AOF
Atheists and Other Freethinkers

AOF News & Views – Newsletter for October 2026

Well-fed, happy AOF members pose after the annual Potluck Picnic in the Park, Sept 27, 2026 – *Were you there?*

✧ ✧ Upcoming Headliner Events ✧ ✧

➢ Sacred Cows and Golden Calves

Sunday, October 25, 2026, 2 pm – 4 pm

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

Our speaker Tim Flood first thought to tell his mother's difficult story of abuse in Washington State in the early 1940s. Instead he wrote a novel, loosely based on his mother's experience but set far away in the Middle East and long ago in the 13th c. BCE. He saw the deep beliefs behind underlying the way his mother was treated. He calls those beliefs "sacred cows and golden calves," the outmoded ways of thinking that plague humanity in any era, including today.

The Flower of Canaan became a story of a woman's abuse and her courageous defiance. Writes one reviewer, the novel is "… an unforgettable portrait of a woman who refuses to let the worst moments of her life define her."

Tim will share his own emotional journey and challenges as a male writer trying to give voice to a woman's struggles. He will also talk about the imperative to shake off still-powerful primitive beliefs about women and to evolve men's ways of thinking about and relating to women.

As usual, event open to the public. Free parking in the lot. OK to BYO snack/beverage, or goodies to share if you wish. Water provided. No entrance fee, but donations gratefully accepted.

Questions? See https://aofonline.org/contact-us/.

➢ HumanLight/Solstice Party

Sunday, December 13, 2026, 12pm – 2:30pm (doors open 11:45am)

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

Save the date! The annual HumanLight/Solstice Party will include a potluck, live music, a charity drive, and lots of socializing. This event is family-friendly & open to the public.

For the Potluck: Bring a dish to share. Please bring your food already prepared and ready to serve, including serving utensils for your dish. No kitchen facilities or electric outlets are available. AOF will provide beverages, water, coffee, & dining utensils.

Live music: Instrumentals and vocals for a happy party.

HumanLight

Charity Drive: Food for humans & pets. We will collect nonperishable food & other necessities for two local charities, the River City Food Bank and the Sacramento County Animal Shelter. Contributions encouraged, not required.

Sponsors are Atheists and Other Freethinkers, Sunday Assembly, California Freethought Day, and Reason Center.

Questions? Please contact AOF at https://aofonline.org/contact-us/.

✧ ✧ Other Upcoming Events ✧ ✧

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

➢ LiteraCheer @ the Reason Center

Saturday, October 17, 2026, 2 pm – 4 pm

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

Come to the Reason Center library seating area to discuss your favorite 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 personal RSVPs to move forward. Less will compel a cancellation. Also, please follow common decency in your choice of books. Have a book in mind for discussion - even if you are still reading it. Try to keep topics accessible to all – a topic you would bring up at a cocktail party or public function. Finally, always be nice.

Details (and to RSVP): https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/316463008/.

☞ Optional to bring your snacks to share with others. The organizers will bring complementary treats.

☞ Honor your RSVP and keep it updated.

☞ Avoid unrelated and/or prolonged discussions that veer off topic.

☞ Focus on the "cheer" part of the event.

➢ Blasphemy Breakfast

Sunday, October 18, 2026, 9:30 am – 11 am

Location: at Mel's Diner, 6708 Lonetree Blvd, Rocklin, CA, map at https://goo.gl/maps/ZUY2gq72KkmkC4bU6, event details at https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/316159112/.

Like to hang with like-minded people? Want to meet freethinkers in smaller groups? Or do you just get the morning munchies? Come to the "Blasphemy Breakfast." We really 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 link).

Details: See https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/316645706/.

➢ Ancient Christian Study Group

Sunday, October 18, 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. Every third Sunday, 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 Christian founders, 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 not required to participate.

Details: See https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/316629164/.

➢ Game Night at the Reason Center

Monday, October 19, 2026, 6 pm – 8 pm

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

The Reason Center hosts a game night on the third Monday of every month. We have a few games to get us started, but feel free to bring your own.

"RC" will provide snacks and non-alcoholic beverages. Attendees are welcome to bring more to share. Note: No gambling will allowed. Give us a break, people.

