



AOF News & Views – Newsletter for February 2026



AOF meeting, January 25, 2026: Dr. Arturo Baiocchi discusses Homelessness in California

✧ ✧ This Month's Headliner Event ✧ ✧

➤ The Underground Railroad

Sunday, February 22, 2026, 2 pm – 4 pm (doors open 1:45pm)

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

Presenter Anne M. Rewell of the CSUS Renaissance Society will tell us all about the Underground Railroad, exploring the routes utilized by escaping enslaved people in the Antebellum South, as well as those who collaborated to assist, the secret networks, the waystations and rest stops. The Railroad (not a literal railroad) brought together a diversity of people in the flight from slavery and slavers – from the deep south, and the journey to Canada and sometimes to Mexico (yes Mexico abolished slavery in 1837; if you didn't know, shame on you for sleeping in Mrs. Grundy's history class). Perilous for all involved, it called for courage and ingenuity, and sometimes some pretty fast thinking.

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

A free event with free parking. Open to the public. Bring snacks or a beverage to share if you can. AOF provides cool, clear water.



Special Event – the Sacramento Darwin Day Gala ☆☆

Friday, February 13, 2026, 6:30 pm – 9:30 pm

Location: MOSAC Science Museum, 400 Jibboom St, Sacramento, [see map](#)

Presenting the 29th fabulous year of the **Darwin Day Birthday Gala**, Sacramento's coolest, most singular, most go-to event of science and humanity, brought to you by area science advocates, civic groups and nerds on too much coffee. An in-person event at the MOSAC Science Museum, marking "Chuck" Darwin's 217th birthday. Open to all. But ... you'll need a ticket.

[Darwin Day](#) is a science-rush like no other, a celebration of scientific inquiry honoring of the life and work of the great Charles Darwin (b. 12 February 1809), sponsored worldwide by community and educational groups. Strictly speaking it's not an AOF event, but AOF helped found the local gala, and continues to support it and commend it to all our friends in the Sacramento community of reason. Because *science!* And what's science but reason in the trenches?

The main speaker will be Rick Grosberg of the University of California, Davis.

"Throughout my career, my research has centered on the major evolutionary transitions in the history of life, from DNA to genes, from unicellular to multicellular organisms, and from families to complex societies of multicellular organisms. I'm especially interested in the mechanisms that regulate the inevitable conflicts of interest between different levels of biological organization. I'm also fascinated and attracted by the history of ideas, and -- as a marine evolutionary biologist -- to Darwin's notoriously complicated and misunderstood relationship with the sea. Over the last few years, my research has inescapably emphasized the impacts of climate change and other human activities on the ecological and evolutionary resilience of marine populations and ecosystems. And, most recently, I have explored the causes and consequences of differing patterns of biodiversity across the major realms of life."

How to attend: Get a ticket! It's not pricey, and this is no time to grinch. Price is just \$25 general, \$20 for museum members, or \$10 if you have a Student ID. Ticket link: <https://visitmosac.org/darwin-day/>. As a bonus you'll get sweet, sweet birthday cake. Note, entertainment, snacks and parking included with your ticket.

For details: See <https://visitmosac.org/darwin-day/> or <https://www.facebook.com/darwindaysac/>.



✧ ✧ Other Upcoming AOF-related Events ✧ ✧

➤ Free Movie and Discussion

Friday, February 6, 2026, 7 pm – 9 pm

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

Join us for a cozy **in-person Movie Night** at Sacramento's [Reason Center](#), in a quiet room with cushy seating and a huge screen and refreshments right at hand. The movie title is a secret because of our [MPLC License](#) and certain legal folderol -- but we can drop hints.

This month's film, from 2013, celebrates Black History Month. It stars the late Chadwick Boseman, T.R. Knight, and Harrison Ford. "In 1947, Jackie Robinson becomes the first African-American to play in Major League Baseball in the modern era when he was signed by the Brooklyn Dodgers and faces considerable racism in the process."

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 Events ✧ ✧

Here are some local *non-AOF* events worthy of your attention. We won't list them all this time, just the highlights. For more, please check the calendar links below.

➤ Game Day at the Library

Saturday, February 7, 2026, 2 pm – 5:30 pm

Location: North Highlands/Antelope Library, 4235 Antelope Road, Antelope, CA, map at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/g5LNGeUSeTDEnNrS9>.

