
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

I hope *PANViews* finds most everyone is feeling and doing as well as they can during the pandemic. PAN has been doing Zoom meetings online for the last two months and will be continuing for the foreseeable future. We have decided to have meetings weekly on the same day and time, Wednesday, to try to decrease the confusion and scheduling difficulties.

Unfortunately, the events that PAN would typically have our tabling at have been getting cancelled and rescheduled and we do not know when we will be having our first tabling event for the year. We will try to let you know when our first tabling event is and when we will resume in person monthly meetings. Enjoy *PANViews*.

Atheist News in Pennsylvania – The Nation – The World!

What We're Like

American Atheists has announced the release of a report, [Reality Check: Being Nonreligious in America](#). This is from AA's US Secular Survey, a data collection project about the nonbelieving world.

In a letter announcing the release, AA president Nick Fish describes this project: *This important report, which draws from the experiences of almost 34,000 nonreligious Americans, exposes the stigma and discrimination we face as atheists. At the same time, it reveals our common values and the future of the secular movement.*

This survey was so important because almost no one else is collecting data about our community and how anti-atheist stigma affects us. And this is all the more important as more and more Americans [say](#) it's acceptable to use religion as an excuse to discriminate in business. In order to fight back and make our presence known, we must have good data about nonbelievers, especially because no religious demographic in the U.S. is larger than we are.

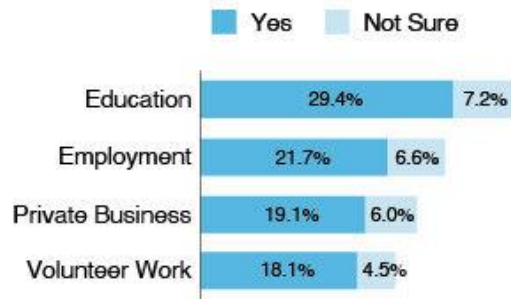
The report can be found at secularsurvey.org. The Executive Summary drops some interesting nuggets of information. 57.1% of the participants most strongly identified as atheists. The second most popular primary identity, at 14.2%, was humanists. The number of participants who were

raised in nonreligious households or in very religious households was strikingly parallel: 14.2% and 14.3%, respectively.

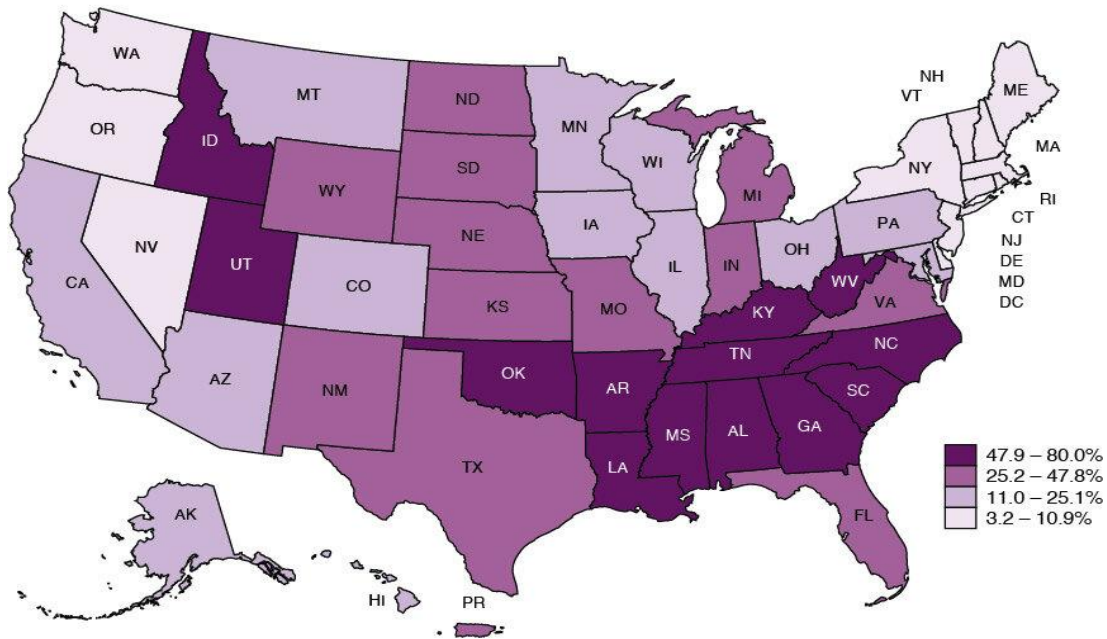
It probably won't surprise PAN members that a significant number of participants hide their nonreligious identity. 31.4% mostly or always concealed their lack of religious identity from family members; 44.3% did so at work, and 42.8% did so from people at school.

