



AOF News & Views – Newsletter for May 2023

✧ ✧ Special Events this month ✧ ✧

➤ The Amazing James Webb Space Telescope

Saturday, May 20, 2023, 1:30pm - 4pm

Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Ste 675, Sacramento,
map at <https://goo.gl/maps/S5MR1e8ZodBzb4TG8>.

... A presentation by [Barri Babow](#),
co-sponsored by **Atheists & Other Freethinkers** and **Sunday Assembly**
Doors open 1:30pm, talk begins 2pm



The new James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) pushes the engineering and exploration of space a giant leap forward. We'll compare the JWST with its predecessor, the Hubble Telescope, and see what makes the JWST so special. We'll show some of the JWST images and explain what's groundbreaking about them.

Speaker [Barri Babow](#) is a long-time member of the Sacramento freethought community. She has a MS in Information Systems, a MA in History of Science, and a BS in Physics. After college, she briefly designed satellite software at Aerojet in LA before going to grad school where she taught in the Astronomy and Computer Science departments. Intel brought Barri back to her native Northern California where she's spent the last 20+ years working in IT at various companies.

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

A free event. We will provide drinking water. OK to bring personal snacks & beverages - or snacks to share as you wish.

➤ 30 Years of AOF -- a celebration ♥ ♥

Sunday, May 28, 2023, 2pm - 4pm

Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Ste 675, Sacramento,
map at <https://goo.gl/maps/S5MR1e8ZodBzb4TG8>.



Holy smoke, AOF is 30 years old! Come and party with your AOF friends as we celebrate the birthday of our organization.

It was 1993. A clandestine coterie of freethinkers gathered to plot and plan. AOF soon acquired a name, then became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit public benefit corporation, promoting understanding and acceptance of atheists and freethinkers through educational programs, projects and publications – also advancing separation of church and state, with the right to think and speak freely on these topics. It has been an adventure. And we could not have done it without you.

So join us! Mynga Futrell, AOF Founder & perennial Board member, will provide us with a look back and reminiscence of AOF's somewhat obscure beginnings.

PARTY DETAILS:

- **It's a potluck!** Bring a dish for 6-8 people.

Note, no cooking/heating kitchen facilities available. For hot foods, just wrap them up, or perhaps use chafing dishes with those little candle warmers. AOF will provide plates, bowls, utensils, napkins, and cups.

- **Beverage:** Bring your own. Water, cool water, is provided.

- **Live music!**

- **Merriment & Memorabilia!**

FREE PARKING in the Reason Center lot.

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



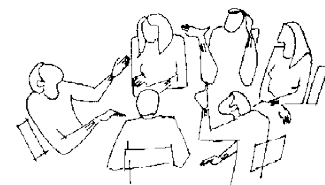
✧ ✧ Upcoming regular AOF Events ✧ ✧

➤ Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday, May 9, 2023, 7pm - 8pm

Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Ste 675, Sacramento,
map at <https://goo.gl/maps/S5MR1e8ZodBzb4TG8>.

It's an AOF planning meeting, mainly for AOF directors & officers but open to all of you. 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 often have snacks. And maybe you'll have some good ideas, hm?

Note, it will be an actual in-person meeting, so be sure your vaccinations are current, or wear a mask, or don't cough on us.

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

Bring your ideas for AOF, your strategies, your event and activity suggestions -- best of all, your volunteerism! Helping hands are the bomb. (A good kind of bomb.)

➤ **Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup**

Saturday, May 13, 2023, 9am - 11am

Location: Near W. Elkhorn Blvd & Hwy 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. One of our more successful civic efforts, it proves freethinkers can serve the community.

So 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 be swept by the rain into tributaries and into the ocean, degrading habitat, and leading to a slow death for many sea creatures. (Note, 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. 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 Natomas area. 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.

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

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

Contact for details: 916-805-9337 (Don Knutson), or <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>.

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



➤ **Davis Community Meal – Feed the Hungry**

Tuesday, May 30, 2023, 4:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Location: St. Martin's Episcopal Church, 640 Hawthorne Lane, Davis, CA,
map at <http://binged.it/1uBpi57>.

Once again, the **Davis Community Meal** is serving up meals to the hungry, the poor, the indigent, the outcast. It all happens in bucolic, compassionate Davis city, so near to us, where citizens have developed a secular solution for the problem of hunger, and need our help.

