
PANViews



**Newsletter of PA Nonbelievers, Inc., affiliated with American Atheists,
Atheist Alliance International and the Council for Secular Humanism.**
Visit us on the web at panonbelievers.org or like us on Facebook at [facebook.com/PennsylvaniaNonbelievers](https://www.facebook.com/PennsylvaniaNonbelievers)
Follow us on Twitter @panonbelievers

President's Report *Josh CruverKibi*

Come on out to our Annual meeting this Saturday, the 7th, from 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm. We will be having a potluck in which PA Nonbelievers will be providing pizza in addition to other food items that members will be bringing. If you are interested in bring something please let us know and check what other people are bringing at this link:
<https://perfectpotluck.com/meals.php?t=IPQH9204&v=d8fdd5198e>

The Annual meeting will be at the York Unitarian Universalist Church, located at 925 South George St, York, PA 17403.

Also, we will be voting for board membership. We have some seats that need to be filled and some current board member whose terms will be ending this year. If you are interested in joining the board, you can make yourself available to be voted onto the board if you have a current membership. We hope to see you there.



March 2020

PA Nonbelievers Balance Sheet - December 31, 2019

Assets

Members 1st FCU - Undesignated Checking	9,341.96
Members 1st FCU - Billboard	475.00
Members 1st FCU - Tent	<u>70.63</u>
Santander Checking –	
Total Checking	9,887.59
Members 1st FCU - Savings	20.00
PayPal	96.58
Total Assets	<u>10,004.17</u>

Liabilities and Equity

Due to Pam Zerba for Red Lion	
Due to Families in Transition	
Equity	<u>10,004.17</u>
Total Liabilities and Equity	<u>10,004.17</u>

PA Nonbelievers Income Statement - Year-to-Date through December 31, 2019

Revenues

Gift Card Sales (Face Value)	5,240.00
Sales (Taxable Merchandise)	1,526.95
Voluntary Membership Dues	736.00
General Donations	915.85
Amazon Partner Income	118.68
Sales (Nontaxable Clothing)	--
Interest	<u>3.23</u>
Total Revenues	8,540.71

Expenses

Gift Card Purchases (at 95% of Face Value)	4,370.00
Insurance - Property/Liability/D&O	1,736.00
Rent (UU & PO Box)	482.00
Merchandise	596.70
Tabling Fees	650.00
Accounting	180.00
Website Hosting	--
Advertising (Meetup)	80.00
Sales Tax	73.70
Charitable Donations	--
Supplies & Repairs	96.18
Banking Expenses	145.55
Total Expenses	<u>8,410.13</u>

Net Income - 2019* 130.58

130.58

**net of outstanding gift cards in inventory (\$440)*

Atheist News in Pennsylvania – The Nation – The World!

Only Some Foster Parents May Apply

It's well known that foster parents are in short supply. That's why the City of Philadelphia was surprised when the Philadelphia *Inquirer*, www.inquirer.com, wrote in May, 2018 that a Catholic Social Services agency was refusing to place foster children with LGBT couples who were otherwise qualified.

The City stopped using the agency, so the agency sued the city, claiming that the decision violated its First Amendment right to discriminate, based on its religious beliefs. The New York *Times*, www.nytimes.com, reports that the Third Circuit Court of Appeals ruled for the city, stating that the city was entitled to require that participating agencies comply with the law.

The Supreme Court decided on February 24 to hear the agency's appeal, *Fulton v. City of Philadelphia*. The article pointed out that this case is generally like the Colorado wedding cake case. The Supreme Court didn't really address the central question of that case, whether a business can discriminate based on the owner's religious beliefs. Instead, the Court ruled that the state's Civil Rights Commission had been prejudiced against the cake baker, because of his religion.

The ACLU is representing the city. Leslie Cooper, one of the ACLU lawyers, points out that this decision could affect many foster children. "This case could have profound consequences for the more than 400,000 children in foster care across the country. We already have a severe shortage of foster families willing and able to open their hearts and homes to these children. Allowing foster care agencies to exclude qualified families based on religious requirements that have nothing to do with the ability to care for a child such as their sexual orientation or faith would make it even worse."

