



AOF News & Views – Newsletter for November 2021

Did you miss [California Freethought Day](#) on October 10? Don't wring your hands, because you can still view the event on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OTJdGcAGleE>. Over 4 hours of freethought, with spectacular music, comedic riffs, and inspiring presentations. Yes, inspiring, we use the word, and not lightly.

✧ ✧ Upcoming AOF Events ✧ ✧

➤ Free Movie Nights

Fridays, Nov 5 and Nov 19, 7pm – 10pm

Twice a month, [Reason Center](#) (RC) and AOF host a **Free Movie Night** under an [MPLC License](#). The License prohibits us from telling you the movie title. But we can hint.

First (Nov 5) it will be a suspenseful drama from 2017. "A group of students looking for their missing archaeology professor discover a cave with edge of your seat mysteries till the end." Directed by Mark Dennis and Ben Foster. The second movie is yet unselected.

How can you attend? You'll need a personal Netflix account + a laptop or desktop computer with the [Google Chrome web browser](#). If you don't have these, please be patient until we have a physical 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 website just before the movie begins.
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 Netflix 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 originally for Reason Center members, but non-members are welcome too. RC *may* beg a small (voluntary) donation to cover costs. Go to <http://reasoncenter.com/donate/> to donate or join. Membership is a measly \$5 a month and is tax deductible if you itemize. And the perks (like this one) are timeless.

Location: A Netflix TeleParty link, see above.

Contact: See <http://reasoncenter.com/contact/>.

Free Movie Nights generally occur two Friday evenings each month. You can suggest your own fave flick for next time, how cool is that?

➤ Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup

Saturday, Nov 6, 2021, 9am - 11am

A tidy stretch of Highway 99 runs two miles from Elkhorn Boulevard to Elverta Road – *our* stretch. Sac-area freethinkers "adopted" it in July 1995. It's tidy because we have cared for it, nurtured it, lovingly rescued it from litter and debris, and received recognition for our work. As one of our more successful civic efforts, it proves freethinkers can also serve the community.

So join us, please! Enjoy a morning commune with nature, and do a deed for the environment and local area wildlife. The refuse we collect would otherwise ultimately be swept by the rain into tributaries and into the ocean, degrading habitat, and leading to a slow death for many sea creatures.

As usual, the stalwart activity captain will provide all safety equipment, including comfortable, natty hard-hats and gloves, stylish safety vests, collection bags, and handy trash pickers. The cleanup takes a scant two hours. Please dress for the season. It may be a good idea to bring a backpack or fanny-pack to carry 3 or 4 trash bags.

To get there, travel north from Sacramento on I-5, past the Sleeptrain Arena. Take the "Highway 99 - Yuba City, Marysville" exit. Exit at Elkhorn Boulevard less than a mile north. Turn left, cross the overpass. Park in the park-&-ride lot if possible, else somewhere on Elkhorn Blvd near it.



Note: Please review the CalTrans Highway Cleanup guidelines at <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/maintenance/adopt-ahighway/covid19>.

Location: Near West Elkhorn Blvd & Hwy 99, see map at <https://goo.gl/maps/zw3Rwct9yR52>.

Contact: 916-447-2169 (Don Knutson), or see <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>.

It is a great event for older children, but please leave smalls safe at home.

➤ Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday, Nov 9, 2021, 7pm - 8pm

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

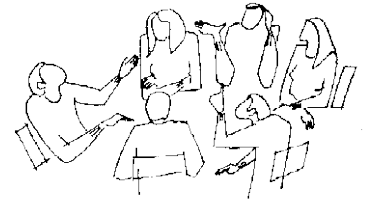
Join us, meet the Board, keep an eye on the shenanigans. We love visitors. We have drinks & snacks. And maybe you'll have some good ideas.

Note, this Board meeting will be an actual in-person meeting, so be sure your vaccinations are current, or wear a mask. Also the home has cats, so 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> or call 916-366-7061.

Bring your ideas for AOF, your strategies, your suggestions for events and activities -- most of all, your volunteerism. "Hands that help," and all that.