Details: See https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/316535420/.

➢ BHNB Book Club

Saturdays, October 24, 2026, 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm (online meeting)

An online book discussion open to all. The book will be *Children of the Struggle and the Ancestors Who Stayed*, with 21 personal narratives of those who came of age during the Civil Rights Movement. RSVP at the Details link below, and you will get an attendance link (this is a teleconference event).

Details: see https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/317003633/.

➢ Dinner & a Show with Sunday Assembly

Sunday, October 24, 2026, 6 pm – 9 pm

Location: Hop Gardens, 2904 Franklin Blvd, Sacramento, map at https://maps.app.goo.gl/S9WLzQByBfME8uxs5.
Join the Sunday Assembly Community for Dinner followed by a performance of the Sacramento Pop Choir. First, meet for dinner 6 pm at Hop Gardens Neighborhood Tap Room in Curtis Park, offering wood-fired pizza and craft beers. Then navigate a 5 minute drive to the Sacramento Pop Choir performance at C.K. McClatchy High School. Tickets required! Link to purchase: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sacramento-pop-choir-presents-animation-celebration-tickets-1998330718974.

Details: See https://www.meetup.com/sunday-assembly-sacramento/events/316344786/.

➢ Coffee and Community at Reason Center

Sunday, October 25, 2026, 10:30 am – 12 pm

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. This event is just a casual conversation on topics of the day, and newcomers are welcome. Hope to see you soon!

Details: See https://www.meetup.com/sacfan/events/316857320/.

➢ Humanity Breakfast at Fixins

Sunday, October 25, 2026, 11 am – 1 pm

Location: Fixins Soul Kitchen, 3458 3rd Ave, Sac, map at https://maps.app.goo.gl/aS39UpJvZUhVAaRq5.

Time for a scrumptious breakfast. The BNHBS folk alternate between dinners and breakfasts each month. This breakfast needs at least 3 RSVPs to proceed, otherwise 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.

Details: https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/315046007/.

➢ Skeptics in the Pub

Sunday, November 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/316302502/.

➢ Movie Night at the Reason Center

Friday, November 13, 2026, 7 pm – 9 pm

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

The movie name is a secret, because of our MPLC License and the stodgy rule of law. Sometimes we can slip a hint. But for now we're clueless. Ask someone clueful.

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!

Details: See https://www.meetup.com/reasoncenterevents/events/dmhtztyjcpbrb/.
Suggest your own fave film for next time!

➢ 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.

First, 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.

Then, Suggest a Meeting

Know a compelling speaker, have a great meeting idea? Tell the AOF Program Committee! Go to https://aofonline.org/contact-us/, click "Programs" in the drop-down line, and enter your thoughtful suggestion. (We pay reasonable honorariums to speakers.)

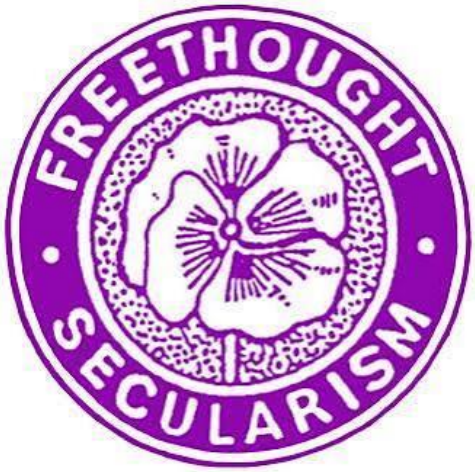
Volunteer?

We suggest it meekly. See https://aofonline.org/leadership-governance/ for opportunities.