Negative Experiences and Discrimination

The following chart illustrates why nonreligious people feel the need to hide who they are. It shows the percentage of participants who have had negative experiences and discrimination:



The survey includes the above map which shows the percentage of very religious communities by state. Pennsylvania is one of the lighter-purple states, although it sometimes doesn't feel like it.



Wrong Way to Protest

A church in Holly Springs, MS, burned down. Law enforcement officials believe that it was arson.

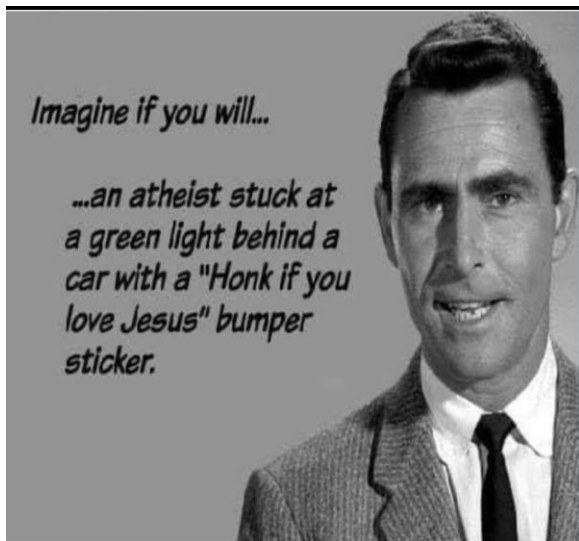
According to the New York *Times*, nytimes.com, there's a disturbing twist to this story. First Pentecostal Church had sued Holly Springs because it said the city's stay-at-home order violated the church members' free speech rights, and their right to worship. The church's pastor also demonstrated against the city's order at a Walmart (?!?) Police cited the pastor for holding an Easter service, and closed down a Bible study group.

A local judge had turned down the church's request to block the city's order, writing that the church was "proceeding in an excessively reckless and cavalier manner and with insufficient respect for the enormity of the health crisis which the Covid-19 pandemic presents." He further noted that the city had agreed to allow drive-in services. The forces of reason were actually winning.

When police officers investigated the arson, they found the following message spray painted on the ground near the church doors: "Bet you stay home now you hypokrits." Next to the graffiti is the atomic symbol with an "A" in the center - American Atheists' logo.

Of course, that doesn't mean that atheists, much less American Atheists, had anything to do with the arson. Unfortunately, though, many people will be happy to blame us.

In any event, the investigation is continuing. As the chief police investigator said, "Hopefully, with the Lord's help, we can get to the bottom of this as quickly as possible."



Why Not Just Send a Text?

Almost two thirds of Americans of all faiths think that God is using the coronavirus to tell people to change.

According to apnews.com, a poll by the University of Chicago Divinity School and the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, 31% of Americans who believe in God feel strongly, and another 31% feel somewhat strongly, that God is telling humanity to change. Evangelical Protestants are the most convinced of this, at 43%, as compared to 28% of Catholics and mainline Protestants.

The virus does not seem to have changed the level of belief in God.

2% of respondents said that they now believe in God, but didn't before; less than 1% said they no longer believe in God. 55% reported that they think it is at least somewhat likely that God will protect them from becoming ill.