➤ An Establishment Clause in Decline (Mynga Futrell)

Sunday, Nov 28, 2021, 2pm - 4pm

For the strong supporters of church/state separation among us, the last couple of decades have been starkly disappointing. Our speaker is [Mynga Futrell](#), AOF vice-president and fervent advocate for civic pluralism. She counts herself among the most disheartened of citizens, and asks: "Has anyone else been so saddened by the hits our precious establishment clause has been taking? Not to be hyperbolic, but I see the 'separation wall' crumbling right before my eyes!" (As if freethinking types didn't have enough to worry about nowadays.) She will shed her tears in public at our next AOF meeting, sharing how she has personally marked the recent decline. Perhaps commiseration can be found among AOFers?



Mynga Futrell, a retired science educator, is a founder (1993) and former president (2002) of AOF. She has written articles in *Secular Nation* and for the California 3Rs Project, developed web resources for public school educators for the Objectivity, Accuracy and Balance in Teaching About Religion Project, and conducted workshops for teachers on "Do's and Don'ts" of handling religion in the classroom. All such activities of the 1990s and 2000s were grounded in federal law as it existed before recent SCOTUS case decisions. Today's situation is starting to call into question much of the essential

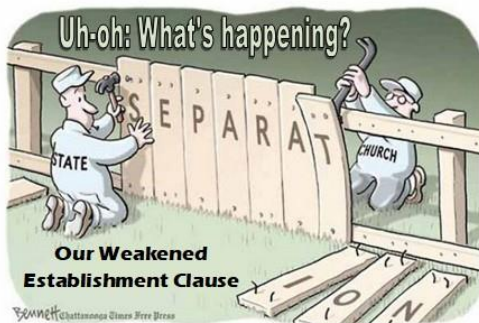
content she had utilized in her work on *Different Drummers: Nonconforming Thinkers in History* and in Chapter 19 of *Teaching about Religion in the Social Studies Classroom* (2019), a chapter she wrote for the National Council of the Social Studies and its only secular perspective on First Amendment issues that the book for teachers explores.

This is an in-person event. Remember in-person events?

Location: Sam's Hofbrau meeting room, 2500 Watt Ave, ph. 916-482-2175, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/Sf8o8QKV1WcDQcFQA>.

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

Park free in the lot. Meet in the private room at the back about 2pm. Be sure to grab some snacks! Sac County mask requirements will apply.



✧ ✧ Other Upcoming Events ✧ ✧

➤ Sacramento-area Online Meetings

Other local freethinkers are meeting up by online teleconference. You can join them from the comfort of home, for free.

- **Tuesdays, Nov 2, Nov 16 and Nov 30, 7pm – 9pm: Porch Talk.** A gathering on a virtual front porch, a chat on the news of the day. Topic ideas welcome! Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86401692746?pwd=NWhrdHpEellNblRiR0w4RGtmQ2ZLUT09>. (For details check <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events>, and click the appropriate listing.)
- **Wednesdays, Nov 3 & 17, and Dec 1, 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=K1pzaXA0dGVESzlvS1lUcEs4RnE2UT09>.
- **Monday, Nov 8, 5pm – 7pm: California Raisin': Growing Up Fundamentalist & Leaving.** Ex-Pentecostal and current podcaster Alexis Arralynn will discuss the trauma children can experience due to belief systems of their parents, and how she weened herself out of fundamentalism. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/186729414>, or see <https://www.meetup.com/RfR-Sacramento-CA/events/281761685/> for details.

- **Saturday, Nov 13, 7pm – 9pm: Word Confusion.** Wonder about a word or phrase? Meanings pass into fashion or change over time. Here's a groupthink to discuss them ("groupthink," that's an example!). Details: <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/281495418/>. Meeting link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88417809715?pwd=UGx1Q3hpU25iWkwrZiZaTWZFMEMxZz09>.
- **Monday, Nov 15, 6:30pm – 8:30pm.** Book club, topic TBD. Details: <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/cmqldsyccpbtb/>.
- **Thursday, Nov 18, 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/pjgkmsyccpbxb/> for details.
- **Saturday, Nov 27, 3pm – 5pm: BHNBS Book Club.** Discussing *Guns, Germs, and Steel* by Jared Diamond, the modern classic by an evolutionary biologist that dismantles racist theories by revealing the factors responsible for its patterns. For details and to attend, see <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/281766795/>.