✧ ✧ Secular Holidays ✧ ✧

➢ Freethought Day

Monday, October 12, 2026



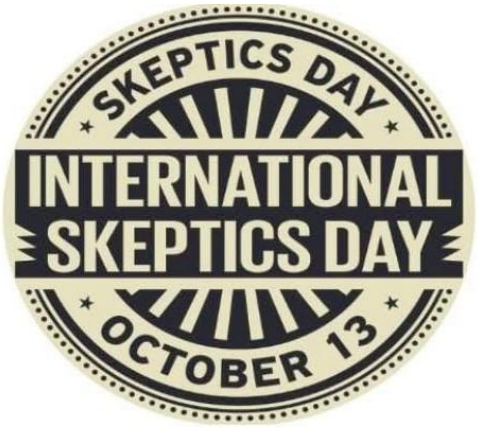
Freethought Day, or "Freethought Coming-Out Day," is a day to give closeted freethinkers a platform from which to declare themselves. The formal calendar holiday is October 12, but many groups plan celebrations for the closest weekend. Some recognize the week as Freethought Week, or the entire month of October as Freethought Month. In this time, newly declared freethinkers can garner strength and support from fellow "declared" freethinkers.

Why October 12? Because on the day in 1692, Colonial Massachusetts Governor William Phips wrote to the Privy Council of the British monarchs to take a stand against the legal use of "spectral evidence," that is, evidence of a non-objective nature, such as "feelings" and visions. His decision that evidence should be objective and verifiable essentially brought an end to the Salem Witch Trials, saving scores of lives. (Click here to read Phips's two letters.)

In the modern United States, discrimination, hatred and bias against freethinkers continues. The freethought community, unlike the gay and lesbian community, lacks a powerful voice and activist population for ending such treatment. Reactions often stem from a misunderstanding of what it is to be a freethinker, or that freethought is a mindset often set in motion in childhood, like sexual preference, not something to change on a whim or with the right "religion." Others should not to try to change it with bullying, ridicule or intimidation. Freethinkers must be allowed to declare themselves openly. The intent of Freethought Day is to change this situation for the better of all freethinkers, especially the young.

Today's world sees the emergence of younger and younger freethinkers who are often alone and isolated in their communities. The Secular Student Alliance and the Campus Freethought Alliance attempt through their projects to give voice to college and university freethinkers in the US and across the globe, while programs such as Camp Omni, the country's first secular humanist summer camp, and the Secular Student Alliance provide young freethinkers with a place to gain a sense of community and understand that there is a proud and illustrious history to their philosophy. However these programs are few, and without a united voice and a united commitment to change this situation, they may not be enough. Every freethinker in every community should feel comfortable with his or her ideals, and part of that is a connection to like-minded individuals. Freethought Day gives our friends a chance to understand who we freethinkers are, what we believe, that freethought exists in every community, and that they should not view freethought with fear, but with respect as a positive, compassionate way to live life.

➢ International Skeptics Day
Tuesday, October 13, 2026



International Skeptics Day is like a party for your brain, where doubt is the guest of honor! This special day lands on October 13th each year, inviting everyone to question the usual and embrace some healthy skepticism. But there's a twist. This day also gets celebrated on January 13th and sometimes even on the first Friday-the-13th of the year, making it a triple treat for those who love to question everything. The day's roots stretch way back, touching on historical figures like Pyrrho of Elis and William of Ockham, who taught us the importance of questioning our beliefs and the knowledge we take for granted. The essence of International Skeptics Day is not just about doubting for the sake of it but encouraging a spirit of inquiry and critical thinking. Imagine a world where everyone accepted things at face value. There's not much room for progress, right? That's where this day steps in, urging us to question the established, seek evidence, and maybe even play devil's advocate at the next group hangout. Remember that the essence of skepticism is not about being negative, but about keeping an open mind, and not just accepting things on someone's word. It's about looking for evidence, asking questions, and not taking "because I said so" for an answer.

AOF
Atheists and Other Freethinkers

Not yet an AOF member? Please join us!

Atheists and Other Freethinkers is a 501(c)(3) non-profit association, FEIN 68-0325762, incorporated in 1993. Meetings are free and open to the public. AOF also hosts civic service projects, dinners, movies and parties! See what awaits you at www.aofonline.org.

AOF President: Prolific Pamella Rivera
Vice-president: Marvelous Mynga Futrell
Secretary: Rapid Ruth Rezos
Treasurer & Registrar: Kinetic Ken Nahigian
Event Coordinator: Pamella Rivera
Webmistress: Palpable Pat Kelley
Facebook page & Advisor: Keen Kaeleigh Pontif
Directors at large:
Fran Evanisko, David Herbert, Rick Tonsing

How to Contact AOF:
- Call 916-304-3796 (voicemail)
- Or write to PO Box 15182, Sacramento, CA 95851-0182

Or visit https://aofonline.org/contact-us/ to e-message.