Sexual Assault Was Just the Beginning

It was clear that Jacob M. Malone, age 37, is a bad guy. According to the Reading *Eagle*, readingeagle.com, Malone impregnated a young girl when he was a youth pastor at Calvary Fellowship Church in Exton. The girl had lived with Malone's family in Minnesota, and moved with them to Pennsylvania in 2014 when he took the job at Calvary Fellowship. The sexual abuse began after the move. The church pastor, Harold Wiggins, reported Malone to the police after the child was born, and Malone was arrested in January 2016.

Malone appeared before Judge Jacqueline Carroll Cody in April 2017, where he expected to be sentenced to two to four years in prison, per a plea agreement. However, Judge Cody rejected the agreement when the victim said she didn't think the sentence was long enough. Attorneys negotiated a three to six-year sentence, which Cody accepted.

Now released, Malone wanted revenge. He is charged with offering a fellow inmate \$5,000 to kill the pastor, Wiggins, at Calvary Fellowship. If the inmate was also able to kill Judge Cody, Malone promised to pay more. The police said that he had asked his former cellmate, Anthony Yerger, to help him find someone "to get revenge on people involved in his case." Yerger claims he told Malone to get over it, and Malone agreed to drop the matter. However, another inmate told police that Malone had reached out to him to commit the murders. The second inmate produced a map of the Fellowship Church, and details about church procedure that the police verified with Wiggins.

Malone is back in jail, presumably with an even longer hit list.

Religious School Bonanza

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos' bias in favor of religious schools is well-known. Now she is using money from the coronavirus law, intended to help public schools and colleges, to benefit private and religious schools.

The New York *Times*, nytimes.com, reports that she has encouraged states to use \$180 million to create microgrants that parents of elementary and secondary students can use to pay for educational services, including private school tuition. She has also taken about \$350 million, meant to be used to help struggling small colleges, and given it to religious schools, regardless of need.



Wonder what the hell I'm doing in a church..

Salon.com offered more detail. Its analysis found that \$19 million went to schools with "bible" or "Christian" in their name, and another \$50 million went to theological schools or seminaries. One school, The Wright Graduate University for the Realization of Human Potential, a private college in Wisconsin, received about \$495,000. This fine institution has a website devoted to debunking claims that it is a cult. Another interesting choice was the \$472,850 given to the Bergin University of Canine Studies in California.

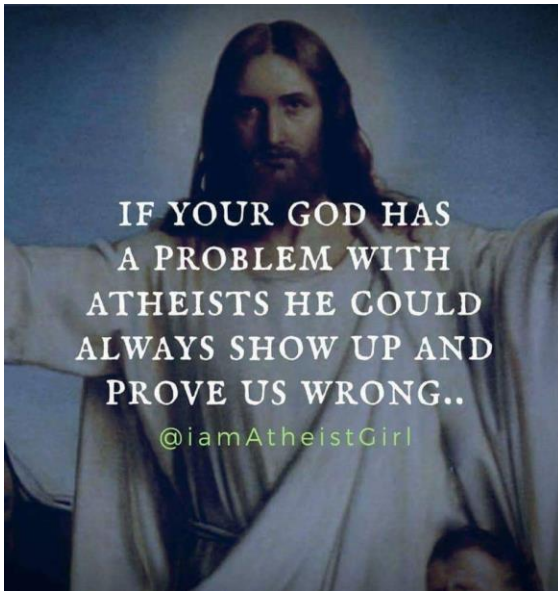
What is causing the most consternation, though, is guidance from the Department of Education that directs school districts to increase the money they provide for students in private schools. Federal law requires districts to use funding it receives for poor students to provide “equitable services,” such as tutoring, or transportation to private schools. The DOE now says that emergency funding, which was provided based on student poverty rates, should help all students attending private schools, no matter what their family income.

Montana school officials think that this change would increase the money private and home schools receive from about \$206,469 to more than \$1.5 million. Louisiana private schools would receive about 267% more funding, and about 77% of the relief allocation in Orleans Parish would be redirected. Newark, NJ, public schools would lose \$800,000 in relief funds to private schools.

In Pennsylvania, Pedro Rivera, the education secretary, stated that 53% more money would go “from most disadvantaged to more advantaged students” in urban districts; a rural district like Northeast Bradford would receive 932% more.