➤ Saturday Hikes in Scenic Sacramento

Saturdays, Nov 6 & Dec 4, 10am – 12 noon

Sacramento is full of gorgeous parks and nature trails. Come hiking each first Saturday of the month, meet new people, observe wildlife, and get chased by raccoons (probably not). Locations differ; on Nov 6 it will be the Pioneer Express Trial on Folsom Lake (moderate difficulty). Details for Nov 6: <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/hfkcqsyccpbjb/>. Details for Dec 4: <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/hfkcqsyccqbgb/>.

➤ Coffee & Community at Local Parks

Sundays, Nov 7 & 21, 10:30am – 12 noon

Join us on the 1st and 3rd Sundays for coffee (BYOC) and conversation in a local park. New folks always welcome. Nov 7: Miller Regional Park, 2701 Marina View Dr, Sac; for details see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/zrsbnsyccpbkb/>. Nov 21: Eastern Oak Park, 3127 Eastern Ave, Sac; for details see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/ccmqpsyccpbcc/>.

➤ Blasphemy Breakfasts

Saturday, Nov 13, 10am; and Sunday, Nov 21, 9:30am

Come join like-minded friends; dine, chat and tempt the wrath of god (who rarely attends anyway). Recommended: the malts, omelets, biscuits 'n' gravy, and grilled cheese. Yum.

Nov 13: At Mel's Diner, 13399 Folsom Blvd, Folsom, see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/vvqfqsyccpbbrb/>.

Nov 21: At Mel's Diner, 6708 Lonetree Blvd, Rockland, see <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/cphppsycpbcc/>.

➤ Sacramento Skeptics in the Pub

Friday, Nov 26, 6:30pm – 9:30pm

A social meetup for the Sacramento Area Skeptics. New Skeptics welcome too! Location: Sac City Brews Neighborhood Tap House, 3940 60th St, Sacto. Details: <https://www.meetup.com/sacskeptics/events/svctmsyccpbjc/>, or contact Angelo Niosi, ph. 831-419-7225, email <skimmer (at) mail (dot) com>.

➤ More Sac-area Events

This isn't all, not a bit. For more freethought events in the area please check out the Sacramento Coalition of Reason global calendar at <https://unitedcor.org/event-calendar-2/>. Because new events pop up like 'shrooms in spring.

You can help. Here's how.

Support Reason Center

Reason Center opened in July 2014 then closed in November 2020. 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" will return, it requires support from members and donors. Please stand up for Reason Center, because it stood up for you! Visit ReasonCenter.org to set up a monthly or one-time donation.

Support AOF

You can also 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? Advise 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.

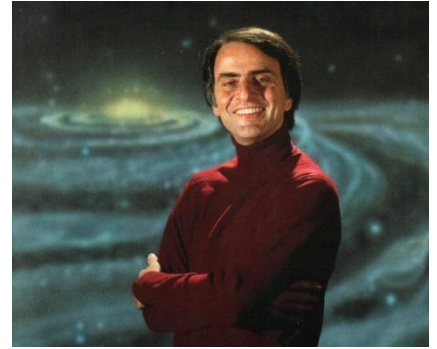
✧ ✧ Secular Holidays ✧ ✧

➤ Carl Sagan Day

Tuesday, Nov 9, 2021

[Carl Sagan Day](#) marks the birthday of the great Carl Sagan and honors his memory. Carl Sagan was Professor of Astronomy and Space Science and Director of the Laboratory for Planetary Studies at Cornell University, an outspoken skeptic, humanist and freethinker, and a Pulitzer Prize winning science author. But for the most part the public remembers him as the creator of the [Cosmos](#) television series. This Emmy and Peabody award-winning PBS series transformed educational television when it first aired in 1980. Thirty years later it still seems fresh, and has gone on to affect the hearts and minds of over a billion people in sixty countries.

