



AOF News & Views – Newsletter for February 2023

Did you miss the Thomas Paine Birthday celebration (Jan 29)? You can still enjoy the recorded video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Okf9uFVM0B8>. Sponsored by the Thomas Paine Memorial Association (TPMA), Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF), Secular Student Alliance, Center For Inquiry (CFI) and The Freethought Society, speakers include Actor Ian Ruskin, Julia Sweeney, Annie Laurie Gaylor, Ann Druyan and Margaret Downey.

✧ ✧ Upcoming AOF Events ✧ ✧

➤ Sacramento Darwin Day ☆☆

Saturday, Feb 4, 2023, 6:30pm – 9:30pm

Location: MOSAC Science Museum, 400 Jibboom St, Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/EXQanKuf138h2F5m6>.

The Race Between Climate Change and Natural Selection

Presenting the 26th 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 this year, marking "Chuck" Darwin's 214rd birthday. Open to all. But tickets are required.

Darwin Day is a science-rush like no other. A celebration of scientific inquiry honoring the life and work of the great Charles Darwin (b. 12 February 1809), sponsored worldwide by community and educational groups. Not exactly an AOF event, to be honest, 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?

Key speaker will be [Dr. Rachael Bay](#), of the Coastal and Marine Science Institute at UC Davis. Dr. Bay leads a group of researchers at The Bay Lab, aiming for insights into how organisms survive in environments and how anthropogenic environmental changes impact individuals, populations, and species.

To attend: Please get a ticket *now*. It's not pricey, and this is no time to grinch. Ticket link: <https://paybee.io/quickpay.html?handle=sacdarwinday#optionList>.

For more on this event, see <https://www.sacdarwinday.org/>, or the beautiful event flyer at <https://www.sacdarwinday.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Darwin-Day-Flier-2023.pdf>. Entertainment, snacks and parking are included.

Contact for details: Pat Desmond, ph. 530-598-6080, or email "patdesmond8 (at) gmail (dot) com".

General Admission \$20, Students \$6. Parking included. Donations cheerfully accepted. Support science in Sacramento!

➤ Adopt-a-Highway Cleanup

Saturday, Feb 25, 2023, 9am - 11am

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

A stretch of Highway 99 runs two miles from Elkhorn Boulevard to Elverta Road – *our* stretch! Sac-area freethinkers "adopted" it in July 1995. 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 also 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 ultimately 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.



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

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

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

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

➤ Neil deGrass - Our favorite astrophysicist -- A video viewing

Sunday, February 26, 2023, 2pm - 4pm

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

You are invited: to a screening of Neil deGrasse Tyson discussing his views and logic on many things, and just being cool, because he is.

We will first watch Dr. Tyson in conversation with Dennis Miller (Larry King NOW) and discuss:

- Survivalist mindset,
- Invention,
- Food scarcity in the world,
- Objective truth vs the scientific frontier,
- Science vs religion, and
- Answering the Bigfoot question.

Then we will view Dr. Tyson and Joe Rogan (*The Joe Rogan Experience*) discussing:

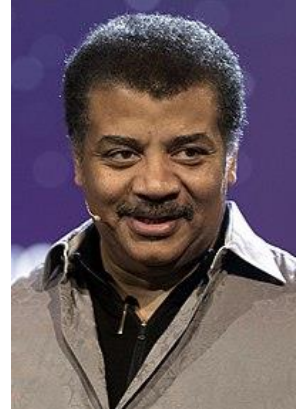
- Calling oneself an atheist,
- Purging words that have religious foundations (think BCE & CE vs BC & AD), and
- The Gregorian calendar – giving credit where credit is due.

Following this, a group discussion. You will have the opportunity to express your thoughts. Your fellow freethinkers will mindfully listen to your opinions with eager ears.

Contact: Email "programs (at) aofonline (dot) org", or see [Contact Page](#)

Park free in the Reason Center lot. This is an in-person event, so be aware of COVID risks.

You may bring personal snacks & nonalcoholic beverages to share, as you wish.



