



AOF News & Views – Newsletter for December 2022

✧ ✧ Upcoming AOF Events ✧ ✧

➤ Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup

Saturday, December 17, 2022, 9:00 am - 11:00 am

Location: Near W. Elkhorn Blvd & Highway 99, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/zw3Rwct9yR52>.

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. It proves freethinkers can also serve the community.

So please join us! 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. And Cal-Trans is now paying a stipend for our work!

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 -- maybe bring a backpack or fanny-pack to carry 3 or 4 trash bags.

To get there, travel north from Sacramento on I-5. 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, or somewhere near it.

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

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

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

In case of rain, fog, excessive mud, rapture or locust plague, the Cleanup will be rescheduled. If unsure, call the Activity Captain (Don).



➤ HumanLight/Solstice Party

Sunday, December 18, 2022, 12 noon - 2:30pm

Location: New Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/RwiUgEJ5ESHRhrPu8>.

Come party down with us - party for humanist ideals and humanist values: reason, compassion, hope, science, kindness, joy and civil community. In a season halfway to insulin shock from a sugary frosting of religion, the annual HumanLight/Winter Solstice celebration is a refreshing opportunity to be festive for common secular values.

The party will include a potluck, music, songs, games and socializing. Donations will be accepted at the door for [the beautiful new Reason Center](#) (!).

What should you bring? Something foody to share for the potluck, your appetite, and a smile. Be prepared for secular fun! The event is family-friendly, so your beautiful kiddos are welcome. *Note: Parking is free.*



- **The Potluck:** This event includes a potluck, so whip-up (or buy) your favorite dish to share. Please bring food already prepared and ready to serve, including serving utensils for your dish. BYO beverage too. Plates, bowls, utensils, napkins and drinking vessels will all be provided.

- **The Charity Drive:** For humans & pets. We will collect nonperishable food and other necessities for two local charities, the [River City Food Bank](#) and the [Sacramento Pet Food Bank](#) (helping the pets of the homeless). Contributions encouraged but not required. This is an opportunity for the freethought community to come together and show their compassion and kindness for others in need in our local community.

The HumanLight Party is for the entire Sacramento area freethought community. That's you, that's me. That's *us*!

Contact for details: Email "programs (at) aofonline (dot) org", or see <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>.

Reason Center has scant cooking facilities, so pre-prep please, Petunia. Hot plates, crock pots and warmers are OK; open fires, not so much. To volunteer, help set up & clean, contact the event organizers (Nancy Sneed & Pamella Rivera).

✧ ✧ Other Upcoming Events ✧ ✧

It's a freethink world – AOF is not alone. Other groups exist and have their own parties going. Here are highlights, to keep you busy.

➤ Blasphemy Breakfasts

Saturday, Dec 10, 2022, 10am – 11:30am, and

Sunday, Nov 20, 2022, 9:30am – 11am

Like to hang out with like-minded people? Want to meet freethinkers in smaller groups? Or do you just get the morning munchies? Join us at Mel's Diner for what we call our "Blasphemy Breakfast." We don't blaspheme all that much, but who knows what mutterings will emerge? A great place to speak your mind, and a good starter if you are new to meetups.

On Dec 14: 13399 Folsom Blvd, Folsom, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ri6JvaBoSZVHTdnU6>.

On Dec 18: 6708 Lonetree Boulevard, Rocklin, CA 95677, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ZUY2gq72KkmkC4bU6>.

For details, see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/>.

Questions? Contact the host, Nancy Sneed, at "nancysneed10 (at) gmail (dot) com".

➤ Recovery from Religion Online Support

Saturday, Dec 10, 2022, 5pm – 7pm: Women's Virtual Support Group Meeting

Thursday, Dec 15, 2022, 8pm – 10pm: Virtual Chapter Support Group Meeting

Saturday, Dec 17, 2022, 7am – 9am: Virtual Chapter Support Group Meeting

Sunday, Dec 18, 2022, 12 noon – 2pm: LGBTQ+ Virtual Support Group Meeting

Providing ongoing and personal support to individuals letting go of their religious beliefs. "RfR" is here to help you on an often painful journey.

