
PANViews



*Newsletter of PA Nonbelievers, Inc., affiliated with American Atheists,
Atheist Alliance International and the Council for Secular Humanism.*

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President's Report

Josh CruverKibi

Summer is here and the Solstice has just passed the previous weekend. The weather has been pretty nice and Pennsylvania and several other states have significantly opened back up and reduced some of the social distancing restrictions. There is definitely a draw for many of us to get back to a sense of normalcy. To go out into the public to participate in larger group activities at restaurants, bars, in person meetups, picnics, PAN tabling events, and or to potentially participate in the now burgeoning Black Lives Matter movement in the United States or maybe some Pride event activities. However, and unfortunately, the coronavirus is still a very significant threat and may be increasing in the states that did not follow science driven and proven protocols such as wearing masks or delaying opening until the data demonstrated significant downturn in infections. Pennsylvania has appeared to have significantly reduced the number of infections and deaths since April, but we still have new cases showing up in testing daily.

As rationalists and people of science, there should be an immediate hesitation to going out into public with an active virus pandemic. A hazmat suit could potentially reduce our chances of infection to near zero, but would be quite impractical for taking a drink of beer at the bar, jogging on a treadmill, or pulling your credit card out of your pocket to pay for your groceries. Not wearing a mask in public and gathering in a large group does not necessarily guarantee that you will get coronavirus either. The most important variable is that an infected person needs to be in close proximity (time and space) to you for the virus to survive long enough to pass from their body into your body. So, we are really dealing with probability and attempting to reduce the possibility of infections. However, humans are not very good at estimation or discerning what variables to use in estimating probability. (Ask any christian when they estimate jesus will be coming back.)

So, the use of the scientific method is an essential tool for us in measuring and determining with more accuracy what works to mitigate infection and predict probability. We can each use what science has determined about the coronavirus in our attempt to come to terms with what our engagement with the social environment will look like now and in the foreseeable future. But we also each have our own personal variables to consider in determining how much we will expose ourselves or increase our probability for getting infected. Some of us have to work outside of the home. There may be financial strains that necessitate getting or maintaining jobs that may expose us to the virus. Some people are retired. Some people have to work directly and daily with people infected with coronavirus. Some may have had or currently do have coronavirus and risk spreading it to others if they go into the community. Some of us have compromised immune systems, have family members with compromised immune systems that we are trying to limit exposure for, may not have enough personal protective equipment, fear getting sick, tend to be introverted or extroverted, have panic attacks in crowds, have a fear of people with guns, fear police violence, etc... We all individually need to consider our variables conscientiously, engage in the social environment, and do our best to reduce our probability of catching and spreading the coronavirus.

As an example, protesting and in person activism may be determined by some people in our community to be a worthy risk to take. It is our First Amendment right for "the people peaceably to

assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.” The prevention of the loss of rights or for some in our community to be given equal rights in the first place, is an essential and worthy cause that cannot be maintained without active engagement. However, not everyone will determine, in considering personal variables, that they can engage in a group protest during a corona virus pandemic. Some of you may determine the best mitigation technique for the coronavirus may be to stay away from any group gathering entirely.

Fortunately, there are many forms of activism and ways that you can contribute to causes without gathering in groups such as making donations to and volunteering for charities and political change groups in the form of money, time, and labor, engaging in dialog and activities on social media and online, engaging and talking to family, friends, coworkers, and acquaintances who may not be aware or knowledgeable about relevant social issues, or taking steps towards or changing the culture and policies within your work, business, or organization that have been found to be racist, sexist, discriminatory, etc... You can also take time to educate yourself on the potential gaps in your knowledge about the topics and history that you may be hearing about. Some important, and to some, new topics and terms that have been talked about lately are systematic racism, white privilege, defund the police, and cancel culture. There is always room to learn and grow, even if we may not be able to explore and socialize as much as we used to.

