



Sean O'Brien chilled our blood in November with his dramatic Poe recitals. We are still shivering.

❖ ❖ **This Month's Headliner Event** ❖ ❖

➤ **HumanLight/Solstice Party**

Sunday, December 15, 2024, 12 pm – 2:30 pm

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

• At a time of year rife with religious holidays, the annual [HumanLight/ Winter Solstice](#) Party lets humanists & freethinkers be festive and celebrate common values and friendship – ideals and values like *reason, compassion, hope, science, kindness, joy & community*.

The party will include a potluck, live music, a charity drive, and lots of socializing. This event is family-friendly, so bring the kiddos too.

The Potluck: Bring a dish to share – bring it already prepared and ready to serve, including serving utensils for your dish. No kitchen facilities or outlets are available.

- BYO beverages. We will provide water & hot coffee.
- We provide: plates, bowls, utensils, napkins, and cups.

Live music: Instrumentals and vocals in keeping with our happy celebration of solstice and Human Light.

The Charity Drive: Food 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 are encouraged but not required. This is a wonderful opportunity for the freethought community to come together and show their compassion and kindness for others in need in our local community.

Event Sponsors are Atheists and Other Freethinkers (AOF), [Sunday Assembly](#) and [Reason Center](#).

Contact for details: Email "programs (at) aofonline (dot) org" or "nancysneed10 (at) gmail (dot) com", or call 916-390-1084 (Pamella).



❖ ❖ Other Upcoming AOF Events ❖ ❖

➤ Free Movie and Discussion

Friday, December 13, 2024, 7 pm – 9 pm

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

• It's a free **in-person Movie Night** at Sacramento's [Reason Center](#), in a quiet room with cozy seating and a huge screen and refreshments right at hand. The movie name is a secret because of our [MPLC License](#) and certain legal foderol -- but we can slip hints. From 2014, it is a film starring Michael Keaton and Zach Galifianakas, in which a washed-up superhero actor attempts to revive his fading career by writing, directing, and starring in a Broadway production. Critical approval rating is 91% based on 351 reviews, and the average rating is 8.50/10.



AOF co-sponsors the Movie Night events. The movie team provides popcorn and other munchies - feel free to bring your own snacks as well. We also encourage a post-film discussion, which makes this educational if you stretch the word. No fee to attend. But you know, Reason Center always appreciates donations. We're just saying.

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

Free Movie Night is a joint venture of AOF and Reason Center. Suggest your own fave film for next time!

❖ ❖ Other Upcoming (non-AOF) Events ❖ ❖

Local *non*-AOF events worthy of your attention. Just highlights. For more, please check the calendar links below, please.

➤ Blasphemy Breakfasts and a Brunch

Sunday, December 8, 2024, 9:30 am – 11:30 am, at Mel's Diner, 3000 J Street, Sacramento, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/toijMkseMwMtanVP7>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/301023324/>.

Saturday, December 14, 2024, 10 am – 11:30 am, at Mel's Diner, 13399 Folsom Blvd, Folsom, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ri6JvaBoSZVHTdnU6>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/304701032/>.

Sunday, December 15, 2024, 9:30 am – 11 am, at Mel's Diner, 6708 Lonetree Blvd, Rocklin, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ZUY2gg72KkmcC4bU6>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/304620734/>.

• Like to hang 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 don't blaspheme all that much, but dark mutterings may emerge ... be warned. A great place to speak your mind, and a good starter if you are new to meetups. Please RSVP (see the links).



➤ Saturday Night Hangout

Saturdays, December 14 and December 28, 2024, 6 pm – 9 pm

Location: Online events! Meet by teleconference; to attend, just click the attendance link at the event time: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83092441353?pwd=Wmp6RVIUR1Q0dFZZMIFQUIVodTN0dz09>.