For Dec 10, online attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87403436249>.

For Dec 15, for online attendance link see <https://www.meetup.com/rfr-sacramento-ca/events/287574453/>.

For Dec 17, online attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7287067292>.

For Dec 18, for online attendance link see <https://www.meetup.com/rfr-sacramento-ca/events/289948374/>.

➤ Word Confusion

Saturday, Dec 10, 2022, 7pm – 9pm

Wonder about words or phrases? Language is weird and twisty, and its quirks change over time. Here's an online gathering to discuss them. Hosted by Nancy Sneed. Details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/nvshqsydcqbnb/>.

Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88417809715?pwd=UGx1Q3hpU25iWkwrZjZaTWZFMEMxZz09>.

➤ Sunday Assembly

Sunday, December 11, 2022, 11am - 1pm

Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Suite 675, Sacramento, CA

Sunday Assembly is back! With welcoming greetings from old and new members, live music by Sunday Reason, and a presentation on Wintermas by Michael Harold. All followed by a potluck lunch – so bring your favorite dish to share with the group.



Topic: *Wintermas: Toward a Secular Celebration of the Season* by Michael Harold. This short ebook sets out the case for a principled Winter Holiday celebration called *Wintermas*. It's for non-Christians, including nonbelievers, the nonreligious, atheists, agnostics, skeptics, freethinkers and those from other traditions. Wintermas is a secular celebration of the Winter Holidays similar to Christmas but with important differences.

For details, see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/290019295/> or <https://www.meetup.com/sunday-assembly-sacramento/events/290014308/>.

➤ Online Zoom with Atheists United

Tuesday, Dec 15, 2022, 6:45pm – 8:45pm

Discussion sparked by short videos about atheism, religion, science, current events, critical thinking, comedy, life hacks, health and beyond, followed by moderated discussions. Online attendance link: <https://zoom.us/j/99257974801>.

For details see: <https://www.meetup.com/reasoncenterevents/events/blkvwsydcqbtb/>.

➤ Online Photo-sharing

Wednesday, Dec 28, 2022, 7pm – 9pm

Maybe you snapped a pic of something interesting or mysterious, like a landscape, a sculpture, a flower, a shrub or tree, and that photo that's unique. And you might have a story behind it you'd like to share. Join us for a photo-exchange and discussion of the photographer's art. This event will occur on the fourth Wednesday of every month.

- Please upload your best pics to your computer beforehand.
- Photos appropriate for general audiences. No sexy selfies please. (You know who you are.) (BTW, thanks.)

- Please do not share photos of individuals without their expressed permission.

Online attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88417809715?pwd=UGx1Q3hpU25iWkwrZjZaTWZFMEMxZz09>.

➤ More Local Events - Event Calendars

But you know, we left out a lot. We had to! And plans keep changing. So don't depend on all these static lists. To keep track of those other events, bookmark & follow these links:

- Sacramento Freethinkers, Atheists and Nonbelievers, <https://www.meetup.com/SacFAN/events/calendar/>
- The Reason Center calendar, <https://www.meetup.com/ReasonCenterEvents/events/calendar/>
- Black Humanists of Sacramento events, <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/calendar/>
- Recovery from Religion Sacramento, <https://www.meetup.com/RfR-Sacramento-CA/events/calendar/>
- Sacramento Skeptics events, <https://www.meetup.com/sacskeptics/events/calendar/>
- Compassionate Humanists of Roseville, <https://www.meetup.com/compassionate-humanists/events/calendar/>
- Sunday Assembly Sacramento events, <https://www.meetup.com/sunday-assembly-sacramento/events/calendar/>
- Sacramento Think Atheist events, <http://www.thinkatheist.com/events>
- Central Valley Alliance of Atheists & Skeptics, <https://www.meetup.com/fresno-cvaas/events/calendar/>

You can help. Here's how.

Support Reason Center

Since Reason Center opened in July 2014, it has hosted hundreds of events and accrued twelve partner organizations. Its mission: 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.