His *magnum opus* was his final book, [The Demon-Haunted World](#), published in 1995, the year before his untimely death.



Few other science writers (perhaps only Isaac Asimov) were able to reach and teach so many nonscientists in such a meaningful way. So in 2009, the [Center for Inquiry](#) inaugurated Carl Sagan Day as a secular holiday. Each year we will continue to celebrate Dr. Sagan, remember him and his work, and revel in the wondrous cosmos he helped us understand.

➤ Church/State Separation Week

Sunday, Nov 21 – Saturday, Nov 27, 2021

Many freethinkers have adopted the week of Thanksgiving (~Nov 24) as **Church/State Separation Week**, to offer concerned and active citizens an opportunity to educate others about the importance of a clear division between Church and State. The hope is that this secular holiday will rally us and provide a platform to celebrate one of this nation's finest contributions to civilization.



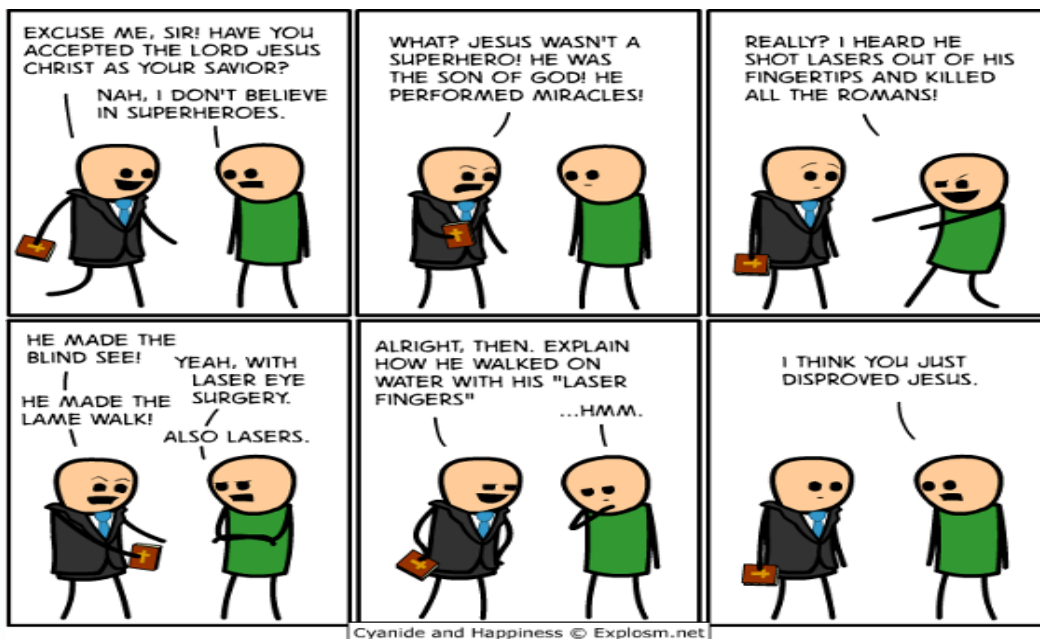
Secularist societies such as [Americans United for the Separation of Church and State](#), the [Institute for First Amendment Studies](#), the [Freedom From Religion Foundation](#), the [American Atheists](#) and the [Institute for the Secularization of Islamic Society](#), as well as others united for a secular government, have supported this celebration.

In humanist circles, some also celebrate November 24 as [Evolution Day](#), marking as it does the anniversary of the first publication of *The Origin of Species* (Nov 24, 1859). For the most, however, the focus is on church/state separation this week. Charles Darwin has his own secular holiday (February 12).

National Events of Interest

Nov 13, 9am – 5pm: **First Annual SoCal Secular Coalition Conference**, a free online conference. Register at <https://bit.ly/3Bjz0Bi> to attend.