Pledge Conflict, in 2020?

During World War II, the Jehovah's Witnesses won a Supreme Court case (*West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*) confirming that students cannot be forced to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. Although this decision settled the matter more than 70 years ago, cases pop up from time to time showing that some school districts have never gotten the memo.

Lebanon Senior High School is the latest example. According to the Lebanon *Daily News*, www.ldnews.com, a junior has filed suit because he was repeatedly punished for not standing for the pledge. The lawsuit (which does not give the student's name) says that he did not stand for "religious and political beliefs."

The school requires students to recite the Pledge during first period. On October 19, 2019, the student refused to stand during his first period math class. He was sent to the assistant principal's office.

Science & Religion – George Perdakis



The assistant principal provided the student with the school's excuse for the requirement: Students must stand so the teachers can perform a dress code check. This student was given an in-school suspension, which meant that he had to sit in a separate classroom. He continued to refuse to stand during the rest of October and continued to receive in-school suspensions. In November, the school gave him a copy of a policy stating that students must stand and recite the Pledge, unless their parents provide a statement explaining their "conscientious objections." The student counterargued that the requirement violated his First Amendment rights. From December 1 on, the school streamlined the process (and avoided giving other students funny ideas) by requiring him to spend first period in the principal's office. Because of that, he failed math.

The lawsuit requests that the school district acknowledge the First Amendment violation, and that he be allowed to sit in his first period class during the Pledge. The student also requests that any punishment be expunged from his permanent record, and that the school provide him with the math instruction he missed when he was sitting in the principal's office and allow him to make up any assignments and tests.

School District Religious Policies Update

Last month's *PANViews* reported that a Harrisburg-based "legal center," Independence Law Center, had sent letters to several central Pennsylvania school districts complaining about supposedly anti-religious policies contained in their handbooks. According to the *York Dispatch*, www.yorkdispatch.com, one of the York County districts, Eastern, has proposed a change to the policy – which it has refused to release, because it is just a draft. The other York County district, Spring Grove, has made the requested change.

The Spring Grove school board removed the following line in the Student Expression section of the handbook describing forbidden types of speech: "Seek to establish the supremacy of a particular religious denomination, sect, or point of view." Presumably the proselytizing will start soon.

From the *York Emporium*



Change in Pennsylvania Law

Pennsylvania has changed its laws to make it easier for victims of sexual abuse to file lawsuits. While this is not just a church/state issue – organizations other than churches have had to deal with sexual abuse – churches have been in the lead in objecting to these kinds of changes.

The Philadelphia *Inquirer*, www.inquirer.com, details the changes. Governor Tom Wolf has signed legislation that would eliminate any statute of limitations for filing criminal charges against sexual abusers of children. Victims who were abused at age 23 or younger would have until age 55 to file a lawsuit; the prior age limit was 30.

Originally this legislation contained a "look back" period that would allow past victims to sue. However, some legislators were concerned that would be found to be unconstitutional. That provision was removed, and the above law was passed. The legislature then passed a constitutional amendment that would provide for a two-year window for adult victims to sue predators from their past, along with

any institutions that protected the predators. Constitutional amendments take awhile to officially pass; it must be approved by the House and Senate again next year, and then be passed by voters. About two dozen states have made similar changes over the last few years.

Catholic News

There are always a couple of stories involving the Catholic church. Here are the latest:

The diocese of Pittsburgh had a plan to pay compensation for sexual abuse victims: take \$8 million from a fund for needy children!

The Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette*, www.post-gazette.com, explains. The Toner Institute Fund was set up early in the 20th century to fund a boys' industrial school. Since these kinds of schools no longer exist, in 1978 the diocese merged the fund with the Catholic Institute of Pittsburgh, for "for the care, education, training, maintenance and treatment of neglected, emotionally disabled and needy children in order to assist them to make an adjustment to life and work in accordance with their abilities." The church argued that using these funds to help adults traumatized as children was reasonable. Attorney General Josh Shapiro called this proposed use of the fund "self-dealing," and Allegheny County Orphans' Court Judge Lawrence J. O'Toole denied the request.

The Harrisburg diocese's bankruptcy filing, the first Catholic diocese to do so in Pennsylvania, has been widely reported. Catholic hierarchy has assured their flock that the filing won't affect parishes, schools, and activities at all. The Philadelphia *Inquirer*, www.inquirer.com, points out that may not be entirely true. Many of those entities use the Harrisburg diocese's tax id number, complicating any effort to break out the diocese's finances.

Finally, a priest in Rhode Island has banned all lawmakers who voted to include abortion protections in state law from receiving communion, or acting as witnesses to marriage, godparents, or lectors at weddings, funerals or any other church function. Other priests have done that (although usually they stop at communion, without adding the laundry list of other functions) so it wouldn't qualify as news, except that *Newsweek*, www.newsweek.com, quotes the priest, Richard Bucci, as having a rather novel explanation as to why the church seems to care so much more about abortion than it does about the sexual abuse of children: "Well, pedophilia doesn't kill anyone, and this does."

And there you have it.

Facts About Atheists

Pew Research, www.pewresearch.org, recently published an article entitled *10 Facts About Atheists*. Not all these facts will be news to *PANViews* readers, but it's interesting to see what an objective organization thinks is interesting about atheists. Here's the list:

1. The share of Americans who identify as atheists has increased modestly but significantly in the past decade. Pew reports that its telephone surveys in 2018 and 2019 showed 4% of adults were atheists, as compared to 2% in 2009. (Bright side: that's double!)



Their survey shows more agnostics, too: 5% in 2019, as compared to 3% in 2009.

2. 81% of US Atheists don't believe in God or a higher power. So, what do the remaining somewhat confused atheists believe? According to Pew, they say they believe in a higher power, or some kind of spiritual force. None, Pew notes, believe in the God of the Bible.

3. There are more Atheists in many European countries than in the US.

4. US Atheists are mostly young (ish) men. About 68% are men, and the median age is 34 (it's 46 for the US in general.) Atheists are 78% white, and 43% have college degrees; the figures are 66% and 27% for the rest of the US.

5. Atheists don't pray (duh), but do experience a sense of wonder. 97% of atheists don't pray (what is going on with the other 3%?) 54% of atheists say they experience a sense of wonder about the universe, as compared to 45% of Christians. Several years ago, Oprah Winfrey told her audience that she couldn't imagine how one could feel wonder and awe without believing in God. Take that, Oprah.

Sari Swick



6. Atheists are more likely to have meaningful hobbies. 26% of atheists, as opposed to 10% of Christians, described hobbies as meaningful or satisfying. Only 4% of atheists found spirituality meaningful.

7. Atheists disapprove of religion in public life. 71% of atheists think religious influence is declining in American public life, and they think that's good.

8. Atheists are well-informed about religion.

9. More Americans think one can be moral without God. 56% agree with this, while 42% still think that belief in God is required to be moral.

10. Atheists still aren't popular. Pew used a "feeling thermometer," with 0 as the most negative, and 100 as the most positive rating, when it surveyed opinions about various religions. Atheists tied with Muslims at 49; Jews were 63, Catholics 60, and evangelical Christians, 56.

Just When You Thought Work Couldn't Get Any More Annoying

Companies, including some major corporations, have come up with a new way to make their employees suffer: chaplains at work!

The Associated Press, www.apnews.com, reports that more than 20% of Fortune 100 companies have established faith-based employee resource groups. Tyson Foods, for example, has a team of more than 90 chaplains available to "counsel" employees.

Brian Grim, associate scholar at the Religious Liberty Project at Georgetown, asserts that “most companies” have paid less attention to religion in their diversity programs than they have to race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and disabilities.