Now "RC" is back! But to continue, it relies on support from members and donors. Please stand up for Reason Center, because it stands up for you. To set up a monthly or one-time donation, visit ReasonCenter.org.

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 ✧ ✧

➤ International Human Rights Day

Saturday, December 10, 2022

"[IHUD](#)" is a way to promote, defend, and remember the basic human rights every person in every country has as a result of being born into this world. The basic document that outlines these rights is known as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as adopted by the United Nations in 1948.



The Universal Declaration of Human Rights came about as a result of the atrocities of World War II. As the United Nations came into being its charter gave human rights a new international legal status, and the need to codify human rights as a means to prevent similar atrocities took shape. It created a Commission on Human Rights, which spent three years drafting the declaration with the help of such members as Eleanor Roosevelt, John P. Humphrey, Charles Malik and Rene Cassin. The declaration was adopted without dissent on December 10, 1948, and has grown in stature and respect over the years since its adoption as it continues to assert the human dignity and worth of every human being on the planet.

Since its adoption countries around the world have celebrated the anniversary, but it has only been since the 50th anniversary celebrations in 1998 that the holiday has gained in popularity.

Eleanor Roosevelt once said that the fate of human rights lies in the hands of everyone in every community. Freethinkers know the importance of this statement. It can often be a challenge for many of them to be given the same rights and opportunities as others in their own communities, much less in the world. They, of all people, understand the importance of

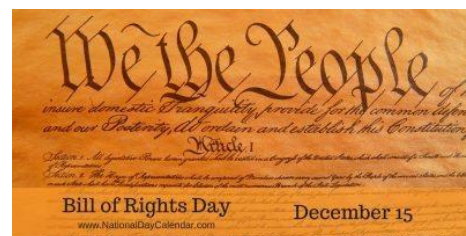
keeping human rights the center of focus and attention in the world at large. Celebrating International Human Rights Day is a way to show how everyone, religious or not, is connected in ways that run deeper than the nature of belief.

➤ Bill of Rights Day

Thursday, December 15, 2022

By Presidential Proclamation:

Now, Therefore, I, Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States of America, do hereby designate December 15, 1941, as Bill of Rights Day. And I call upon the officials of the Government, and upon the people of the United States, to observe the day by displaying the flag of the United States on public buildings and by meeting together for such prayers and such ceremonies as may seem to them appropriate.



To view the official proclamation, see: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/proclamation-2524-bill-rights-day>

The first 10 amendments to the United States Constitution comprise the Bill of Rights. Passed by Congress on September 25, 1789, these rights place limits on government power. Did you know...?

- The bill was introduced by James Madison. He later became the 4th President of the United States.
- The Bill of Rights initially had 12 proposed amendments. One concerned the number of constituents for each Representative. The other addressed compensation of Congressman. Neither were ratified.
- In 1992, compensation of Congressman was ratified 203 years later and is now the 27th amendment.
- The Bill of Rights is displayed in The Rotunda of the National Archives Building in Washington, DC.
- There were 14 copies of the Bill of Rights, one for each of the 13 states to sign and one for the federal archives. Only 12 copies survive today.

How to observe this day:

Display the flag of the United States at home and on public buildings. Read the Bill of Rights. See if you can pass a quiz about the Bill of Rights. Use #BillOfRightsDay to post on social media.

➤ Solstice (December)

Wednesday, December 21, 2022

December Solstice is the *real* Reason for the Season. Called Winter Solstice in the northern hemisphere, Summer Solstice in the southern, people have marked this astronomical event for thousands of years. Many religions have seasonal holy days or celebrations linked to the December Solstice. It is the day the Northern Hemisphere has less daylight than at any other time of the year (we call it *the shortest day*), and the Southern Hemisphere has more daylight occurs than any other time (*the longest day*).



The exact date of the December Solstice varies from year to year, but it will occur between the 20th and 23rd of the month.

"Solstice" derives from two Latin words: *sol* (meaning sun) and *sistere* (to cause to stand still). At noon in either hemisphere the sun will be low in the sky during the winter season, high in the sky during summer. The day with the least daylight is the Winter Solstice, where sun has the lowest elevation. So in the Northern Hemisphere, the December Solstice is officially the first day of winter, sometimes called Midwinter.