• An online meetup on various Saturdays, at 6:00 PM Pacific Time. The first half hour is for greeting friends, catching up, welcoming newcomers and having fun. No politics please! Then games, trivia, movies. Options may grow.

Details: <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/304751460/>.

➤ Ancient Christian Study Group

Sunday, December 15, 2024, 12 noon – 2 pm

Location: Mast Coffee, 1430 28th Street, Sacramento, map at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/kA5LsqahX2jFLcHF9>.

• The history of ancient Christianity is endlessly fascinating. Don Fox and Steve Thoreson will facilitate a review of the history of Rome, religions of the Roman Empire, Gnosticism, Mystery cults, history of Christian persecutions, biographies of major Christians, the history of the Bible and other related topics. If you ever wanted to sort out Eusebius from Clement, or Constantine from Diocletian, or the Vulgate from the Septuagint, then this group is for you. Previous biblical knowledge is not required to participate. Topic focus this month: "Magic in the Roman World."

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/304620732/>.

➤ Coffee and Community at Reason Center

Sunday, December 22, 2024, 10 am – 11:30 am

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

• Come to the Reason Center Library for coffee, tea and treats, yum! This event is just a casual conversation on topics of the day, and newcomers are welcome. Hope to see you soon!

➤ Humanity Breakfast at Fixins

Sunday, December 22, 2024, 11 am – 1 pm

Location: Fixins Soul Kitchen, 3428 3rd Ave, Sacramento, map at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/RmKrF3fgz8jpVCYp7>.

• Time for a scrumptious breakfast. As you may already know, we are alternating between dinners and breakfasts each month. For this we need at least 3 RSVPs to proceed with this event.

BTW. Be prepared to bring cash to have the most flexible payment experience (if party size is larger than 3).

Details: See <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/301324984/>.



➤ Black Humanists & Non-Believers Book Club

Saturday, December 28, 2024, 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm

• A book discussion via phone conference, open to all. RSVP to attend and the phone number will be revealed. Book topic to be announced.

Details (and to RSVP): see <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/whnfftygcqblc/>.

➤ Sacramento Skeptics in the Pub

Sunday, January 5, 2025, 6 pm – 8 pm

Location: Duke's Pints & Plates, 510 La Sierra Dr, Sacramento; map at <https://goo.gl/maps/aNzV4j33cnizW9j77>.

• A social meetup for the skeptical minds, a community of people, friends, and families that champion the methods of science and critical thinking. Visitors and new skeptics most welcome!

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

➤ More Events – So many Calendars!

Really, there's more. And plans change, because we're human. So don't trust the list above. To learn of all those other events, please 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/>

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.

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. Or email "programs@aofonline.org". Or call us! (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

Tuesday, December 10, 2024

"**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.



Dignity and justice for all of us

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.

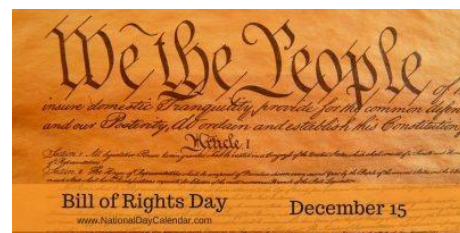
Since its adoption countries around the world have celebrated the anniversary, but it has only been since the 50th anniversary celebrations in 1998 that the holiday has gained in popularity.

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** **Sunday, December 15, 2024**

Bill of Rights Day (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 make up 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: 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)** **Saturday, December 21**

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

"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

Monday, December 23, 2024

HumanLight is a [Humanist holiday](#) celebrated annually on December 23. It was first celebrated in 2001, and was created to provide a specifically Humanist celebration during the [western world's holiday season](#). The New Jersey Humanist Network founded the holiday in 2001 to aid [secular](#) people in commemorating the December holiday season without encroaching on other adjacent events—both religious ones such as [Christmas](#) and secular ones such as [Solstice](#).^[1] The inaugural event involved only the founding organization, but is now celebrated by many secular organizations and individuals across the United States and other countries. Various organizations have recognized the holiday, including the [American Humanist Association](#) in 2004. The HumanLight Committee maintains the official HumanLight webpage and engages with humanist organizations and the media about the holiday.



