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# 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](http://panonbelievers.org) or like us on Facebook at [facebook.com/PennsylvaniaNonbelievers](https://facebook.com/PennsylvaniaNonbelievers)  
Follow us on Twitter @panonbelievers

## **President's Report**

*Josh CruverKibi*

PA Nonbelievers will be having our Annual Meeting online via Zoom next Saturday March 6<sup>th</sup>, from 12:00 to 2:00 pm. The invite and Zoom link will be sent out to current members who started or renewed their membership for 2021 before February 27<sup>th</sup>. We will be sending this email and link out today or tomorrow, so that you can participate this Saturday. I will be speaking at the meeting about our potential plans for PA Nonbelievers for the upcoming year and expectations for board member participation. We will then allow any current or potential board members time to tell us a little about themselves and we will then have everyone vote for who they would like to be board members. If you are interested in joining the board let us know.

There has been some expressed interest over the years for an atheist secular meetup group for families with children. COVID has really made this difficult over the last year, but I think we should try to establish this type of PAN group and support again. A lot of kids and families have been struggling with the quarantine, isolation, and a lack of group activities. The plan would be to set up a private group for secular and atheist families to network and potentially plan activities together. This group is meant to be a potential kids and family outdoor activities group, practicing safe social distancing, with the potential for hopefully more interaction and engagement as the COVID pandemic comes under control. We may be able to plan in this group for a larger PAN family day event this summer, COVID permitting of course. Let us know if you are interested and we can start you in the private group.

There are also some potential tabling events coming this summer. We will let you know soon which events we may be able to attend. Hopefully as COVID comes under control, we can all start doing more outdoor and social activities again.

*friendlyatheist@patheos.com*



March 2021

**PA Nonbelievers Balance Sheet – December 31, 2020**

**Assets**

Members 1st FCU - Undesignated Checking	9,265.23	
Members 1st FCU - Billboard	475.00	
Members 1st FCU - Tent	<u>70.63</u>	
Total Checking		9,810.86
Members 1st FCU - Savings		20.00
PayPal		<u>231.88</u>
Total Assets		<u>10,062.74</u>

***Liabilities and Equity***

Equity		<u>10,062.74</u>
Total Liabilities and Equity		<u>10,062.74</u>

**PA Nonbelievers Income Statement – Year-to-Date through December 31, 2020**

**Revenues**

Gift Card Sales (Face Value)	6,500.00	
General Donations	726.60	
Voluntary Membership Dues	970.20	
Sales (Nontaxable/Hard Drive)	25.00	
Amazon Partner Income	17.51	
Interest	5.13	
Sales (Taxable Merchandise)	<u>-</u>	
Total Revenues		<u>8,244.44</u>

**Expenses**

Gift Card Purchases (at 95% of Face Value)	6,175.00	
Insurance - Property/Liability/D&O	1,233.00	
Charitable Donations (riverboat)	257.00	
Rent (UU & USPS)	166.00	
Accounting	150.00	
Advertising (Meetup)	80.00	
Sales Tax	62.04	
Supplies & Repairs	46.64	
Banking Expenses	16.19	
Merchandise	-	
Tabling Fees	<u>-</u>	
Total Expenses		<u>8,185.87</u>

**Net Income**

58.57

*Plus prior year equity*

10,004.17

*Check to equal this year's equity*

10,062.74 ok

***Atheist News in Pennsylvania – The Nation – The World!***

Ron Chusid



*“Honey, come look! I’ve found some information all the world’s top scientists and doctors missed.”*

**Oaths of Office**

There was a small sliver of hope for nonbelievers recently. According to religiondispatches.org, Secretary of State Antony Blinken took his oath of office on the US Constitution. Imagine that!

Many officials swear on the Bible because of their personal beliefs; others, because it’s just easier. When Jamie Raskin, recently one of the Trump impeachment managers, was in the Maryland House, he testified against a proposed amendment to the Maryland constitution that would have banned gay marriage.

Maryland State Senator Nancy Jacobs asked him, “Mr. Raskin, my Bible says marriage is only between a man and a woman. What do you have to say about that?” Raskin replied, “Senator, with all due respect, when you took your oath of office, you put your hand on the Bible and swore to uphold the Constitution. You did not put your hand on the Constitution and swear to uphold the Bible.” Raskin is now a member of Congress’ Secular Caucus, and one of the few active politicians willing to speak at atheist events, such as the 2016 Reason Rally.

Jacobs is not the only religionist to believe that officeholders must take their oaths of office with the Bible as a prop. There is a video of Georgia’s Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene telling a group of visitors that Reps. Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar are “not really official” because they didn’t use the Bible. Greene tells her visitors, “they swore in on the Quran. Oh, we have the Bible. We’re going to talk about how to swear an oath on the Bible with them and let them know what our law says that you can’t swear in on the Quran. So, we’re going to explain that. We’re going to explain about how you can’t swear in on the Quran. We’re going to have the Bible and ask them if they would swear in on the Bible ... We have the oath. ...I think that’s important.”

What Greene – and many other officeholders – don’t appear to realize is that the Constitution actually prohibits any kind of religious test for officeholders.

