babylonbee.com/worship-song-generator>



"If I were to suggest that between the Earth and Mars there is a china teapot revolving about the sun in an elliptical orbit, nobody would be able to disprove my assertion provided I were careful to add that the teapot is too small to be revealed even by our most powerful telescopes. But if I were to go on to say that, since my assertion cannot be disproved, it is an intolerable presumption on the part of human reason to doubt it, I should rightly be thought to be talking nonsense. If, however, the existence of such a teapot were affirmed in ancient books, taught as the sacred truth every Sunday, and instilled into the minds of children at school, hesitation to believe in its existence would become a mark of eccentricity and entitle the doubter to the attentions of the psychiatrist in an enlightened age or of the Inquisitor in an earlier time."

— Bertrand Russell



I'M CROWDFUNDING A PROJECT TO LAUNCH A TEAPOT INTO ORBIT AROUND THE SUN TO SETTLE THE RUSSELL THING ONCE AND FOR ALL.

Afterward

Janet L. Factor

*I bequeath myself to the earth to grow from the
grass I love,
If you want me again look for me under your
bootsoles.*

—Walt Whitman

*I would rather live and love where death is king than
have eternal life where love is not.*

—Robert Green Ingersoll

Of course I have wandered in lands of the dead. They call to me, these places, wherever I go. Despite the din of cities, their whispers reach my ears. Amid the quiet of the countryside, they sing to the sun, and their shining notes draw me.

Fascinated, I approach. Sometimes the way is gated; I lift the latch gently, to show the mute guardian I mean no harm, and pass, allowing it to return to its post. The enchantment enfolds me.

I step softly, for all here are sleeping. They sleep and yet they speak, or rather, their stony-faced attendants speak for them. Mostly these murmur vaguely, but sometimes they cry out and pierce me with their pain. A tiny chunk of granite, pillow to a toddler, stops me, offering a flower, and says two words, "Our Darling." I weep.

So very, very often it is children who lie here, and often together, under one stone, though whether that choice was sentiment or the hard reality of cost cannot be judged. I worry, though, at tall stones that begin with one inscription that is followed by another, and another, and another, clearly added later.

Did those parents deliberately buy a large stone, grimly and silently acknowledging the reality that awaited them? Was this a standard product for the hard-handed masons who made them? The thought is unbearable but inescapable.

Here James H. and Eleanor buried three, the oldest of whom was only four. There James and Sarah buried four aged one, two, nine, and fifteen—a son so close to manhood he must have been their hope and his death its shattering. Worst of all I have seen, M.D. and Ruth, who both lived to nearly eighty and whose handsome and perfectly preserved marker testifies to their prosperous lot in life, buried five together whose days were carefully tallied: the youngest was seven months and twenty-three days; the eldest was sixteen years, eight

months, and nine days, a daughter they likely expected to lean upon in their age. When she died in 1855, they were both in their mid-fifties. Below this roll, as on so many others I have seen, are only the words, "Our Children."

Rarely, oh so rarely, are inhabitants here permitted to speak for themselves. A pillar of pure white marble that is short but must have cost its rural buyers dearly relates that Lee L. died on Valentine's Day of the year 1878, aged ten years, four months, and three days. In crisp and careful lettering, it says, "His last words was, Goodbye papa meet me in heaven." That piping little-boy voice will haunt me.

More often I hear the words of those who mourned. While most, struck dumb by death, say nothing, or choose a Bible verse or trite phrase to cloak their desolation, some summon the strength to speak. Beneath the statue of a seated woman, deep in thought and holding an open book, Emeline's survivors say of her, "She was a kind and affectionate wife & fond mother and friend to all."

Such figures are rare, but often more eloquent than the words of plainer stones—though it may take time to read their story. Deep in the Illinois countryside, visiting a cemetery I had been told about by a dear friend whose ancestor was buried there, I glimpsed from the corner of my eye what seemed to be a female figure. When I moved to examine it more closely, it revealed itself as a low stone chair, draped with a shawl, ever so carefully shaped to suggest the woman absent from it now.

I had seen empty-chair stones before but never one so small or so cleverly ambiguous. I wondered at the choice, until I read the hidden inscription and realized that the dead woman was a young mother. Then I knew: it was placed there so her little children could come to visit and climb into her sun-warmed lap as they always had. And again, I wept.

The land of the dead is indeed watered by tears, soaked through with sorrow. It is the sorrow of all humanity through all time, weeping that love must end. And while I add my tears to that river, it is the

love from which it springs that draws me.

It is everywhere here, even when we must pause to decipher it. A handsome stone proclaims to me forthrightly, "*Das wiedersehen hoffen ist der getrennten trost*," and I translate to hear, "The hope of seeing one another again is consolation to the separated." It is the pain of parting that abides in these places, the anguish that is the inevitable accompaniment of love.

How else, indeed, would we know that we love at all? Is it not that very pain, which cries "I can't bear to see you go" or even "I can't live without you!" the diagnostic symptom of the condition? When severing a connection feels like a knife-stroke, we must admit to our heart's condition, even if that admission comes sometimes too late to save us.

We are brought to our knees, like the beautiful woman of stone in the Indiana countryside, head bowed, who showed me, cradled by one hand in the folds of her dress, carved flowers, and built among them a tiny bird's nest. Abandoned now, it yet spoke clearly: "From love comes life. It flies away, but this, the truth, remains."

Janet L. Factor grew up in Barberton, Ohio, and graduated from Hiram College, where she absorbed the ideals of the liberal arts tradition. She is the founder of Springfield (Illinois) Area Freethinkers.



**Go to a cemetery.
See all the baby graves there
from before the 1950s & 1960s?
Then, hardly any.
That's when people started
vaccinating their kids.
If you are unsure, the answer is,
literally, written in stone.**