HumanLight is a secular holiday that focuses on the "positive, secular human values of reason, compassion, humanity and hope". While there are no universally accepted ways to commemorate the holiday, modern celebrations typically involve a communal meal among a family or group. The use of candles to symbolize reason, hope, compassion, and humanity has become widespread among those celebrating. Groups today also observe the holiday using charity work, gift exchanges, and other ideas associated with holidays and celebrations.



The Reason for the Season, by Fran Evanisko

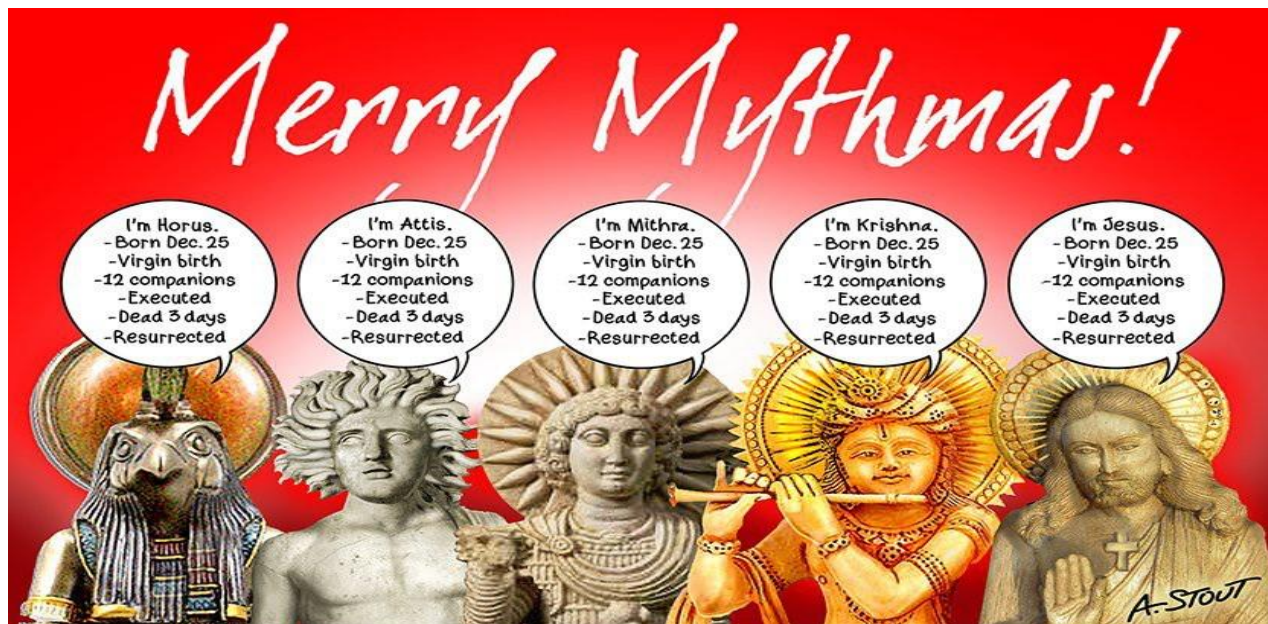
I thought Christmas was intentionally set to December 25th to coincide with the winter solstice which was celebrated all across Europe, Asia, and North Africa, though it was understood that Jesus was not born at this time. Some historians think he was born in the fall, and some think it may have been spring, but there is a consensus that it was not in December. One explanation is that some Christian bishop chose December 25th to prevent his people from participating in the Pagan Saturnalia festival which included feasting and giving gifts to the poor, but also included licentious partying.