Betsy DeVos knows better than to let a good crisis go to waste.

Bad Timing



The Catholic Bishops of Minnesota are fed up. They’ve tried! But enough is enough. Time to reopen those churches!

Here’s an excerpt from the letter the bishops wrote, explaining their position, from Archspm.com:

The Catholic Bishops of Minnesota, along with many people of faith, were disappointed in Governor Walz’s May 13 announcement that he would end the Stay-at-Home order to allow more commerce but prohibit religious gatherings of more than ten people. We have attempted to work collaboratively with the Walz Administration up to this time, seeking the guidance of the Department of Public Safety and the Department of Public Health to help us

strengthen our specific safety protocols based on the statewide plan. Along with some Lutheran colleagues, we submitted a plan to the Governor on May 8 that detailed the sanitation measures we would take and proposed a cap on occupancy limited to 33 percent of building capacity...The bishops of Minnesota are united in our conviction that we can safely resume public Masses in accordance with both our religious duties and with accepted public health and safety standards. We can worship in a way that reflects both the love of God and the love of our neighbors (cf. Mark 12:30-31). Therefore, we are giving our parishes permission for the resumption of the public celebration of Mass on Tuesday, May 26, which will give us time to be ready for the celebration of Pentecost on May 31.

Note the timeline. PANViews would never be cynical, or cast aspersions on a religious organization’s motives, but perhaps the church is interested in the collection money on Pentecost?

There’s a footnote to this story, as reported by Rachel Maddow, and various Minnesota news outlets. Knsradio.com says that a priest in Annandale, MN has notified his parish that he’s been diagnosed with COVID-19. And two other priests who serve the same parish have developed

symptoms and are awaiting test results. And several parishioners have already tested positive. And a parishioner who was involved in delivering flowers on Mother's Day isn't feeling well. Nothing to worry about, though. Just ask the bishops.

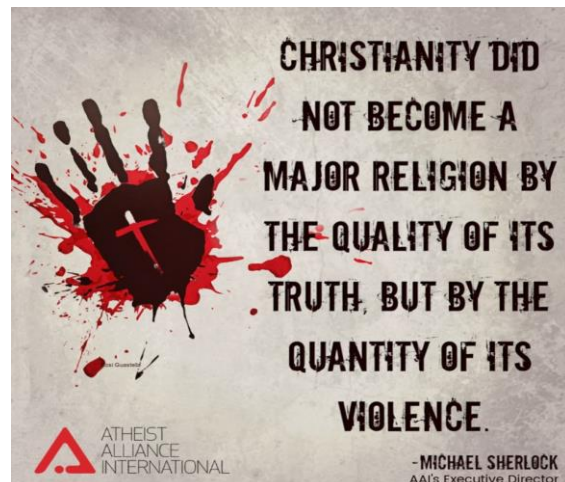
There is a Limit

Hemant Mehta, The Friendly Atheist, friendlyatheist.patheos.com, details a lawsuit involving religious discrimination and retaliation in the Bowling Green, KY, fire department. As Hemant notes, the things that Jeffrey Queen alleges he saw and heard at the fire department are unbelievable. Here's what Hemant describes as a partial list:

- Assistant Chief of Training Norman Simpson referred to non-Christians as "pagans."
- Chief Jason Colson told Queen he needed to join a church.
- Chief Paul Campbell told Queen to "get right with Jesus."
- Captain Todd Barnard said atheists "deserved to burn."
- Chief Donnie Frye said, "I'll be damned if I work with [atheists]," and he was "sure as hell glad none of those f-----s work here."
- Queen says he was "forced" to participate in Bible study during dinner at the fire station.
- After he admitted to being an atheist, Captain Eric Smith and another firefighter said they would "burn his house down."
- Queen says he was called "f----t" almost every day. Others called him a "queer." (For the record, he isn't.)
- Queen witnessed colleagues saying they wouldn't touch gay people because they "probably had AIDS."
- Queen was told, "If a homo works here, we'll make sure he dies in a fire. We'll chop his feet off."
- Queen said some of the firefighters refused to help a man with chest pain after learning he was gay.
- He witnessed members of the Fire Department refer to African Americans as "hoodrats," "thugs" and "n-----."
- He witnessed members of the Fire Department refer to Muslims as "towelheads," "jihadis," "ali-babas," and "sand n-----."
- He heard those same people say of Muslims, "we need to ship them all back where they came from" and "let the bombs torch them, they are going to hell anyway."
- One of his colleagues burned a copy of the Qur'an in front of the Fire Department while saying "burn them all." (And there's a video of this.)