So join us in the effort. Your reward will be an opportunity to meet new minds and hobnob with your freethought friends, a likely free meal, jazzy music, and the rosy hearts-glow of benevolence. Also, seriously, it's a blast!

Cooking? Dish washing? None needed! The Davis Community Meals team will perform all the food prep and kitchen work. Our job is simply to set up chairs & tables, serve, smile, put things away at the end, and clean a bit (with a minimum of mopping). Extra points if you can arrive for setup, but if you can't, that's OK, any help is good help. Setup begins about 4:30 p.m., food service at about 5:45. At 6:30 we clean up, leaving the hall as we found it.

For details, please see [Davis Community Meals](#). For a map, see: [Martin's Episcopal Church](#). (Yes, a church hall, so what?)

Contact for details: See <https://www.aofonline.org/contact.html>, or call the Service Coordinator (Don, 916-805-9337). Carpooling may be available. For info, please contact the Service Project Coordinator.



✧ ✧ **Other Upcoming Events (non-AOF)** ✧ ✧

AOF is not the whole story of course. Sacramento has other freethought groups. So keep reading.

➤ **Game Night**

Friday, May 5, 2023, 5pm – 11pm

Location: Great Escape Games, 1250 Howe Ave #3A, Sacramento,, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/W7iqzNQSttY5yj5P7>. Games to play for all skill levels, and you may bring your own favorites. Great Escape Games also has over 100 demo games you can play for free.

Details: See <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/293263156/>.

➤ Saturday Morning Hikes

Saturday, May 6, 2023, 9:30am – 11:30am

Saturday, Jun 3, 2023, 9:30am – 11:30am

Sacramento has gorgeous hiking places, ranging from riverside nature to rugged hills. Join us for hiking on a Saturday each month, to meet new people, observe nature, and leave footprints. Sites to be determined.

For May 6, details: <https://www.meetup.com/reasoncenterevents/events/jfkqsyfchbjb/>.

For June 3, details: <https://www.meetup.com/reasoncenterevents/events/jfkqsyfchbjb/>.

➤ Blasphemy Breakfasts

Sunday, May 7, 2023, 9:30am – 11am (Midtown Sac)

Saturday, May 13, 2023, 10am – 11:30am (Folsom)

Sunday, May 21, 2023, 9:30am – 11am (Rocklin)

May 7 location: Mel's Diner, 3000 J Street, Sacramento, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/toijMkseMWmTanVP7>.

May 13 location: Mel's Diner, 13399 Folsom Blvd, Folsom, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ri6JvaBoSZVHTdnU6>.

May 21 location: Mel's Diner, 6708 Lonetree Blvd, Rocklin, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ZUY2gq72KkmcC4bU6>.

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 for our "Blasphemy Breakfast." We really don't blaspheme all that much, but who knows what dark mutterings will emerge? A great place to speak your mind, and a good starter if you are new to meetups.

Details for May 7, see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/292939783/>.

Details for May 13, see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/zgwfdyfchbrb/>.

Details for May 21, see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/pwwnssyfchbcc/>.

➤ Coffee and Community

Sunday, May 7, 2023, 10:30am – 12 noon (online meeting)

Sunday, May 21, 2023, 10:30 – 12 noon (at Reason Center)

May 7 link: click <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88317332021?pwd=OVI6M3lRQm52L0hQUmhwd0pucENEQT09>.

May 21 location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, Sac., map at <https://goo.gl/maps/RwiUgEJ5ESHRhrPu8>.

Meet for coffee and open-topic conversation. Get to know new folk or visit with some old friends! Hosted by Nancy Sneed and Mynga Futrell, such friendly people!

➤ Recovery from Religion (RfR) Virtual Support meetings

Sunday, May 7, 4pm – 6pm (online link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87403436249>)

Sunday, May 13, 5pm – 7pm (women & non-binary only, online link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87403436249>)

Thursday, May 18, 8pm – 10pm (online attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82268955990>)

Saturday, May 20, 7am – 9am (online attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7287067292>)

Sunday, May 21, 12 noon – 2pm (for LGBTQA+ folk, attendance link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7287067292>)

Providing ongoing and personal support to individuals letting go of religious beliefs. Please be sensitive and tolerant, and cut others some slack, because they need it. "RfR" is here to help.

➤ Suicide Loss Survivors Discussion and Support

Tuesday, May 9, 2023, 5pm – 7pm

Online survivor support in a compassionate, secular way. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82683645189>.