Grim’s foundation recently analyzed Fortune 100 companies on their commitment to religious inclusion. Among the companies in the top 10 were Google’s parent company Alphabet, Intel, Tyson Foods, Target, Facebook, American Airlines, Apple, Dell, American Express and Goldman Sachs.

Most of these companies have an interfaith resource group, or separate groups for major religions. The article noted that Google’s interfaith group has chapters for Christians, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhists; Intel actually has a group for agnostics and atheists, along with religions. The Internal Revenue Service has a separate group for fundamentalist Christians.

Tyson’s chaplains are predominantly Christian, although there is one Muslim. The chaplain group’s director, Karen Diefendorf, insists that the chaplains are trained to offer counseling to members of any religious faith, or no religious faith. A quick search of the internet reveals that there are eight current openings for chaplains, and the pay is \$34 per hour. Members of PAN need not apply; chaplains must have the approval of their parent religious organization, and “ordination is preferred.”

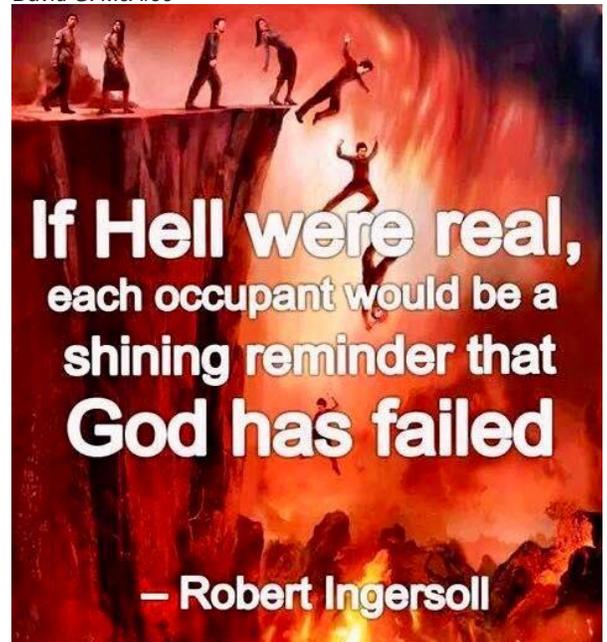
What isn’t clear is what happens to employees who reject a chaplain’s help. Companies sometimes present troubled employees (for example, someone who is missing time without a clear reason, or whose work product has suddenly declined) with a choice: seek help through an employee assistance program, or leave. Does Tyson have mandatory referrals? What happens if an employee refuses?

David G. McAfee

Has BYU Loosened Up?

Brigham Young University, owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, has long been known for its strict rules about student behavior. Its handbook was explicit that sex is reserved for marriage between a man and a woman.

The handbook was equally clear in its disapproval of homosexuality: “One’s stated same-gender attraction is not an honor code issue. However, the honor code requires all members of the university community to manifest a strict commitment to the law of chastity. Homosexual behavior is inappropriate and violates the honor code. Homosexual behavior includes not only sexual relations between members of the same sex, but all forms of physical intimacy that give expression to homosexual feelings.”



That definition included hand holding and kissing. But something might have changed, according to the *Deseret News*, www.deseret.com. BYU and other LDS colleges have issued a new handbook, and it has deleted all mention of homosexuality, although it continues to state that sex is only allowed during heterosexual marriage. But BYU admits gay students, and some of those students wondered if the deletions from the new handbook meant that gay couples could publicly show affection on campus.

The answer appears to be - maybe. University administration responded to questions via Twitter: "In speaking with Honor Code Office Director Kevin Utt this afternoon, we've learned that there may have been some miscommunication as to what the honor code changes mean. Even though we have removed the more prescriptive language, the principles of the Honor Code remain the same. The Honor Code Office will handle questions that arise on a case-by-case basis. For example, since dating means different things to different people, the Honor Code Office will work with students individually."