Well, at least these guys seem to hate everybody, not just atheists.

Recently the US Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit ruled that neither the city nor the individuals should be granted immunity regarding violations of the Kentucky Civil Rights Act.



Rebellion at a Catholic Hospital

There may not be many reasons for optimism in American healthcare just now, but one glimmer of hope has emerged in Orange County, Calif., where a prestigious hospital says it's fed up with the Catholic Church's restrictions on healthcare.

Michael Hiltzik, business columnist at the Los Angeles *Times*, latimes.com, explains.

Hoag Memorial Hospital of Newport Beach, which was founded as a Presbyterian institution in 1952, wants to end a partnership it entered into with a Catholic hospital system in 2012. The Catholic group, Providence St. Joseph Health, has 51 hospitals and hundreds of medical facilities in 7 states. In a lawsuit aimed at dissolving the partnership, Hoag states: "It has become increasingly clear that Presbyterian beliefs, values and policies have been compromised due to restrictions within the larger Catholic system, and those constraints impinge upon the valid exercise of those Presbyterian beliefs, values and policies."

Religidiculous

A SHORT HISTORY OF GOD:

- 1) Creates Adam and Eve
- 2) Creates Evil
- 3) Populates the World through incest
- 4) Surprised the evil exists
- 5) Clueless about how to deal with evil
- 6) Drowns the entire planet saving one small family of very, very skilled ship builders
- 7) Populates the World through incest... again
- 8) Surprised the evil exists... again
- 9) Sends diseases, starvation, plagues, tsunamis, etc.
- 10) Still bewildered by the existence of evil
- 11) Blames the Devil... that he created
- 12) Rapes a girl so she'll give birth to himself as his own son so that we can torture and kill him/his son so that he can forgive us for being so evil
- 13) Says, "Just joking" three days later and brings his son back to life... because he's lonely(?)
- 14) Claims omniscience and omnipotence
- 15) Expects to be worshiped for his wisdom

The arrangement was always problematic. When the deal was negotiated, in 2012, Hoag's physicians were assured that nothing would change in the way they practiced medicine. Instead, within weeks of the agreement, Hoag was told that it could no longer perform abortions. To make matters worse, as far as the Hoag physicians were concerned, when this decision was announced, it was implied that the reason they ended the procedure was Hoag doctors didn't perform enough of them to maintain "clinical excellence." Hoag's OB/GYNs were insulted by the suggestion that their patients would be better off getting abortions elsewhere.

Actually, the doctors should not have been surprised. Despite Providence St. Joseph's assurances, an abortion ban was part of the agreement from the beginning; nobody bothered to tell the medical staff.

The article points out that there are lots of issues when Catholic hospitals merge with non-Catholic ones. The Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care, released by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, bans the distribution of contraception, sterilization procedures including tubal ligations, and limits end-of-life options. These rules have caused problems in other merger situations. In 2010 a Tucson non-religious hospital dissolved a 2-year trial merger with a Catholic group after administrators refused to allow a doctor to perform an emergency abortion for a patient undergoing a miscarriage. The woman, who survived, was taken to a hospital 80 miles away.

The problem of Catholic domination of US hospitals is larger than people often realize. According to MergerWatch, in 2016, 4 out of the largest 10 hospital chains were Catholic, controlling 1 out of every 6 acute care beds.



Well, How is that Working for You?

Hemant Mehta, the Friendly Atheist, friendlyatheist.patheos.com, noticed another interesting story.