➤ Word Confusion

Wednesday, May 10, 2023, 7pm – 9pm

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

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

➤ Free Movie Night at the Reason Center

Friday, May 12, 7pm – 9pm

Free Movie Nights are back in person at our new Reason Center in Sacramento. We are in the back corner of the building – you can find us. No fee for the movie, but "RC" does appreciate donations. Bring your own snacks & drinks.



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

Details: See <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/gkwfdtyfchbqb/> or call RC at 916-426-6416.

You can suggest your own fave flick for next time, how cool is that?

➤ **How To Be A More Persuasive Skeptic Communicator (Workshop, Susan Gerbic)**

Saturday, May 13, 3:30pm – 5:30pm

Susan Gerbic returns to present her workshop helping skeptics be more persuasive communicators when confronted with strange beliefs shared by friends, family, co-workers and acquaintances. Susan will draw from recent debunking of the "alien skin marking" claims, which have been proven to be the result of burns caused by hair blow dryers. Not a lecture but a hands-on workshop where everyone will participate. Please see <https://www.abouttimeproject.org/general-5>, Susan's webpage, to articles and a video that explain this in detail. It will help to be familiar with the subject in advance of the workshop. This event is FREE and open to everyone. Masks recommended for this indoor event.

After the workshop, the group will move up the street to Duke's Plates and Pints (501 La Sierra Dr.) for a bite to eat and more skeptical conversation. Duke's has some tasty menu items and outdoor seating.

Location: Arden-Dimick Branch Library, 891 Watt Ave, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/TDdfTTYwqyr2d26J9>.

➤ **Black Humanists & Non-Believers Book Club**

Saturday, May 27, 2023, 3:30pm – 5pm

An online book discussion open to all, book to be determined. Details, see: <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/zbwlctyfchbkc/>.

➤ **Casual Game Night**

Saturday, May 27, 2023, 6pm – 10pm

Location: Nr.Highlands-Antelope Library 4235 Antelope Rd, Antelope, map: <https://goo.gl/maps/rAVPSjMZnCKTwikDA>. Casual board & card games will be played and most take less than an hour to play. If you have a favorite game then you are welcome to bring it. Bring your own snacks too, but no alcohol! No money bets! Geeze, people.

Details: See <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/293268073/>.

➤ **More Local Events - Event Calendars**

There's more! Believe us, a lot more. And plans change, so don't trust the static list above. 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/>
- Central Valley Alliance of Atheists & Skeptics, <https://www.meetup.com/fresno-cvaas/events/calendar/>

Want to 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.

But to continue, "RC" relies on support from members and donors. Please stand up for Reason Center, because it stands up for you. To join or donate, visit ReasonCenter.org.

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 ✧ ✧

➤ National Day of Reason

Thursday, May 4, 2023

First endorsed in 2003 and honored by U.S. secularists, the **National Day of Reason** (NDoR) occurs on the first Thursday of May. NDoR is a response and counterbalance to the National Day of Prayer, designated by the US Congress since 1952. On this day all humanist Americans can join hands to celebrate rational thinking—a concept all can or should support. The goal: to raise public awareness of the persistent threat to religious liberty posed by government intrusion into the sphere of private worship. For details, and to learn about events in your area, see <http://www.nationaldayofreason.org/>.



On January 23, 1808, in a letter to the Reverend Samuel Miller, our Founding Father Thomas Jefferson had these words

"Fasting and prayer are religious exercises; the enjoining them an act of discipline. Every religious society has a right to determine for itself the time for these exercises, and the objects proper for them, according to their own particular tenets; and right can never be safer than in their hands, where the Constitution has deposited it. ...civil powers alone have been given to the President of the United States and *no authority to direct the religious exercises of his constituents.*" [emphasis added]

The National Day of Reason is a *movable* secular holiday – it can occur any time from May 1 to May 7. This year, the 4th.

➤ Towel Day

Thursday, May 25, 2023

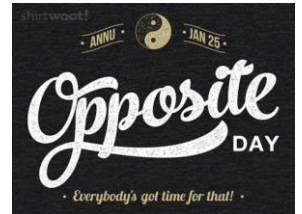
Towel Day is the annual celebration of the life and writings of Douglas Adams (1952-2001), humorist, humanist, conservationist, science fiction writer, and social critic. On that day, fans around the universe proudly carry a towel in his honor. Why a towel? Don't panic, go to the website to see - or better yet, read [The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy](#). It's a great book.