However, there's a reluctance among many Christians to associate the Christmas celebration with Paganism. In fact historian William J. Tighe claims that Christ's birth is celebrated December 25th because it is nine months after Christ's conception which was supposedly March 25, and therefore has no relationship to the Pagan solstice celebrations. Supposedly, some believe that great prophets died on the date of their conception.

Ironically, the Vernal Equinox was also a time of Pagan Fertility festivals. So if Jesus' birthdate is free of Pagan connection, his conception was likely not.

Regardless of all of this, the first Christmas was not celebrated till 336 AD, while there is evidence of Ancient Winter Solstice celebrations dating back to about 3200 BC, so it is hard to see how the reason for any season can be something that occurred more than 3000 years after the first known seasonal celebrations.

So, what is the reason for the Pagan wintertime celebrations? Clearly the reason for the Pagan winter celebrations is grounded in something that actually occurs, the solstice. **HAPPY SOLSTICE.**



The hermit who redistributed temptation

WHEN THE ROMAN EMPIRE converted wholesale to Christianity, religious people had a bit of a problem. Where do you go to get religion when everyone's baptized into the Church at birth? Where do you go to be not of the world, when the whole world is incorporated into the Church?

So they started becoming hermits, heading off into the desert to overcome their temptations with prayer and self-discipline, or just trying to run away from them.

Of course some did better than others. But one Father Apollo mastered temptation so well, he could, allegedly, redistribute it.

One day, he was passing a monastery as a glum faced young monk shuffled out.

"What's up?" he asked.

"I'm packing it in", answered the boy.

"Why?"

"I've got this lust thing. I've got enough of it to sink a nunnerly."

"Why don't you talk to your abbot about it?" asked Apollo.

"I did, and he says I'm a disgusting pervert who shouldn't be allowed in a monk's robe. Not even my own."

"Hmm," hummed Apollo. "Look, go back, and give it another shot, and I'll pray for you."

So the boy went back in, while Apollo talked to God.

"Father," he prayed, "deliver this boy from his temptation, so he can get some peace. And may it be passed on to his abbot, so he learns a bit of understanding."

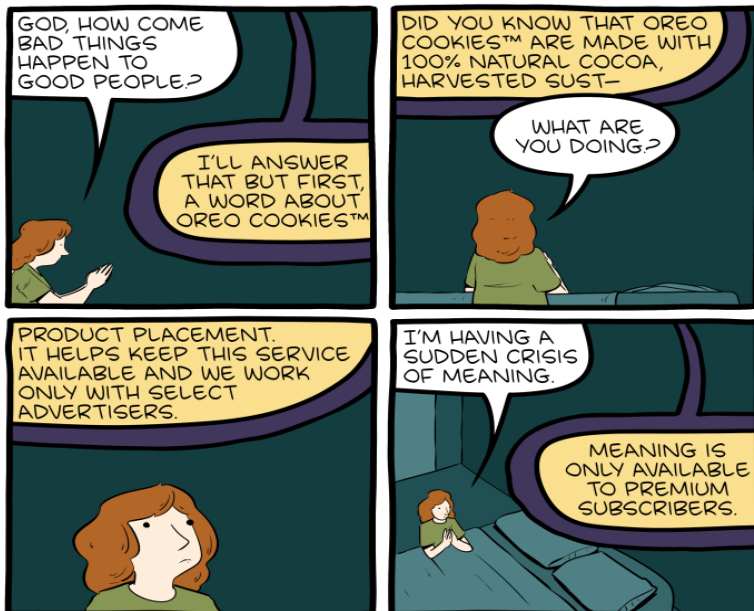
And apparently it worked. Soon afterwards, Father Apollo was walking along the road when he was passed by the abbot, scuttling into the nearest town.

"Where are you off to?" demanded Apollo.

"Erm, nowhere", explained the old man.

"Go home and pray, you dirty old monk," said Apollo.

Which, so far as we can tell, is what he did.



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.

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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 & stuff.

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>.