Darrin Patrick, a controversial megachurch pastor, author, etc., has died, apparently from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. Herman quotes the Religion News Service as noting that Patrick had a “checkered past.” He had been fired from the six-location megachurch he founded in St. Louis for a laundry list of transgressions, including inappropriate sexual behavior with two women, lying and lack of self-control. He underwent 26 months of counseling, and was hired by a megachurch in South Carolina.

A friend of his, Bob Oesch, remembered him as follows to the Religion News Service: ... Patrick would often ask people who “lived without God in their lives”: “How’s that working for you?” “And that was a great way of getting people to see the value of putting God in their lives,” Oesch said. “I still call it ‘the Darrin question.’”

It Just Doesn’t End

An Allentown priest was sentenced to prison for the indecent assault of a girl he met through the parish, according to lehighvalleylive.com. Sadly, this sort of thing is still common enough that PANViews doesn’t usually bother to mention it. This story is a little different.

According to the lehighvalleylive.com, Kevin Lonergan was sentenced to 1 to 2 years in state prison by Judge Maria Dantos. Dantos noticed that Lonergan had been accused of a similar crime in 2016, in Northampton County. In that case, the girl and her family did not cooperate with the investigation. And what did the church do? That thing it says it doesn’t do anymore: it transferred him to another county, where nobody would know about the accusation.

At Lonergan’s sentencing, Dantos asked, “We are still transferring priests that molest children? If he had been sanctioned and fired, this victim would not be a victim.”

The church responded: “Regarding statements made in court, it is not accurate to say that the Diocese improperly transferred a priest who had committed an offense. Father Lonergan received a new assignment in 2016 only after Northampton County Children and Youth determined that the accusation was unfounded. The Diocese took immediate action upon receiving the information on this previous allegation. Father Lonergan was forbidden from ministry, and the Diocese reported the allegation to law enforcement under its zero-tolerance policy.”

That isn’t entirely accurate. Neither the Northampton County district attorney’s office, nor the private investigator hired by the diocese classified the case as “unfounded.” And neither did the diocese’s own private investigator, who called it “unsubstantiated.” According to Chief Deputy District Attorney Tatum Wilson “It’s not that we made a determination one way or the other whether there was criminal activity. It was closed because we didn’t have a victim who would be able to

testify about any criminal activity.” A mandated reporter originally notified the police in the Northampton County case. The victim made a statement to the police, but recanted. Another priest assigned to the same Northampton County parish as Lonergan stated that “no credible allegations” had been made against Lonergan while he worked there.

The treatment the Allentown victim received helps to explain why the Northampton County victim recanted. No members of the parish, or other priests, supported the Allentown victim, and a relative of Lonergan’s contacted her through social media, and offered to pay her if she recanted.

Lonergan actively pursued the Allentown victim. He got her cellphone number, and communicated with her through Snapchat, sending nude pictures. In February 2018 Lonergan hugged her at church, grabbing her rear end over her clothes. She reported that to another priest. The diocese notified the DA’s office, and suspended Lonergan.

At least in the Allentown case, Lonergan was convicted. The judge called out the church’s continuing practice of sweeping accusations under the rug. Plus, the church seems a little bit defensive.

Shawn Hines/Still Here? Silly Christians

A Touch of Kenneth Copeland

Readers of *PANViews* don’t pay much attention to the world of fundamentalism, and therefore don’t always understand how bizarre it really is. One of the best examples: Kenneth Copeland.

Copeland is an evangelical minister based in Fort Worth, TX. He’s described by newsbreak.com as the wealthiest evangelical minister, with a net worth estimated at \$300 million. At least he’s not a hypocrite; Copeland is a proponent of the prosperity gospel, unashamed of his vacation home and his fleet of airplanes.

Copeland has been in the news recently because he has loudly claimed to be defeating the corona virus. He has screamed at Satan to “get off this nation” and “crawl on your belly” and declared the crisis “over.” He also spit on the virus, and blew on the virus, but somehow, it’s still here.