As atheists and non-believers, we are also aware that many of the systematic and cultural issues that exist in our society, such as racism, sexism, LGBT+ phobia, anti-atheist fears, etc... often come from or are maintained by the religious systems and institutions in America, as well as around the world. However, we must also be vigilant to confront ourselves as well, to make sure that we are not in some way also contributing to the systematic oppression and harm to other. The religious and cultural ideas that we learned during our lives can be pervasive and psychology has found that our minds will actively avoid cognitive dissonance (awareness of being wrong) through confirmation bias, group think, etc... Even if we think that we have eliminated the overt and obvious negative behaviors that we may have learned, we may still be engaging in behaviors and supporting systems that may be harming others that we are not aware of. As humanists, we should feel responsible for both directly helping other's in our society but also improving our self-awareness to be sure that we are not maintaining a system or engaging in personal behaviors that creates harm to others, ourselves, or the planet.

There may be some in person PAN meetings for the month of July. We will post them on Facebook and Meetup. We ask that members that attend these meetings practice appropriate social distancing guidelines. We have also added some sections to *PANViews*. We now have a crossword puzzle, challenge, and kid's activity section. If you would like to contribute to these activities, feel free to submit them monthly to the PAN Views. We will also be making sections for them on the Website so that they can be an activity resource that will build over time.

Atheist News in Pennsylvania – The Nation – The World!

Money Wasted

There's a lot of concern about state and local budgets for the upcoming year. The pandemic has caused a serious reduction in sales revenues, which those entities count on.

That makes it even more disturbing that Pennsylvania's budget includes specific allocations for two churches. According to the Freedom From Religion Foundation, ffrf.org, PA will give \$2 million to Grace Baptist Church of Germantown, and another \$5 million to Bible Way Baptist Church in West Philadelphia.

What's the money for? Grace Baptist Church needs funds for its Community Center. That's not so bad – except that the church actually calls it the Christian Center. While the Center does host activities that benefit the community, such as driving courses and computer courses, bible studies are listed third among its activities (gracebaptistgtn.org).

Bible Way Baptist is clear about its goals. Its website, biblewaybaptist.org, states that its purpose is "Preparing disciples to make an impact for the Kingdom of God Everywhere." And its vision? "To see the Bible Way Baptist Church become the catalyst for Spiritual, Social and Economic, Transformation of the Carroll and Cathedral Park Communities of West Philadelphia into Christian Communities."

Hard to believe these two are the best recipients of \$7 million from Pennsylvania taxpayers.

Hope For LGBT Teachers in Religious Schools?

Still Here? Silly Christians



The recent US Supreme Court decision stating that Title VII of the Civil Rights Act barred employment discrimination applied to the LGBT community would certainly seem to mean that religious schools can no longer fire teachers who are members of that community.

Not so fast. Religious groups are reviewing the decision, but are not inclined to give up the fight. The *New York Times*, nytimes.com, reports that the Association of Christian Schools International states that its position continues to be that sexual activity must be confined to a married man and woman.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the public policy arm of the Southern Baptist Convention had filed amicus briefs in the cases before the Supreme Court, claiming that Title VII did not apply to gender identity. The president of the bishops' conference, Archbishop José H. Gomez commented about the decision, "Protecting our neighbors from unjust discrimination does not require redefining human nature."

Many Catholic dioceses have come under fire from their own members, who are for some reason surprised when a diocese insists that an LGBT teacher who marries must be fired. Often the teachers have been open about their sexuality for years.

America, the magazine for the Catholic Jesuit religious order, analyzes how the decision might affect Catholic schools at americamagazine.org. Essentially, the “ministerial exception” allows religious organizations to pick its clergy and people who work in ministry-related fields. Religious schools have used this exception to label teachers, even those who don’t teach religion, and musicians, as “ministers.” Kimberly West-Faulcon, a professor of constitutional law at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, notes that this exception isn’t absolute. “A Catholic school cannot say, ‘I’m not going to hire you as a teacher because hiring an African American person is contrary to the tenets of our religion.’ That is not a permissible religious organization exception to Title VII. The question going forward is whether the previously very limited ministerial exception will become an exception that swallows the rule.”

Surprising New Atheist

Shlok Bajpai *Atheist, Agnostic, and Non-Religious*

Things being how they are, most *PANViews* readers probably don’t follow Christian bands. So nonbelievers didn’t notice when Jon Steingard of the Christian band Hawk Nelson announced that he is now a nonbeliever, too.