Nov 19-21: **43rd Annual Convention of the Freedom From Religion Foundation** (FFRF) at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel, Boston, Massachusetts. Details at <https://ffrf.org/outreach/convention>.

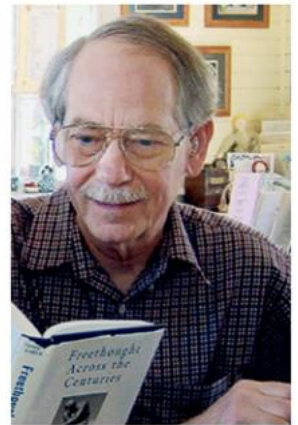


California Freethought Day Honors Paul Geisert

Paul Geisert, a longtime member of AOF who died last year from Covid-19, was honored at California Freethought Day along with the magician, James ("the Amazing") Randi.

Both these freethinkers were inducted last month into CFD's growing "Freethought Gallery," which pays tribute to persons who have made notable contributions to freethought. AOfer Cleo Kocol, who died a few years ago, had been previously so honored.

Soon after he and his wife, Mynga, moved to Sacramento in 1985, Paul redirected his "out-of-the-box thinking" habits from science education toward freethought. He had retired as a university biology professor and was a freelance educational consultant when becoming at first a noticeably vociferous member of HAGSA. Then in 1993, he became one of AOF's original fifteen founders. Paul served AOF's second president and in several additional AOF capacities across the group's early years.



Paul Geisert

As an educational activist on behalf of nonreligion, Paul pursued several instructional projects pertaining to the teaching about religion in public schools. He directly petitioned the California Department of Education to modify its curricular standards and move toward greater equity. His lobbying achieved two key wording modifications in the departmental guidelines for social studies teaching. He co-wrote a set of teacher materials ("*Different Drummers: Nonconforming Thinkers in History*") and set up a simple reference website on teaching about freethought.

Interestingly, as relates to his own induction into the CFD Gallery at the 2021 event, is the fact that the very idea of producing a historical gallery to display and educate about freethinkers traces back to Paul. (The Gallery had been part of what was originally the *local* Freethought Day but later became a *state-wide* Freethought Day event.) Both Paul and Mynga had enjoyed reading about notables' contributions to western civilization at each year's Greek festival and thought something similar could and should be constructed to recognize the freethinkers who had contributed greatly to society despite perhaps enduring slings and arrows of contemporary conformity. (Paul's best friend at the time, fellow AOfer Kevin Schultz, selected the original ten honorees, and Mynga wrote up the specific contributions each had made.)

Among the more noteworthy of Paul's AOF activities across the years would be his idea that Sacramento should have a "Reason House" in which to center secular activity and activism, a concept that he proposed in 2000 to the boards of AOF and HAGSA and pursued with vigor. Under his leadership, locals carried out a search. Paul garnered formal approval from both boards along with membership pledges of \$300K, but the amount proved insufficient for acquisition of a truly suitable market-rate property. (The *idea*, however, lived on, and evolved into our current Reason Center nonprofit, which hopes someday to accomplish a similar vision.) Despite his eventual gradual decline due to Alzheimer's, Paul was able to enjoy becoming a Reason Center founder and helping to establish the Futrell-Geisert library there.

Paul is perhaps best known for his invention of the noun term "Bright" to echo the Enlightenment's hopeful promise of science and reason, which he and Mynga proposed at the Atheist Alliance International meeting in Tampa in 2003. The idea so stirred the freethought community that word of it spread across the globe, even into developing nations, and many well-known celebrities of the freethought world signed on to Paul's affirmative term for their worldview. (Geisert saw it as a *positive* way to express one's *naturalistic* - no supernatural elements at all - outlook without referring in any way to religion. Too many others interpreted it or mischaracterized it *negatively*, though, and the ruckus gradually faded along with hoped-for international adoption.)