An article in the Salt Lake *Tribune*, www.sltrib.com, noted that even though the explanation wasn't clear, gay students were celebrating, even kissing in front of the school's statue of Brigham Young.

<https://www.instagram.com/why.iamnot/>



Religion Trumps Art

Watkins College of Art is a small, 180 student school in Nashville. Students and faculty were horrified to find out that it is about to be absorbed by the 6,000 student Belmont University.

What's wrong with that? Being part of a larger school might guarantee that the Watkins continues to exist. An article on www.news.artnet.com explains the problem.

Belmont is a Christian school that appears to retaliate against faculty members deemed to be insufficiently religious.

Watkins' students and faculty sent an open letter asking for transparency, and a guarantee that there will be no censorship. Also, since Belmont only hires practicing Christians, they want an assurance that faculty who are not hired by Belmont will receive adequate severance. Belmont's provost, Thomas Burns, confirmed this at a town hall: "We do not hire people who are not Christian. So, the ones who are not Christian will not be eligible to work at Belmont. That's just part of who we are."

Students have been informed of some restrictions already. Any films they make must be PG, and artists will not be allowed to draw from nude figures. LGBT students are worried because in 2010 Belmont forced its soccer coach to resign after she announced that she was gay, and planning to have a baby with her partner, a former assistant coach. Team members said they were told that the baby would be a problem with Belmont's "don't ask, don't tell," approach to gay students. In 2018 Belmont requested that a university production of the play *The Wolves* omit the words "goddamn" and "fuck." Rather than comply, the faculty member in charge of the production moved it off-campus. The faculty member was later terminated.

Belmont apparently does not think freedom of expression is a Christian value.

Coronavirus? No Problem!

Worried about coronavirus? Don't worry. Jim Bakker is here to help!

Yes, that Jim Bakker – the one who spent five years in Federal prison for mail fraud, wire fraud, and conspiracy. According to www.cspinet.com, Jim is pushing Silver Solution dietary supplements from his online store, which, he says, will cure coronavirus within 12 hours. In the past, he's claimed these supplements will cure all venereal diseases, and HIV. The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) has asked the FDA and the Federal Trade Commission to prevent him from selling this garbage.

Still Here? Silly Christians

Trump Holy Family to Rule For Years



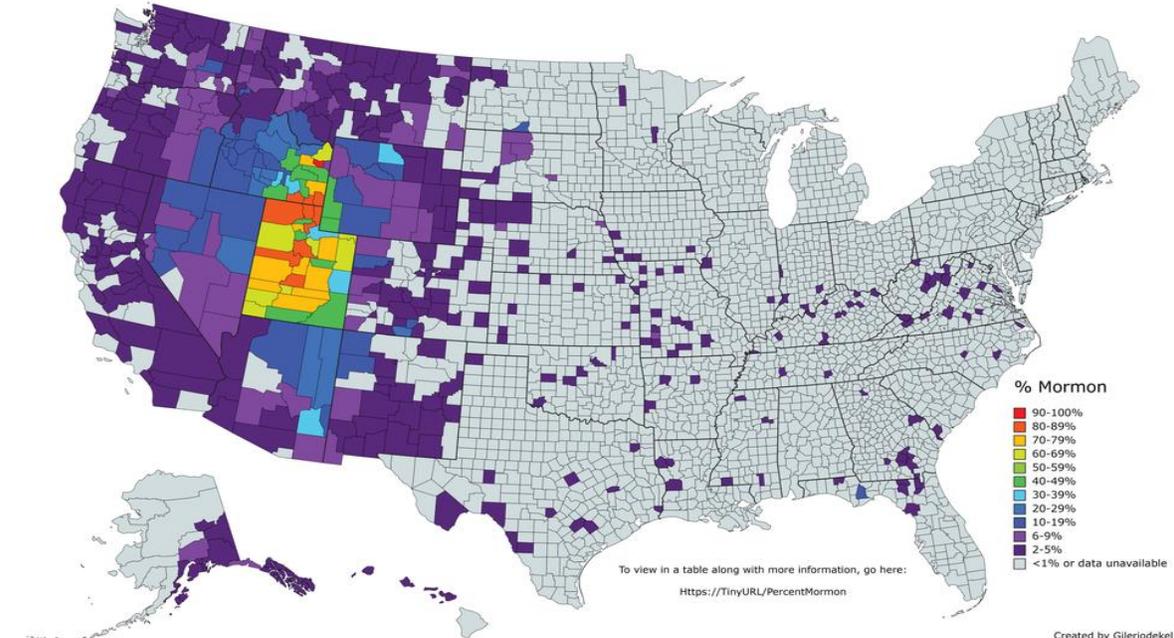
"I was sleeping last night and God came to me and showed me a vision of the White House and there were pictures of presidents on the walls. I saw pictures of Don Jr., Ivanka, Eric, Barron and even some Trumps that are not even born. I believe God was showing me the holy Trump line will go on because they are doing His work."