God VS Satan

According to foxnews.com, Steingard released a statement on Instagram, because, he said, he had received so many questions from fans. The main question was obvious: Is he now an atheist? “While labels like that feel kind of icky, they do help sometimes, so I guess I would say agnostic. I certainly couldn’t say for certain that God isn’t there. I would prefer it if he was. It feels important for me to leave that door open.”

✓	Committed genocides	✗
✓	Asked a man to kill his only child	✗
✓	Allowed slavery	✗
✓	Made women inferior to men	✗
✓	Caused all the suffering in the World	✗
✗	Convinced 2 people to eat a fruit	✓

He continued: “It’s just that everything I’ve experienced, everything I’ve read, and everything I’ve discussed with friends and family leads me to a place where I can’t honestly say I believe. Continuing to say nothing about that was beginning to feel dishonest.”

Why rock the boat, people ask him. Just keep quiet. Steingard’s words will sound familiar: “In the past few days, I’ve spoken with so many people who feel the same things as me, but are terrified to speak up about it. Unspoken doubts and feelings like this are poisonous and corrosive to our hearts - and I hope this encourages people who are working up the courage to be more open and transparent about both their faith and their doubts.”

His fellow band members issued a statement that said in part: "God is still for Jon and he still matters ... that truth doesn't change just because we question it."

Steingard noted that most of his friends are Christians, and he hoped they would remain his friends. He is fortunate in that their reaction has been mostly supportive. “The fear of losing them has been one of the things that made me hesitant to be honest about how I feel - but their love and kindness in this moment has shown me that fear was largely unfounded.” He concludes his statement by noting that he does not know what will happen next.

Steingard was well-known in Christian circles as the co-author with Joshua Harris of the 1997 book "I Kissed Dating Goodbye." Emphasizing "purity culture," it was influential in Christian circles. Twenty years later he renounced the book, apologized to anyone who had been hurt by it, and contributed to a documentary film, "I Survived Kissed Dating Goodbye." In a statement issued on joshharris.com when the documentary was released, Steingard states, *I no longer agree with its central idea that dating should be avoided. I now think dating can be a healthy part of a person developing relationally and learning the qualities that matter most in a partner. here are other weaknesses too: in an effort to set a high standard, the book emphasized practices (not dating, not kissing before marriage) and concepts (giving your heart away) that are not in the Bible. In trying to warn people of the potential pitfalls of dating, it instilled fear for some—fear of making mistakes or having their heart broken. The book also gave some the impression that a certain methodology of relationships would deliver a happy ever-after ending—a great marriage, a great sex life—even though this is not promised by scripture.*

Niallthinkandwrites.blogspot.com



Religious Schools and the Coronavirus

As a side effect of the pandemic, there has been a spate of religious school closings. According to the website worldwng.com, Catholic primary and secondary schools have been the hardest hit. Protestant and Evangelical schools appear to be better able to attract new students.

The article quotes the National Catholic Educational Association as estimating that about 100 schools have folded in the past month or so, and the number could double before the start of the school year.

Catholic schools were already having problems caused by changing neighborhoods and greater competition from public and private schools. Catholic schools are expensive, averaging about \$5,000 per year for grade schools and \$11,000 for secondary schools. Parishes used to be able to subsidize tuition, but their revenues are down; cancelled services meant no collections.

On the other hand, the Association of Christian Schools says that the reenrollment numbers at most Protestant and evangelical schools are about the same. ACSI schools expanded quickly into virtual and hybrid instruction; 80% of ACSI schools missed fewer than 5 school days. In fact, an ACSI spokesperson said that they actually picked up new students from families who weren't happy with the public-school response to the coronavirus shutdown.

According to cruxnow.com, Catholic prelates have taken a more old-fashioned approach to the school crisis. During an April 24 conference call with President Donald Trump, Cardinals Timothy Dolan of New York and Sean O'Malley of Boston asked for tuition assistance for families who want to send their children to Catholic schools.