Join us on the first Saturday of each month for our gaming social program for adults. We'll provide the games and refreshments; you bring the conversation and the fun. All Experience Levels Welcome! Games available for play include classic family games like Dominoes to modern strategy games like Ticket To Ride. If you have a favorite casual game you'd like to share, you are welcome to bring it. (Please Note: We only play for fun and never for money.)

Details at: <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/313103316/> or <https://engage.saclibrary.org/event/14368090>.

➤ **Small Groups, Big Talk (Consensual Non-Monogamy)**

Saturday, February 7, 2025, 3:30 pm – 7 pm

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

A structured small-group discussion for the local Polyamory/CNM community. Roughly 2 hours of discussion with breaks. A safe space for LGBTQIA+ and BDSM but not exclusive to those communities. Not a swing party (really).

Details: see <https://www.meetup.com/reasoncenterevents/events/313100732/>.

➤ **Sunday Assembly & Potluck**

Sunday, February 8, 2026, 11 am – 1 pm (doors open 10:30am, presentation at 11)

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

Sunday Assembly meets once a month to share stories, create community, and learn from our experiences. It is secular and inclusive, and everyone is valued. As always, families are welcome and child care is provided.

We will have a speaker, a short Doing Your Best presentation by a member, a time for members to share their Milestones, and a potluck. Please bring a dish to share unless you are a newcomer. Donuts and coffee are provided. Hope to see you there!

Details at: <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/312876302/>.



➤ **Blasphemy Brunch and Breakfast**

● **Saturday, February 14, 2026, 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/312169689/>.

● **Sunday, February 15, 2026, 9:30 am – 11 am**, at Mel's Diner, 6708 Lonetree Blvd, Rocklin, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ZUY2gq72KkmkC4bU6>, details at <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/313066114/>.

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 good if you are new to meetups. Please RSVP (see the detail links).



➤ **Sunday Assembly Fitness Mall Walk**

Saturday, February 14, 2026, 10 am – 12 noon

Location: 6041 Sunrise Mall Blvd, Citrus Heights (South Main Entrance facing Sunrise Blvd). Map at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/mr6FmCtAWM8WuPX48>.

Join the Sunday Assembly community's Friend-in-Fitness Mall Walk, followed by coffee and conversation.

Details at: <https://www.meetup.com/sunday-assembly-sacramento/events/313165416/>.

➤ **Ancient Christian Study Group**

Sunday, February 15, 2026, 12 pm – 2 pm

Location: Mast Coffee, 1430 28th Street, Sacramento, CA, map at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/7LLEqGrzrQRZm7jn9>.

The history of ancient Christianity is an endlessly fascinating topic. Don Fox and Steve Thoreson facilitate this meetup to review 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 many 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 not required to participate.

Details: See <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/312876308/>.

➤ **LiteraCheer at Reason Center**

Saturday, February 21, 2026, 2 pm – 4 pm

Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, Sac., map at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/bQFMctTFPXyDYTB8>.

Reason Center continues the in-person Literacheer events! These occur in the library seating areas. Come and enjoy the weekend afternoon by discussing books with fellow thinkers.

Everyone will get a chance to share ideas about any book of their choice—any genre, fiction or nonfiction. It's a great way to keep abreast of what like-minded people are reading.

Note, the event must have 3 persons RSVPs to move forward. Lacking that number will force a cancellation.

Honor your RSVP and keep it updated.

Follow common sense decency in the choice of books. Have a book in mind for discussion - even if you are still reading it. Avoid unrelated and/or prolonged discussions that veer off topic. Try to keep the book topics accessible to all – a topic you would bring up at a cocktail party or public function. Finally, be nice. Focus on the "cheer" part of the event.

Details at:

<https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/312959591/>.



➤ Humanity Breakfast at Fixins – Yummy!

Sunday, February 22, 2025, 11 am – 1pm

Location: Fixins Soul Kitchen, 3428 3rd Ave, Sacramento, map at

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/2nv3Wfn8siRMucdq7>.

Time for a scrumptious breakfast. As you may know, we alternate between dinners and breakfasts each month; even months are breakfasts, and odd months dinners. We need at least 3 RSVPs, including myself, to proceed with this event. If we don't meet this threshold, the event will be cancelled the day before. Always check for updates or check your email.

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/310344255/>.



➤ Coffee and Community at Reason Center

Sunday, February 22, 2026, 11 am – 12:30 pm

Location: Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, Sac., map at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/bQFMctTFPXyDYTBe8>.