✧ ✧ Other Upcoming Events ✧ ✧

Other groups exist you know (besides AOF), and have their own events going. We've gathered some highlights. Enjoy.

➤ Humanist Salon

Saturday, Feb 4, 2023, 10am – 11:30am

An online discussion, details available only to attending member of the Compassionate Humanists of Roseville. Easy to join though. See <https://www.meetup.com/compassionate-humanists/events/291140320/>.

➤ Blasphemy Breakfasts

Sunday, Feb 5, 2023, 9:30am – 11am,

Saturday, Feb 11, 2023, 10am – 11:30am, and

Sunday, Feb 19, 2023, 9:30am – 11am

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

On Feb 5: 3000 J Street, midtown Sacramento, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/nW9U93obp9PKck9a7>.

On Feb 11: 13399 Folsom Blvd, Folsom, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ri6JvaBoSZVHTdnU6>.

On Feb 19: 6708 Lonetree Blvd, Rocklin, CA, map at <https://goo.gl/maps/ZUY2gg72KkmkC4bU6>.

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

➤ Coffee and Community

Sunday, Feb 5, 2023, 10:30am – 12 noon

Sunday, Feb 19, 2023, 10:30am – 12 noon

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, two amiable people.

On Feb 5, meet at Reason Center, 1300 Ethan Way, Rm 675, Sac., map at <https://goo.gl/maps/RwiUgEJ5ESHRhrPu8>.

On Feb 19, it will be an online Coffee & Community via Zoom Teleconference. BYOC, obviously. To attend, click this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88317332021?pwd=OVI6M3IRQm52L0hQUmhwd0pucENEQT09>.

➤ **Atheist Community Online Videos**

Monday, Feb 6, 2023, 7:30pm – 9:30noon

Educational and entertaining presentations about Atheism, Logic, Reason, and Thoughtfulness, every 1st Monday, by [Atheists United](#). To attend, simply click this link at meeting time: <https://zoom.us/j/99257974801>.

➤ **Word Confusion**

Saturday, Feb 11, 2023, 7pm – 9pm

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

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

➤ **Sunday Assembly**

Sunday, Feb 12, 2023, 11am - 1pm

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

Sunday Assembly is back! With live music by Sunday Reason, a reading, a speaker, and a feature on "Doing Your Best." All followed by a potluck lunch, so bring your favorite dish to share with the group, and be hungry.

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

➤ **Suicide Loss Survivors Discussion**

Tuesday, Feb 14, 2023, 4pm – 6pm

Online survivor support in a compassionate, secular way. Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81387403536>.

➤ **Recovery From Religion Virtual Support**

Thursday, Feb 16, 2023, 8pm – 10pm

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

Attendance link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82268955990>.

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

Saturday, Feb 25, 2023, 3:30pm – 5pm

An online book discussion open to all, about the Introduction and Chapter One of *Godless Americana: Race and Religious Rebels*, by Sikivu Hutchinson. For more information see: <https://www.meetup.com/bhnb-sacramento/events/291301850/>.

➤ **Photo-sharing (new, improved, in person!)**

Tuesday, Feb 28, 2023, 6:30pm – 8:30pm

Maybe you snapped a pic of something interesting or mysterious, like a landscape, a sculpture, a flower, a shrub or tree, and that photo that's unique. And you might have a story behind it you'd like to share. Reason Center has a 75-inch video screen, so simply bring them on a flash drive to share. This event will occur on the fourth Tuesday of every month.