Mynga is exceedingly pleased about the pairing of this 2021 honor with that of another educator and Paul's fellow Bright, James Randi. (Randi once published an article, the title of which contained: "... and Why I Am a Dedicated and Vociferous Bright.") However, among the two decades of accumulated inductees (now numbering over 30) in the California Freethought Day's "Freethought Gallery," she would count Paul Geisert as *nonconforming* to conventional freethought itself. He once produced a personal business card characterizing himself by a number of different but related labels (atheist was *not* among them). Paul closed out his listing with "*skeptical* of all of the above."

The Seeker

A documentary about Kenneth Copp, a man who lived for years in the Amish community, then was excommunicated and shunned by his family when he lost his faith. He continues to keep the Amish culture. A professed "Amish Atheist", Copp tends to his farm, rides his horse and buggy, and lives a modest lifestyle, but with no ties to religion.

Director Lance Edmands transfers the complexity of Copp's world into the film beautifully. The themes are rich and full-bodied; high quality photography and an affecting structure mirror the discussion of Copp's decision to expand his views.

One review: "Utter perfection. I've definitely lacked insight on the Amish community, so watching this short documentary about a pentecostal man that transitioned to Amish and then transitioned to atheist was a very eye-opening experience. The documentary discusses how the man started finding inconsistencies and flaws in the Bible and when reading into it more with an outsider's perspective, he found that God was indeed forgetful and harsh"

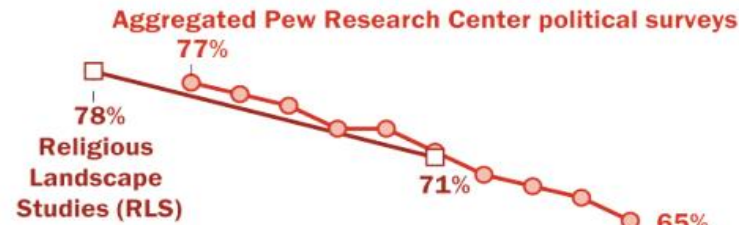
Details at <http://riifilmfest.blogspot.com/2020/07/riiff-filmmaker-spotlight-series-seeker.html>.

Watch the documentary for free at <https://vimeo.com/467141591> (19 minutes).

In U.S., smaller share of adults identify as Christians, while religious 'nones' have grown

% of U.S. adults who identify as ...

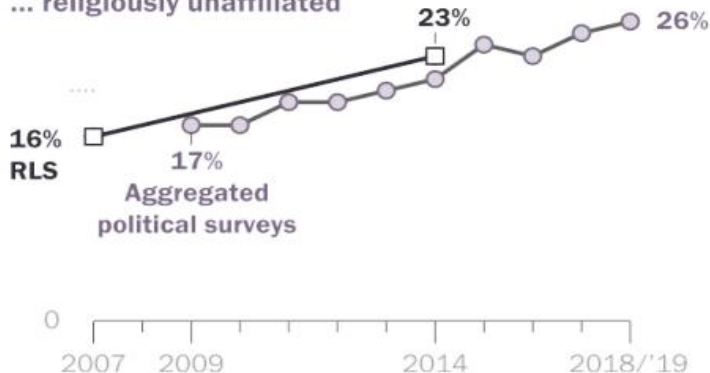
... Christian



60 ----

40 ----

... religiously unaffiliated



Source: Pew Research Center Religious Landscape Studies (2007 and 2014). Aggregated Pew Research Center political surveys conducted 2009-July 2019 on the telephone.

"In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



(A Tweet)

JRehling

@JRehling

Ted Cruz said that school shootings take place because we removed "God from the public square." Texas is 93% Christian and has a fatal school shooting every year. Japan is 2% Christian and has never had a school shooting.

Worst theory ever. [#TXSenateDebate](#)

5:34 PM · Sep 21, 2018



AOF

Atheists and Other Freethinkers

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 Pamela Rivers
 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, Christine Tweet,
 Linda Ostrofsky (Jetta), Kaeleigh Pontif

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.

AOF's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1525411971087089/>

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. Be respectful, and you 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>.