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

Details at: <https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/312876309/>.

➤ Skeptics in the Pub

Sunday, March 1, 2026, 6 pm – 8 pm

Location: Urban Roods Brewing & Smokehouse, 1322 V Street, map at <https://maps.app.goo.gl/VmDt4vn2y1ac12Np7>.

A social gathering for the skeptical minds, a community of people, friends, and families that champion the methods of science and critical thinking. The Skeptics will usually meet in the back patio, weather permitting; tables are out there under a tent. Otherwise, a table inside. Urban Roots is an ideal location.

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

➤ 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. (Reasonable honorariums paid to speakers.)

Volunteer?

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

✧ ✧ **Secular Holidays** ✧ ✧

➤ **Darwin Day**

Thursday, February 12, 2026

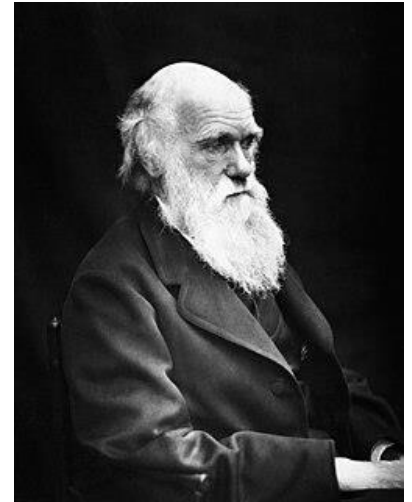
Darwin Day, the only secular holiday in February, celebrates the life and work of Charles Darwin, and is celebrated within the global community with participation from all sectors of society. Even mainline churches have participated, celebrating the day as **Evolution Sunday or Evolution Weekend** (see the [Clergy Letter Project](#) for details).

Under any of these names, this day celebrates the wonder and beauty of both science and humanity, and serve to recognize and celebrate the achievements of a man who cast a bright, explanatory light on reality, our self-knowledge, and on the world of which we are part.

Charles Darwin contributed to our understanding at the deepest level, forever changed how we see ourselves within this vast, impersonal universe, and brought us a paradigm shift of seismic proportions. He symbolizes the brave, human enterprise of science in confronting the mystery of existence. His life and work exemplify the spirit of wonder, curiosity and adventure along with the excitement that the quest for knowledge and understanding can provide.

[The Darwin Day Program](#), an educational non-profit organization, encourages interested groups and individuals throughout the world to participate in the annual celebration of Darwin Day by coordinating events and activities in their area on or around February 12. The program also offers a year-round educational outreach project to help in reaching the goal of improving the public's understanding of science and foster an appreciation for our shared humanity.

Darwin Day, Evolution Sunday and Evolution Weekend encourage us to come together to champion science and humanity throughout our global community. They let us celebrate the astonishing engagement of our common intelligence with the wonder and excitement of life in the universe. If you agree, visit the National Darwin Day site and sign the petition calling for national recognition of this day. Then, visit [Epic of Evolution](#) for a great adventure.



Family News

Don Lorn Knutson, August 6, 1954 – Jan 27, 2026

Don, an amazing man, was a charter member, past director and President of AOF. His remarkable story ended after a protracted struggle with pneumonia.

Born in Alaska to a military family as a career, Don grew up during the Civil Rights era and studied communal living, learning that competition shouldn't be the essence of life.

Don has participated and organized countless local volunteer events, working with Atheists and Other Freethinkers, the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom (WILPF), and the Sacramento Vegan Society. Among his efforts were leading efforts to clean trash from Highway 99 and organizing missions to serve food to hungry poor in Davis. He truly embodied serving the community.

In accordance with his wishes, he was cremated, his estate donated to charity, and his ashes very probably thrown on a certain President.

A memorial will occur on the afternoon of Saturday, April 11 (exact hours TBD), at the Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way in Sacramento. Please save the date and pass the word to others who loved him.

If you have questions or words, contact **Paul Trudeau** <etctjtatpt (at) gmail (dot) com>.



Pennie (Penelope) Ann Taylor, May 1951 – Jan 16, 2026

Some will remember Pennie. Not an AOF member, she was a friend of AOF, a dedicated WILPF member and an attendee of events of the old Humanist Association of the Greater Sacramento Area (HAGSA). She died of a sudden heart attack. We will miss her.