To the ancients, this day marked a key point in the cycle of life. For modern astronomy enthusiasts, it offers an opportunity to celebrate what we have learned about the cosmos, and allows us to revel in the excitement of space exploration and the complexity of the universe.

➤ HumanLight

Friday, December 23, 2022

[HumanLight](#) is a holiday celebrating the humanist values of tolerance, compassion, empathy, honesty, free inquiry, reason and rationality. The event began in New Jersey in 2001, established by Joe Fox and Gary Brill of the [New Jersey Humanist Network](#). It provides an excellent alternative to Christmas celebrations. Joe & Gary described it as follows:

*"The very first HumanLight celebration was held in New Jersey on December 23, 2001 at a gala event attended by close to 100 people. **HumanLight is December 23rd**, and should always be celebrated on or around this date. This date was chosen for several reasons. A critical objective was to be part of the peak celebration time of the holiday season, yet to have a distinct date of our own that did not coincide exactly (and thus interfere) with other holidays such as the Winter Solstice, Christmas, or Kwanzaa. We liked December 23rd because it was close to the shortest day of the year, a natural event of note, as well as very close to vacation days that typically lead to family gatherings. We wanted Humanists at family gatherings and other holiday social events to be able to say "Happy Holidays" and mean it; to have a positive, constructive way to start a conversation in which they could explain to loved ones what Humanism is about."*

Free to you - Magazines and Miscellany

Thanks to several decades of activism in the freethought community, AOF's Vice President Mynga Futrell has accumulated a lot of related print materials. Now the Brights' Net office is moving to the new Reason Center where there's not as much storage space, so Mynga is "unloading" a lot of the publications and memorabilia that she has accumulated.

There are T-shirts (various sizes) from the Washington, DC "Reason Rally," posters from prior Freethought Days, extra computer hardware, and just scads of publications related to freethought and atheism. Any collector types out there? Or, just interested in reading to see how freethought has changed over the time since AOF was established (1993)?

Magazine issues of **The Humanist** and the **Skeptical Inquirer** go wayyy back to the 1980s. And then there are 20 to 30 years of **Free Inquiry**, **American Atheist Magazine**, and **Secular Nation**. Other publications, too, including abundant newsletters from freethought groups across the country. Articles by Carl Sagan, Isaac Asimov, Madalyn O'Hair, Richard Dawkins, and other notables.

Come on by and have a look! Mynga will be available at the old Brights office (**3001 J Street, #200**) from to show these "wares" (all are free!) to anyone interested in perusing what is available and taking home whatever they like. If you are interested please phone her (**916-447-2170**) to set up a meeting time.



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, Christine Tweet,
Rae Howard, 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 pages (two):

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1525411971087089/>
<https://www.facebook.com/Atheists-and-Other-Freethinkers-AOF-104763721971742>

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."

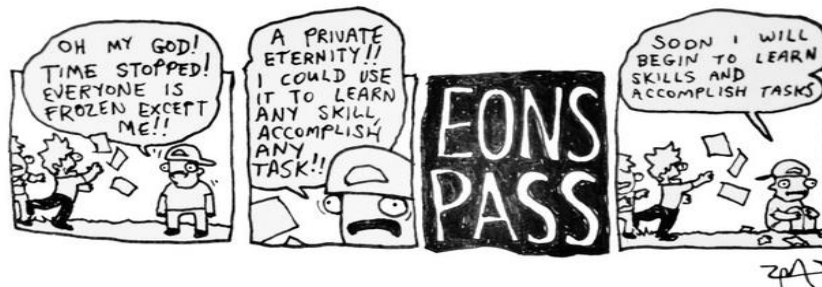
What is a Freethinker? One striving to form opinions of life, religion, politics and philosophy on the grounds of reason and experience, rather than tradition, authority or custom. He or she need not be an atheist, though in a religious society most atheists do tend to be freethinkers.

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>.