Everybody But Atheists

In Wisconsin, it's easy to get married. Its marriage celebrant law lists people who can legally solemnize marriages by just signing the wedding license. The approved list includes religious officials and specific state officials like judges. But the couple doesn't even have to go to that much trouble; the law states that a marriage can be solemnized by "[t]he two parties themselves, by mutual declaration that they take each other as husband and wife, in accordance with the customs, rules and regulations of any religious society, denomination or sect to which either of the parties may belong."

Well, not if a county clerk doesn't agree. Atheists.org reports that a couple from Winnebago County contacted American Atheists and the Center for Inquiry because a clerk refused to let them file a mutual declaration because the couple was not religious.

Geoffrey Blackwell, Litigation Counsel at American Atheists, noted, "Had they been religious, or if they had lied and simply said they were religious, their marriage could have proceeded as planned. Instead, merely because they are atheists, an arbitrary and discriminatory hurdle was placed in their path that religious Wisconsinites don't face."

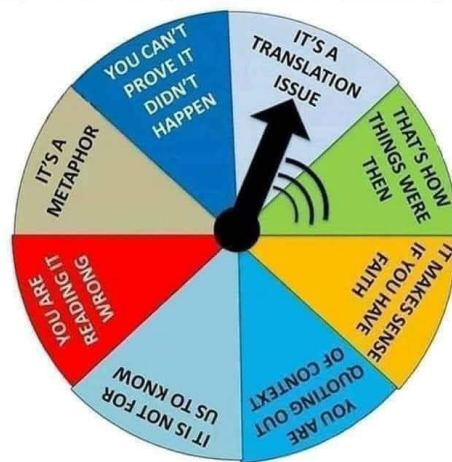
Federal Courts have found that excluding secular celebrants from marriage ceremonies is unconstitutional under the First and Fourteenth Amendment.

Christian First, Politician Second

Christian churches have some responsibility for America's racial problems. After all, many supported slavery, and supported segregation. (Jerry Falwell, Sr's., original claim to fame was as an opponent of Brown v. Board of Education.)

Texas Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick doesn't see it that way. According to huffpost.com, Patrick explained on Fox News why we're having racial strife: "You cannot love your fellow man if you don't love God. And we have a country where we've been working really hard, particularly on the left, to kick God out."

Atheist Alliance International **THEIST'S WHEEL OF EXCUSES**



Patrick went on to explain that laws can't fix racism: "You cannot change the culture of a country until you change the character of mankind. And you can't change that unless you change the heart, and for billions of us on the planet, we believe you can't do that unless you accept Jesus Christ or unless you accept God. God has been left out of this equation through all of this and we need tremendous healing. We cannot heal through commissions and blue-ribbon panels and more laws."

Patrick is clear about his priorities. On his website, danpatrick.com, he lists them as follows: Dan Patrick is a Christian first, Conservative second and Republican third. Among his chief accomplishments he notes that he placed "In God We Trust" in the State Senate, and "Under God" in the State Pledge. He also points out that he helped institute the first seminary in a Texas prison. That's right, prisoners are offered a 125-hour, accredited bachelor's degree in biblical studies taught and supervised by full-time and adjunct professors from the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Various atheist groups have objected, to no avail. Dan knows why Christian groups were able to establish the seminary: "Only God could make this happen. Everybody in this project from day one focused on how God can change lives."

More Christian Charity

One would assume that all religious organizations would, in 2020, support anti-lynching legislation. One would be wrong.

According to nbcnews.com, the US Senate recently passed the Justice for Victims of Lynching Act. While most people, religious and non-religious, thought it was high time for such a law, the Liberty Counsel, an evangelical nonprofit, was not happy. Its chairman, Mat Staver, told the conservative Christian news outlet OneNewsNow, "This is a way to slip it in under a so-called anti-lynching bill, and to then to sort of circle the wagon and then go for the juggler [sic] at some time in the future."

What's the problem? Do they really think lynching is okay? No, it's that the law specifies that LGBTQ people are included under the statute. Liberty Counsel has been labeled a "hate group" by the Southern Poverty Law Center because of its hostility to LGBTQ rights. It was founded by the dean of Liberty University's Law School, and is still closely associated with the school.

The Liberty Counsel denies that it opposes legislation against the lynching of gay people. Staver explains on the Liberty Counsel website, lc.org: "The bill in question created a list of protected categories, thus limiting the application of the law. Lynching should be prohibited no matter the person's reason for committing this violent crime."