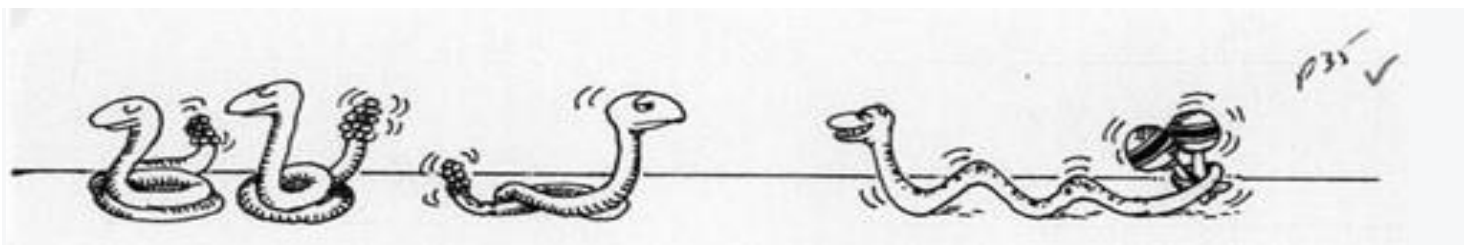
- Photos appropriate for general audiences. No sexy selfies or blackmail pics please.
- Please do not share photos of individuals without their expressed permission.

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

➤ **More Local Events - Event Calendars**

But wait, there's more! And plans keep changing, so don't depend on all these static lists. To keep track of those other events, bookmark & follow these links:

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



You can help. Here's how.

Support Reason Center

Since Reason Center opened in July 2014, it has hosted hundreds of events and accrued twelve partner organizations. Its mission: to support a social and intellectual community for freethinkers, contribute to society through education and community service, advance the civic understanding and acceptance of freethinkers, and uphold the separation of religion and government. All good work.

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 Holiday ✧ ✧

➤ Darwin Day

Sunday, February 12, 2023

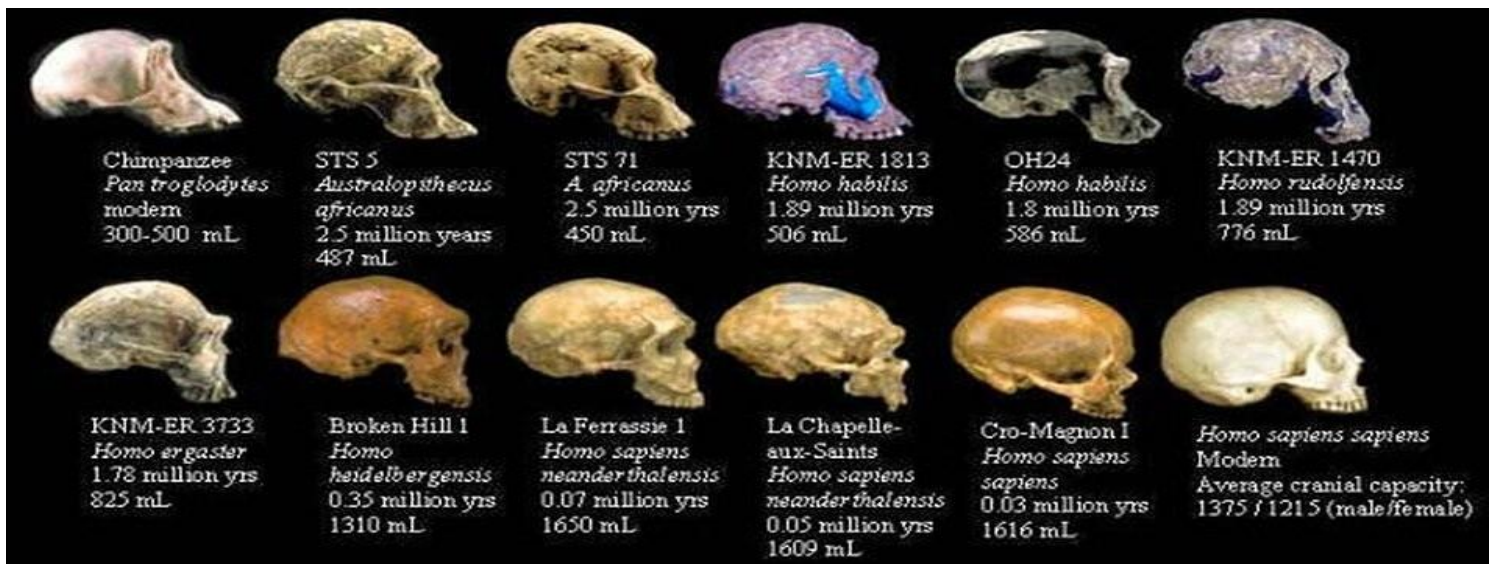
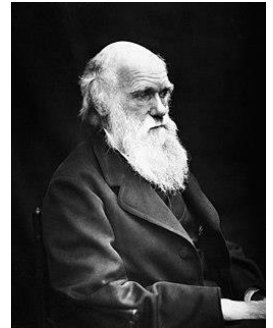
Only one secular holiday occurs in February, and that is [Darwin Day](#), celebrating the life and work of Charles Darwin. Widely celebrated within the global community with participation from all sectors of society, even mainline churches get in the game, celebrating the day as [Evolution Sunday](#) 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 serves 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.