Thomas Paine Day Proclamation Celebration

January 29, 2023

Hear ye, hear ye! Join us to celebrate the birthdate of Thomas Paine!
Come one, come all!
The Thomas Paine Day Proclamation Celebration will be held on Sunday, January 29, 2023, at Noon (PDT) with a special message from Congressman Jamie Raskin. Professor Emeritus of History at the University of London, Greg Claeys, will provide a keynote about the life of Thomas Paine. Participants will also learn how to submit a Thomas Paine Day proclamation for their local community.
RSVP for this online celebration at <http://secularstudents.org/webinars/>.



St Wilgefortis and her Miraculous Beard

MANY SAINTS HAD THEIR beards plucked out as a standard accessory to martyrdom. Here's a rare (but not unique) example of just the opposite.

Wilgefortis was the daughter of the King of Portugal, who announced to her one day that she was to marry the King of Sicily. Like all good Christian girls, the prospect of marriage appalled and revolted her, and she looked for a way out. (To be fair, I would find being given in marriage to a medieval king of Sicily a pretty horrible prospect too, so fair play to her.)

No escape offered itself, so Wilgefortis prayed for a miracle. Boy, she got one. Just as his Sicilian majesty arrived to inspect his bride, the Lord blessed her with a beard, a real, fluffy, Old-Testament one. The King of Sicily suddenly remembered he had left his cauldron on and went home to disembowel his royal portrait painter.

The Portuguese king flew into a rage. Quite how he knew the beard was her fault was not clear but he was determined to punish her. There are only a certain number of times you can ground your kids before it becomes a routine gesture, so he had her crucified, her superabundant hirsutery billowing prophetically in the wind.

A post-structuralist deconstruction of Wilgefortis: her story seems to empower women – allowing her to define herself not as daughter and wife, but as independent person – but only at the cost of becoming masculine; and then it punishes her feminism with (phallic) execution.

Medieval scholars on the other hand tell us the legend grew out of effeminate images of Jesus crucified in what looks like a dress, such as the [Volto Santo at Lucca in Tuscany](#), but there's little that medieval scholars won't tell us if we give them the chance.

Personally, I would just like to say that without miraculously bearded women we would all be the poorer. St Wilgefortis's Day is 20th July. She is the patron of unhappy wives, and should that leave her any time at all, I'm sure she takes an interest in unhappy fiancées too. If you find she is able to get you out of a marital jam, bearded or otherwise, do please let us know.

URLs of local secular groups:

Atheists and Other Freethinkers: aofonline.org (Promoting Civic Understanding and Acceptance of Unchurched Citizens)

Black Humanists and Non-Believers of Sacramento, an outreach and educational community group:

[meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento](https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento), [facebook.com/blackhumanistsofsacramento](https://www.facebook.com/blackhumanistsofsacramento)

The Brights: the-brights.net

California Freethought Day: freethoughtday.org

FACTS Church (First Atheist Church of True Science): factschurch.org (dormant, temporarily we hope!)

Freedom From Religion Foundation, Sacramento Chapter: ffrf.org/component/k2/item/17414-sacramento

Humanist Association of the Greater Sacramento Area: hagsa.org (in abeyance)

Parkway Atheists: [facebook.com/parkwayatheists/](https://www.facebook.com/parkwayatheists/) (They clean part of the trail along the American River Parkway!)

Sacramento Darwin Day: sacdarwinday.org, <https://www.facebook.com/darwindaysac/>

Sacramento Recovering from Religion: <https://www.meetup.com/rfr-sacramento-ca/>

Sacramento Freethinkers, Atheists, and Nonbelievers: [meetup.com/sacfan/](https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/), www.facebook.com/groups/SacFAN

Secular Student Alliance: secularstudents.org (several Sacramento-area groups exist)

Stockton Area Atheists and Freethinkers: [meetup.com/StocktonAtheists/](https://www.meetup.com/StocktonAtheists/)

Sacramento Sunday Assembly: www.meetup.com/sunday-assembly-sacramento/

Thanks to Susan McLean for compiling this list