According to the Human Rights Campaign, hrc.org, the Liberty Counsel has strongly supported "gay conversion" therapy in the past, and has defended the Ugandan law that sentences LGBTQ people to life in prison.



Liberty's Football Problem

Another Liberty-related problem has arisen. Over the past few years, the school has tried to upgrade its athletic programs, hiring a top-flight football coach (who had been fired from U. of Mississippi for hiring escorts, but never mind.) However, this effort has hit a snag. It turns out that black players recruited by the program aren't happy at Liberty.

Per espn.com, three Liberty football players took to social media to announce that they are transferring to other schools because of "racial insensitivity" and "cultural incompetence." A woman's basketball player announced she was transferring a few weeks ago, also citing "racial insensitivities."

There was no description of specific issues with the athletic department. However, Liberty president Jerry Falwell Jr. sent a tweet criticizing Virginia governor Ralph Northam for wearing coronavirus masks in public. Falwell said he would only wear a mask with an image of Northam, whom he called "Governor Blackface." Falwell added previously revealed pictures from Northam's 1984 medical school yearbook, which showed pictures of people in blackface and KKK attire. Several black staffers resigned after Falwell's tweet was sent out; he apologized and deleted it.

July 2020

Black Christian leaders and alumni sent Falwell an open letter that stated, in part, "While your Tweet may have been in jest about Virginia's governor, it made light of our nation's painful history of slavery and racism."

Jim Bakker, Of Course

When *PANViews* last heard about televangelist/con man Jim Bakker, he was hawking a completely useless silver supplement to cure coronavirus. Several state attorney generals sued to force him to stop the sales.

Jim has struck back. According to *ktts.com*, he is suing the Arkansas attorney general, the city of Los Angeles and two other California counties because they demanded records of his supporters, including names, addresses, and financial contributions to Jim. These entities claim that they need that information, so that they can investigate the question of fraud in more detail.

Bakker's attorneys, which include former Missouri governor Jay Nixon, maintain that the request violates the First Amendment. They also claim that these suits could lead to an attempt to test Bakker's sermons for "truth or falsity."

The Springfield News-Leader, *news-leader.com*, in a article published by the USA Network, explains that this dispute "presents the question of whether a governmental agency may, in the name of 'consumer protection,' intrusively supervise, inquire into, censor or punish religiously-motivated speech of a pastor to his congregation." The Bakker camp claims that his television show is a ministry, and his viewers are a congregation. His attorneys also point out that similar silver supplements are sold by national chains such as Walmart and CVS.

According to Jim's wife and co-host, Lori Bakker, the show is currently taking a break because Jim is recovering from a stroke. For which he apparently has no cure.

Babylonbee.com

Baptists Delighted They Can Now Wear Masks At Liquor Store





FUN!

(For adults or children. PANViews doesn't judge. Puzzles are on p. 9; answers at the end of PANViews)

As you color, think about how Noah managed to get all these animals, and many more, in that little boat!



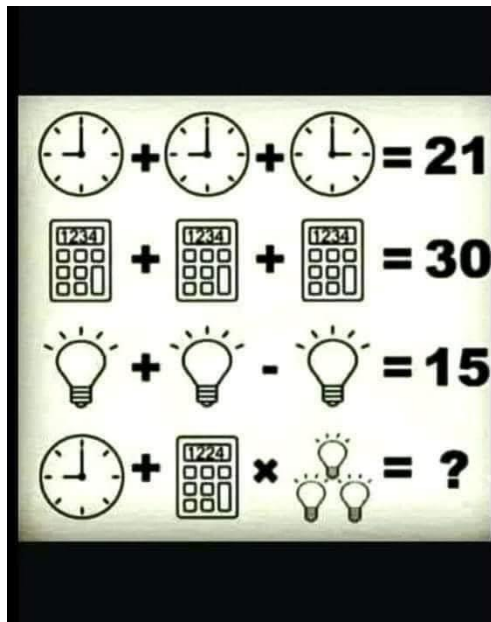
Free-Coloring-Pages.com

Question of Threes!