Brother Juniper, the walking disaster



SEEM TO REMEMBER promising more on that top holy fool [Brother Juniper](#), friend and follower of St Francis. Well, I am not slack concerning my promise as some count slackness, but as others do I probably am. Either way, here's the next instalment.

Juniper once paid a visit to a local count by the name of Nicholas who was usually friendly to the friars. But on his way, typically, Juniper managed both to get beaten up and to tear his habit in two to share with a beggar, so he arrived unrecognisable as a friar.

Being at war, Count Nicholas was a bit jumpy and assumed the undercover Franciscan celebrity was a spy. Juniper spotting the opportunity for some valuable persecution did not disabuse him. When Nicholas searched him and found the awl he used to mend his sandals, he decided he was an assassin too.

Nicholas gave Juniper a good flogging, for which he was heartily thankful.

"Who are you?" demanded Nicholas.

"A great sinner," confessed Brother Juniper.

"Are you here to betray my castle to the men of Viterbo?" asked Nicholas.

"I am indeed a great traitor and unworthy of mercy," confessed Juniper, in saintly economy with the truth.

"Did you plan to stab me to death with your awl and burn my castle?"

"Oh, I'm certain I'd even worse things than those if God allowed me."

And so Nicholas sent the delighted Juniper off to be hanged.

Since he was not offered last rites, a well-wisher called one of the friars to come and give him a send off. The friar arrived as the blindfolded Juniper was being dragged to the gallows hanging from the back of a horse. Hearing the uncharacteristically self-pitying words, "Ow, you're hurting my legs," the friar recognised Brother Juniper, and ran up and pulled off the blindfold.

"Hello," beamed Juniper.

Instructing the executioners to wait, the friar ran and told Nicholas he was committing the greatest sin in the history of the world. When the count realised that his mistreated guest was none other than the celebrated Brother Juniper he was horrified, and ran in tears to release him, falling at his feet and apologising extravagantly.

Juniper happily forgave the little misunderstanding, but, according to his biographer, Nicholas suffered divine vengeance anyhow, dying horribly a few days later. Which I suppose just shows that some people are nicer than God.



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 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 95851-0182
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."

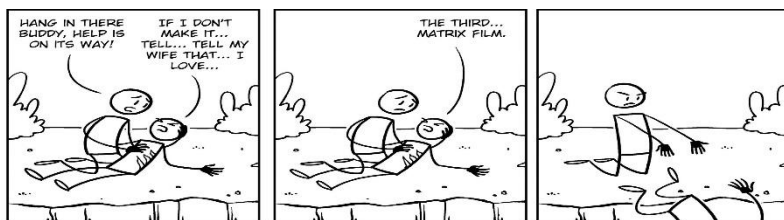
What is a Freethinker? One striving to form opinions of life, religion, politics and philosophy on the grounds of reason and experience, rather than tradition, authority or custom. He or she need not be an atheist, though in a religious society most atheists do tend to be freethinkers.

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.