➤ Opposite Day

Friday, May 26, 2023

Some say the proper date is May 26, some say April 30, some say March 27th -- can you ever be sure? When someone says "Today is **Opposite Day**," he might be lying! Opposite Day is a day to say the reverse of what you mean, with a wink, with a nod; a day when "no" means "yes" and "shut up" means "keep talking;" a day to be nice to your boss, teacher or enemy, and a complete jerk to your best friend; a day to turn words on their head; a day to tie knots in logic. Celebrate this day with care. It might get you in trouble!



➤ Birthday of Science

Sunday, May 28 2023

The **Birthday of Science** marks the day Thales of Miletus (in 585 BCE) correctly predicted a solar eclipse. A better choice might be the discovery of fire or the wheel, but we don't know exactly when that happened or who did it. We *do* know about Thales. His prediction was significant because the idea of cause and effect (causality) applies to all science. Given any phenomenon, with the exception of purely random quantum events, in principle we can trace its cause or causes, and the cause of those causes, back through time -- until all cause-tracks merge at the "Big Bang," beyond which, presumably, no tracks remain. The seeds of our life and future were sewn then. The [Large Hadron Collider](#) is an effort to re-create those first moments.



Science desires a beginning that applies to the big picture, and a sense of order and predictability. That is where causality leads us.

➤ Hug an Atheist Day

Thursday, June 1, 2023

In 2009, freethinker William Bermudez started [Hug an Atheist Day](#) (June 1st) to poke fun at other groups popping up at the time to encouraged hugging. He called for people to run up and hug atheists or nonbelievers in general. As one blogger wrote:

It doesn't matter what your worldview is, practice a little tolerance. Find your nearest Atheist, Absurdist, Agnostic, Anti-Religionist, Antitheist, Apatheist, Deist, Dystheist, Existentialist, Freethinker, Gropaga, Ignostic, Mahayana, Marxist, Misotheist, Naturalistic Pantheist, Nihilist, Nontheist, Pastafarian, Secular Humanist, Skeptic, Spagnostic, Structuralist, Buddhist, Zen Buddhist, or anyone else who doubts the existence of a god, and & give him/her the biggest hug ever!

But use common sense, because, you know, not everyone appreciates uninvited hugs.



St Aelhaiarn, the Snooping Saint



any saints make their name by being killed, of course. Torn on racks, burned in pitch, choked with quicklime, covered in nails, beheaded and drowned – and that was just St Quintin of Rome.

But St Aelhaiarn is (so far we know) unique among the blessed in having been killed as a punishment from God.

Aelhaiarn, or "Ironbrow" in English, was, according to that most reliable of historical records, medieval hagiography, the manservant of the great Welsh saint, Beuno of Clenogvaur.

Beuno was in the habit of rising secretly in the middle of the night and walking to Llaynhayrne, which as you'll appreciate is a four-mile trip from Clenogvaur. At Llaynhayrne he would kneel on a flat stone in the middle of the river and pray.

Aelhaiarn couldn't help wondering what the holy man was getting up to. So one night, in idle curiosity, he followed surreptitiously behind.

And so it was that in mid-prayer Beuno heard a rustle in the bushes and saw the shape of a man. Not knowing who was there, Beuno called on God to punish the lurker if his intentions were not commendable. Idle curiosity being non-commendable, the Lord rustled up a pack of wild beasts, who tore the hapless lackey limb from limb, and bit of limb from bit of limb.

Realising then who the lurker was, Beuno repented – a bit late, you might have thought. But not so. Nothing as superficial as dismemberment keeps a good saint down.

Beuno had the theology. He could rebuild him.

Bit by bit and limb by limb, he pieced his servant together. Unfortunately, though, in the darkness, even the great Beuno failed to find one of his eyebrows.

There was nothing for it but to fill the gap with the metal tip of his pikestaff. So the six-million-groat man went through life with an iron eyebrow – and that's how Aelhaiarn got his name.



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
Newsletter Editor: Fabulous Fran Evanisko
Webmistress: Palpable Pat Kelley
Program chair: Super Susan McLean
Facebook page: Keen Kaeleigh Pontif
Directors at large:
Roger Zabkie, Fran Evanisko, Kaeleigh Pontif

How to Contact AOF:

- Call 916-304-3796 (voicemail)
 - Or write to PO Box 15182, Sacramento, CA 95851
- 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 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>.

Your humble editor is Fran Evanisko.