What do the three items listed on each line have in common? *From familyreunionhelper.com, courtesy of Gail Crow*

- 1. Picnic - card – pool _____
- 2. Earth – book – inch _____
- 3. Onion – Napkin – Wedding _____
- 4. Egg – Safe – Whip _____
- 5. Eyes – Eggs – Laundry _____
- 6. Blue – Goose – Black _____
- 7. Swiss cheese – Donut – Bowling Ball _____
- 8. Penny – Ford Motor Co. – Nebraska _____
- 9. Tent – Baseball – Horseshoe _____
- 10. School – Skate – Dart _____
- 11. Flag – Tent – Magnet _____
- 12. Fortune – Bank – Story _____
- 13. Turtle – M&Ms – Ocean _____
- 14. Pumpkins – Turkeys – Initials _____
- 15. Head – Tail – Cross _____
- 16. Africa – Red Riding Hood – Matador _____
- 17. Radio – Car Engine – Pianos _____
- 18. Florist – Furniture Store – Obstetrician _____
- 19. Baseball Glove – Pool Table – Jeans _____

What's the Answer? *Courtesy of Cathryn Smith, via Brian Fields*



PAN News & Update

Meetings - PAN may start holding in-person meetings in July. For more details about our meetings, which will include virtual meetings on Wednesdays for the time being, find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/groups/panonbelievers.

Here's where they are held, when we are able to have them in person:

Carlisle – Fourth Friday of the month, 5:30 pm, Hops and Barley, 398 North York Street, Mechanicsburg

Chambersburg – Third Tuesday of the month, 7:00 pm, Montezuma Mexican Restaurant, 1495 Lincoln Way East

Harrisburg– First Wednesday of the month, 6:30 pm, Midtown Scholar, 1302 N. Third St.

Lancaster – Fourth Wednesday of the month, 6:00 pm, Centerville Diner, 100 S. Centerville Rd.

Lebanon - Second Wednesday of the month, 7:00 pm, Batdorf Restaurant, 245 W. Main St., Annville

Reading – Third Wednesday of the month, 6:00 pm, Oakbrook Brewing Company, 628 Park Avenue

York – First Sunday of the month, noon, I-ron-ic Coffee Shop and Art Boutique, 256 W. Philadelphia St.

How to Contribute to PAN

Giant Cards - We will have Giant grocery store cards available for purchase at PAN meetings. You pay face value for the card and use the face value at the store, but Giant let's PAN have 5% of that face value. If you shop at Giant, anyway, use the cards in lieu of cash and help PAN. What could be easier?



Pennies for PAN - Finally, we are happy to take money the old-fashioned way. You can give your tax-deductible contribution to a Board Member at one of our meetings or events, you can donate via PayPal on our website, www.panonbelievers.org, or you can mail a check to us at PA Nonbelievers, Inc. PO Box 702, York, PA 17405. Remember when you donate you can indicate what fund you want your donation to go to, you can find the list of our funds on the PAN website in the Donate section.

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July 2020

Puzzle Answers:

Question of Threes

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1. Picnic - card – pool | Tables |
| 2. Earth – book – inch | Worms |
| 3. Onion – Napkin – Wedding | Rings |
| 4. Egg – Safe – Whip | Cracked |
| 5. Eyes – Eggs – Laundry | “Whites” |
| 6. Blue – Goose – Black | Berries |
| 7. Swiss cheese – Donut – Bowling Ball | Holes |
| 8. Penny – Ford Motor Co. – Nebraska | Lincoln |
| 9. Tent – Baseball – Horseshoe | Pitched |
| 10. School – Skate – Dart | Boards |
| 11. Flag – Tent – Magnet | Poles |
| 12. Fortune – Bank – Story | Tellers |
| 13. Turtle – M&Ms – Ocean | Shells |
| 14. Pumpkins – Turkeys – Initials | Carved |
| 15. Head – Tail – Cross | Winds |
| 16. Africa – Red Riding Hood – Matador | Capes |
| 17. Radio – Car Engine – Pianos | Tuned |
| 18. Florist – Furniture Store – Obstetrician | Deliveries |
| 19. Baseball Glove – Pool Table – Jeans | Pockets |

What's the Answer? 333