Televangelist Jim Bakker
The Jim Bakker Show 2/11/20

Jim's store, found at www.jimbakkershow.com, pushes gels, lozenges and liquids that contain a silver solution, with a price range of \$80 to \$300. There is of course no evidence that silver treats any condition or illness, and, if taken orally, can cause argyria, which can result in permanent gray or blue skin discoloration. In addition, a "naturopath," Sherrill Sellman, has appeared on Jim's show to hawk these products. Sellman is identified as "Doctor Sherrill Sellman," but she is not a medical doctor. She has a "Doctor of Naturopathy" degree from Trinity College of Natural Healing, an Indiana organization that is – surprise! – not accredited. The CSPI points out that this is against FTC regulations prohibiting advertising that implies an endorser is a medical doctor, when he is not.

What will it take to get Jim back in jail again?

<https://www.reddit.com/r/MapPorn> Provided by John Wolff



This pretty map illustrates where Mormons live. No wonder they have so much influence in Utah.
Credit: Gleriodekel.

Member Submissions

Member John Wolff recommends: *An excellent talk (IMHO) by Jerry Coyne about evolution if you have an hour & 18 minutes. It's a few years old.*

<https://youtu.be/58cBKIAWeWE>

Dr. Jeffrey Robbins "Doing Theology in the Age of Trump "

This talk may be of interest to PAN members.

Dr. Robbins is a Professor of Religion and Philosophy at Lebanon Valley College. He is the co-editor of the book "Doing Theology in the Age of Trump." Dr. Robbins will speak about the state of evangelical Christianity today and why so many of its adherents are avid supporters of President Donald Trump.

The Lancaster Unitarian Church, 538 West Chestnut Street, Lancaster, PA,

7:00 PM - 8:30 PM

Thursday, March 12

PAN News & Update

Meetings - For more details about our meetings, find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/groups/panonbelievers.

Carlisle – Fourth Friday of the month, March 27, 5:30 pm, Hops and Barley, 398 North York Street, Mechanicsburg

Chambersburg – Third Tuesday of the month, March 17, 7:00 pm, Montezuma Mexican Restaurant, 1495 Lincoln Way East.

Harrisburg– First Wednesday of the month, March 4, 6:30 pm, Midtown Scholar, 1302 N. Third St.

Lancaster – Fourth Wednesday of the month, March 25, 6:00 pm, Centerville Diner, 100 S. Centerville Rd.

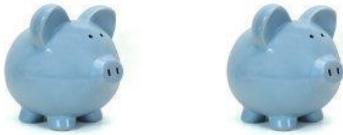
Lebanon - Second Wednesday of the month, March 11, 7:00 pm, Batdorf Restaurant, 245 W. Main St., Annville

Reading – Third Wednesday of the month, March 18, 6:00 pm, Oakbrook Brewing Company, 628 Park Avenue.

York –The annual meeting will take the place of the March meeting.

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 PANonbelievers, 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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