**Hello Friends, this is Satan.
I’m here to remind you that plagues, great
floods and, pandemics are god’s department.
I just do orgies and metal bands.**



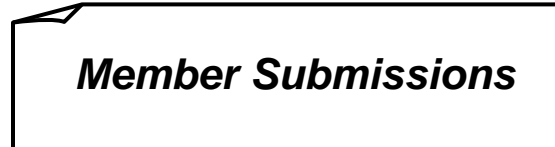
Hemant Mehta, friendlyatheist.patheos.com, rates a third mention in *PANViews* this month for reporting another example of Copeland’s shamelessness.

It seems two of his children, John and Kellie, wanted a boat. Kenneth says he told them, “You may have a boat, but I’ll tell you what we’re gonna do. This is gonna be your faith project. You’re gonna *believe* this boat in...”

Copeland says he forgot all about it, didn’t tell anyone. Then he got a phone call out of the blue from his friend, Monty. As Copeland tells it, Monty said, “... I really do need you to forgive me.” I said, “Well, Monty, what for?” He said, “The Lord spoke to me and told me to give you my boat several days ago and I didn’t do it... Kenneth,” he said, “I’ve got it all cleaned up and polished.” He said, “I’m gonna bring it over there this afternoon.” I said, “Well, Monty, man, that’s great, man! That’s wonderful!” His kids were thrilled, he reported. God answered their prayers!

But wait, there's more! Kenneth says another friend called him: "Brother Copeland." He's nearly in tears! He said, "Oh, you've got to forgive me." I said, "Why? What for?" He said, "God told me to give you my boat. And I didn't do it and I'm ashamed of myself!"

So, to summarize: Kenneth Copeland's kids' prayers are so powerful that they can conjure up two boats for themselves in a few days. They are all so unselfconscious that it doesn't even occur to them that they could have requested, or pretended to have requested, something for others.



Member Submissions

An Exploration of the Foundational Difference between Religious and Non-religious Knowledge and Existential Dread.

Josh CruverKibi

The non-religious existentialist should recognize that all knowledge and ideas are obtained and created posteriori and the absurd existential reality and dread exists as long as thought processes occur. The religious thinker on the other hand believes thoughts and existential dread are made real, disregarding the absurd, and are also potentially absolute, apriori, and deterministic depending on the inductive feeling that they perceive related to the idea.

Religion as an existential foundation, is like standing on a small dingy on rough and changeable absurd seas. It would be very destabilizing for a religious person standing on this underdeveloped foundational raft to try to reach out and catch an idea different from their foundation. The non-religious existentialist would immediately realize on the rough and absurd open seas that no clear or dependable measurements could be made if the measured variables could change at a whim of the next feeling. The only stable foundation would need to be based on what could be materially measurable. To achieve some modicum of control over the absurd, we need to instead make our measurements and deductions on land. There must be a stability and objectivity that is unchanged from one existential measurement and deduction to the next. The ever-present existential dread is for the unknown, what is across and, in the seas, and the potential of becoming lost in bias and the absurd. We realize that measurements, replication, and attempting objectivity is the best we have.

Many people who have been set adrift on a religious dingy often do not know or understand the stability on land due to being taught to stay away from land and believing that the conclusions made on the sea is good enough. There may even be an artificial consistency created by a large group of religious dingies floating together in their beliefs and feelings. For these floating religious groups, their groupthink is the most familiar and often the only conception of the existential that they may have. In a large group of religious dingies on the ocean, the ones at the center may not feel or perceive the absurdity, the dread, and waves lashing at the periphery of their beliefs. However, the ones at the existential edges are feeling the inevitable inconsistency, experience the dread, and wish for the comfort and experience of existing at the center of a large group. They perceive that those at the center of the group are stable, but not that they are just insulated and would likely become just as existentially desperate at the edges of the flotilla as they are. They do not know any better and assume that the absurd is real because it is perceived. What if they had instead been allowed to stand on shore to develop a sense of stability before they were set adrift?

PAN News & Update

Meetings - For more details about our meetings, which will remain virtual 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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PAN Views is published by: PA Nonbelievers, Inc. PO Box 702 York, PA 17405 PAN Views Editor: Pam Zerba