How to Join AOF:
Visit https://aofonline.org/join-us/, or come to a meeting. We have forms.

AOF's Facebook pages (two):
https://www.facebook.com/groups/1525411971087089/
https://www.facebook.com/people/Atheists-and-Other-Freethinkers-AOF/100076377183563/

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's 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.

Your humble editor is Fran Evanisko.

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

THE CASE FOR OBSCURITY by Piet Hein

If no thought
your mind does visit,
make your speech
not too explicit.

What do we know about Jesus? The facts vs the myths.

by Chris Reid (Source: https://qr.ae/pFVl9N)

Here are all the facts we have about Jesus (a.k.a. Christ):

1. There were stories of a Christ figure as early as the 2nd century BCE from the Gnostic mystery cults. This Christ figure was celestial and not physical. The story of a god becoming mortal, dying, and resurrecting was already popular among the Gnostics, who had borrowed it from older religions.
2. An anonymous writer, from another region, writing in Greek, wrote a story about a physical Christ around 70 CE that became the first gospel, Mark. He gave him the common name Yeshua and wrote that he had died around 40 years earlier.
3. Over the next hundred years, several other anonymous writers wrote different versions of the story, copying heavily from the gospel of Mark. It is theorised that there may have also been a document, referred to as "Q", which contained popular cult sayings that the gospel authors used for their stories.
4. Many of the details in the gospels are clearly fictional. The dates for officials and censuses just don't match up. People were not forced to return to their hometowns for a census. The "massacre of the innocents" was not historical. The sky did not turn black for three hours at the crucifixion. Thieves were crucified, but it was done outside the city gates and not on Passover. Zombies of dead saints did not rise up from their graves and wander the streets as Jerusalem as the gospels claim. *etc.*
5. There is no first century written mention of Jesus, outside of these anonymous gospels. No eyewitness accounts. No historians mentioning him. No civil or criminal records. Nothing but the story by the author of Mark and the stories based off his story.
6. In the second century CE the cult of Chrestus was mentioned by several prominent authors. Two of them, Tactius and Pliny the Younger, in 110CE and 116CE, mention that the Christians worshipped a figure called Jesus that they said had been crucified. Pliny makes it clear that he has not personally dealt with anyone from the Christian cult because it was still very small.
7. From the end of the first century the Christian cult began the practice of apologetics, defending the story that Jesus had been real. It does not make sense that they would have been writing in defence of Jesus being real if nobody was questioning it.
8. In the 4th century Christian apologetics, began forging documents to use as evidence that Jesus had been real. Eusebius's forgery of Josephus to include mention of Jesus is still cited by those ignorant of the forgery even today. Fictional letters claiming to be written by Pilate were made up. etc. New letters were written that later became attributed to Paul.
9. In 325, the Roman emperor Constantine met with Christian church leaders and decided the content of the Bible and which gospels to include, out of dozens. Many that had the same provenance as the others were rejected because they did not fit the story of Jesus that the council wished to present.
10. The Edict of Milan protected the right to practice the religion of your choice. When Constantine made Christianity the state religion of Rome (4th century), the church began dismantling the Edict of Milan, which led to persecution of all non-Christians for the next 1600 years.
11. As part of the campaign to eradicate non-Christians religions, Christians began burning books, destroying sculptures and artwork, or anything that did not support the stories in the Bible. They began torturing people who spoke against the church or questioned the historicity of Jesus. After 1600 years of this, many people today believe that questioning whether Jesus was real is a new phenomenon and that everyone in history believed he had been real.

Even after 1900 years of searching, no evidence of Jesus being real has been found. Whether you believe he was real or not depends on your pre-existing religious beliefs. If you are Christian, you will believe he was real without evidence. If you are not Christian, you will either require evidence before believing or you will just cede that there may have been a historical figure that the fictional stories are based on. ■