Memento Mori by Brian Jay Stanley

...every mother's son
Travails with a skeleton.
-A.E. Housman

Poets, painters, and philosophers of the Renaissance used to set skulls on their desk to remind them of their mortality. I have no idea where to buy a skull nowadays, but sometimes while propping my cheek against my hand in thought, I become aware that I am touching the contours of my own skull. I run a finger around my eye sockets, feel the hinge of my jaw, and picture myself as I will one day look, minus everything soft—a bald globe of calcium. The only shared feature of that face and my present one are my teeth—the one place where my skeleton already pokes through my skin.

We are the clothing of our skeletons, but since our skeletons never undress until the prom of life ends, we forget what we look like beneath this tuxedo of flesh. The evolution of the endoskeleton was a key contributor to the denial of death. How could we forget our mortality if, like molting cicadas, we wore our skeletons outside and periodically had to crawl from a now lifeless replica of ourselves?

Instead, self-knowledge depends on imagination. Some lustful teenage boys mentally undress attractive women to see them naked. We should go further and mentally strip them of their skin to see the ribs and femurs that keep their beauty upright. When we shake hands with businessmen, we should squeeze hard enough to feel their metacarpals, which will stock next century's graveyards.



This Month in Religious History

February 1, 1663

John Eliot, Congregational minister at Roxbury, Massachusetts, published the first Native American Bible, for the 1,100 "Praying Indians" who lived in his area. The Bible was written in phonetic Algonquin for 14 Indian villages comprised of people who couldn't read in any language. Oh well.

February 5, 1636

Roger Williams, a defrocked Puritan minister, was kicked out of Massachusetts, even though, at that time, it was the dead of winter and there was no place to go other than Indian villages and trading posts. Roger somehow survived his journey south through the Connecticut woods and down into what would become Rhode Island, but he wouldn't come up with his best quote for eight more years: "Forced worship stinks in God's nostrils." We should put that on a coffee mug or something.

February 8, 1654

A shipload of 23 Dutch-speaking Jews fleeing Portuguese inquisitors in Brazil—no, this is not the set-up for a joke—arrived in New Amsterdam, creating the first Jewish community in North America. It took them two and a half more centuries to discover the Catskill Mountains.

February 11, 1682

William Penn issued a charter for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania declaring it to be free of religious prejudice—well, almost, free of prejudice toward anyone who believed in "One Almighty and eternal God." Close enough for 1682.

February 12, 1683

The first German dissenters arrived in Philadelphia from Krefeld, Germany, in a group made up primarily of Mennonites and Quakers. They would soon be followed by Dunkers, Moravian Brethren, Footwashing Moravian Brethren, German Baptists, and our favorite, the Schwenkfelders. We're not sure what the Schwenkfelders believed, we just like to say it.

February 14, 1649

The Maryland Assembly passed a freedom of religion law that they were very proud of—in one depiction, Lord Baltimore hands it to the ancient Spartan lawgiver Lycurgus—but it was actually much wimpier than the ones in Rhode Island and Pennsylvania. It was mostly passed in order to protect Catholics, hence it applied only to "Trinitarian Christians."

February 15, 1632

The Virginia House of Burgesses passed a law establishing the Church of England as the only religion of the colony. Not very American of them, was it?

February 18, 1614

Pocahontas, the daughter of Chief Powhatan, was baptized by the Reverend Alexander Whitaker so that John Rolfe could marry her. That rascal.

February 19, 1639

Roger Williams founded Colonial Baptist Church in Rhode Island, the first Baptist congregation in America. So it's his fault.

February 25, 1769

The Bishops Plot—supposedly Britain's effort to force Anglican bishops on Puritan New England—resulted in disturbances, and a political cartoonist in London imagine mobs herding timid prelates onto ships and forcing them back to England. Oddly, the cartoon mob chose the works of Calvin as the book to be flung at the retreating bishop. No one who has actually read Calvin could imagine getting all of him into one volume.



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 Rivera
Vice-president: Marvelous Mynga Futrell
Secretary: Rapid Ruth Rezos
Treasurer & Registrar: Kinetic Ken Nahigian
Event Coordinator: Pamela Rivera (again!)
Program chair: Super Susan McLean
Webmistress: Palpable Pat Kelley
Facebook page & Advisor: Keen Kaeleigh Pontif
Directors at large: Fran Evanisko, David Herbert, Roger Zabkie, Rick Tonsing

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 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.

Your humble editor is Fran Evanisko.

Letters, submissions? We love them! See: <http://www.aofonline.org/read/submission-guide.html>.