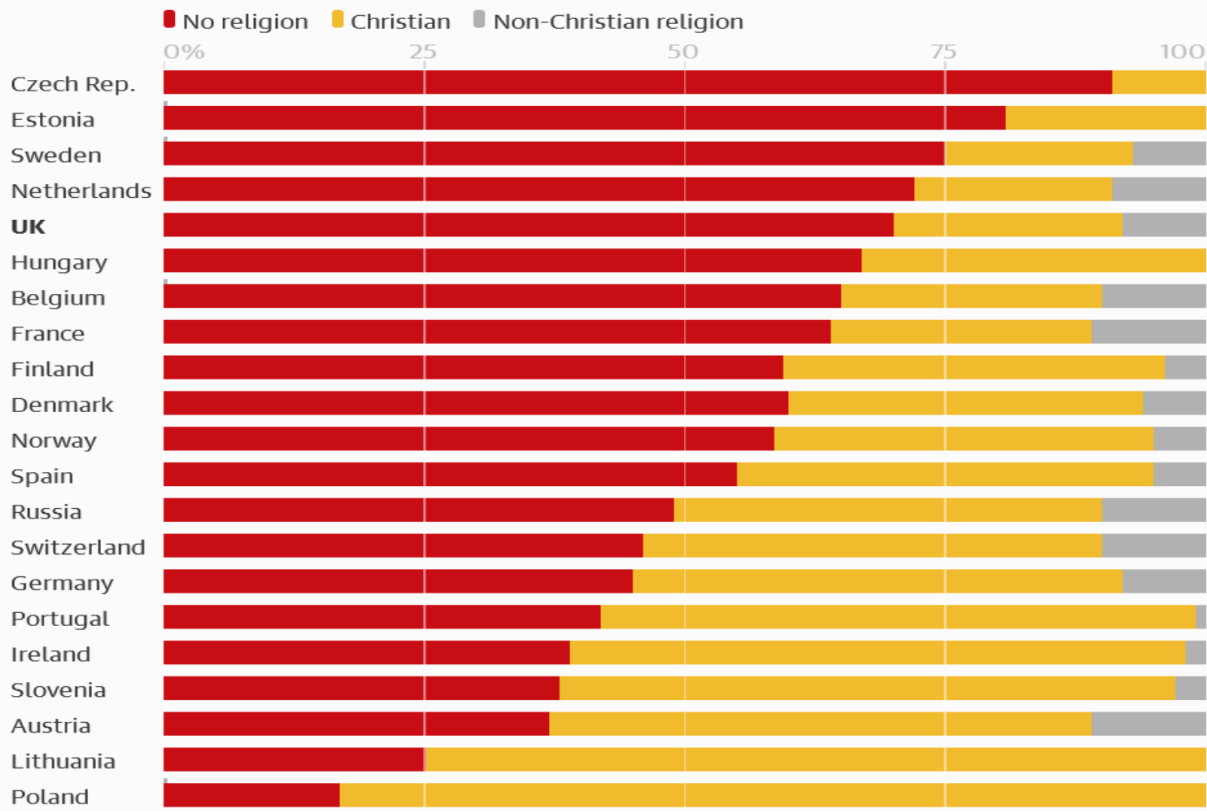
Letters, submissions? We love them! See: <http://www.aofonline.org/read/submission-guide.html>.



'Christianity as default is gone': the rise of a non-Christian Europe

Europe's march towards a post-Christian society was starkly illustrated by research showing a majority of young people in a dozen countries do not follow a religion. The survey of 16- to 29-year-olds by Stephen Bullivant, a professor of theology and the sociology of religion at St Mary's University in London, found the Czech Republic is the least religious country in Europe, with 91% of that age group saying they have no religious affiliation. Between 70% and 80% of young adults in Estonia, Sweden and the Netherlands also categorize themselves as non-religious. The most religious country is Poland, where only 17% of young adults define themselves as non-religious, followed by Lithuania with 25%. 70% of young people in the UK identify with no religion. Religion was "moribund", Bullivant said. "With some notable exceptions, young adults increasingly are not identifying with or practicing religion." The trajectory was likely to become more marked. "Christianity as a default, as a norm, is gone, and probably gone for good – or at least for the next 100 years," Bullivant said. (*theguardian.com*, 03/20/18)

How 16- to 29-year-olds self-identify, %



(Reprinted from the Capital District Humanist Society monthly, July 2019, with thanks.)