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**Southern Baptist Strife**

The Southern Baptist Convention has sex problems. It recently expelled 4 member churches: 2 for affirming homosexual behavior, and another 2 for having pastors who are convicted sex offenders.

The New York *Times*, nytimes.com, quotes the SBC president J.D. Greear: “The last year has revealed areas of weakness in our beloved convention of churches. Fissures and failures and fleshly idolatries. Covid didn’t produce these crises. It only exposed them.”

It is hard to see what covid has to do with any of these situations. The two gay friendly churches were Towne View Baptist in Kennesaw, GA, and St. Matthews Baptist in Louisville, Ky. Towne View decided to accept 2 gay couples back in 2019, which caused about 30% of its members to quit.

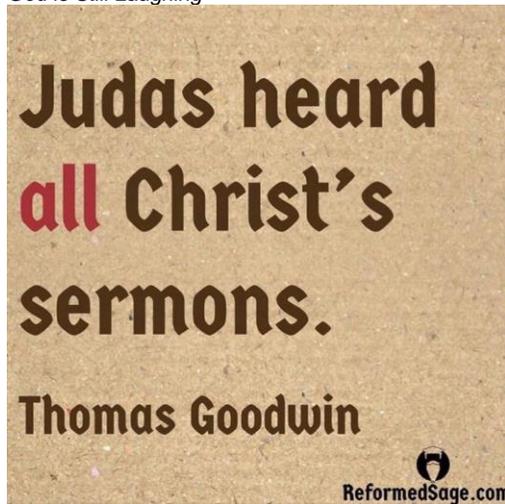
The pastor at Antioch Baptist Church in Sevierville, TN pleaded guilty to two counts of statutory rape for oral sex with a 16-year-old church member in the 1990s. And there's a local PA connection: the pastor at West Side Baptist in Sharpville is on Florida's sex offender registry because of a 1993 conviction for aggravated sexual assault of a child. Church members apparently don't have a problem with this. The church's website explains that the pastor formerly "lived as a great sinner and rebel" but "has gone from disgrace to amazing grace and now has served the Lord Jesus Christ at West Side for 18 years."

In addition to struggling with sex issues, the SBC, the US' largest Protestant denomination, has been as divided as the rest of the country over politics and culture, and white evangelicals' enthusiasm for Donald Trump. Greear addressed this problem in a recent speech: "Do we want to be a Gospel people or a Southern culture people? Which is the more important part of our name, 'Southern' or 'Baptist'?"

As with many churches, the SBC's membership is on the decline. Its membership dropped by almost 2% between 2018 and 2019. It's now 14.5 million.

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*God is Still Laughing*



**International "Death with Dignity" Fight**

The Catholic Church is strongly opposed to ending life support services for people who are terminally ill. PAN members heard a first-person account of how destructive and heartless this policy can be when Barbara Mancini spoke to us about the ordeal her father and she went through when he tried to die on his own terms.

Poland, where the Catholic Church is extremely powerful, was in an end-of-life dispute with Great Britain. According to abcnewsgo.com, a comatose man only identified as R.S. was removed from life support in Britain.

R.S. was a Polish native, but he lived in Britain for many years. A British court affirmed an earlier court decision that ending treatment was in his best interest. As is often the case, this only came before the courts because of a family disagreement. R.S.'s wife and children supported ending treatment, but his mother, sisters and nieces in Poland opposed it. They said that since he was Catholic, he would not want his treatment ended. A clinic in Poland had offered to admit and "treat" him.

The Polish relatives appealed similar decisions to British courts, and to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, but have lost.

R.S. suffered cardiac arrest in November; doctors say his brain is severely and permanently damaged. The Polish clinic, "Budzik" ("Alarm Clock"), says it has brought patients out of comas before. Neurosurgeon Wojciech Maksymowicz explained, "It does not matter whether he is in a

vegetative state or minimal consciousness. In such a situation, you have to hold out your hand to the patient and try.”

An aide to the Polish President discussed the matter with Britain’s ambassador to Poland, and the head of Poland’s Catholic Church, Archbishop Stanislaw Gadecki wrote to Cardinal Vincent Nichols of England and Wales, to request his help in getting continued treatment for R.S. The Polish family members say that the Polish consul in Britain has not been able to see the patient. R.S. passed away at the end of January.

Rmxnews.com reports the Polish reaction: “Unfortunately, we received one of the worst possible forms of news today. This is a huge tragedy for all of us – all those people who did everything they could here in the embassy in London to help our countryman. We did everything, unfortunately our efforts did not come to fruition in the Plymouth hospital,” Deputy Foreign Minister Piotr Wawrzyk announced.

Archbishop Stanisław Gądecki also commented on the man’s death: “I express deep sorrow due to the death of the Pole in Plymouth. I pray for heaven for him and comfort for his family. We should bravely say 'NO' to the barbaric civilization of death.”

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### Prophet Apologizes

PANViews has reported before about prophets who predicted that Donald Trump would remain president. Here’s an update from the New York Times, nytimes.com.

Last fall, Jeremiah Johnson revealed a prophetic dream that showed Trump falling while running in the Boston Marathon. Two old women helped him over the finish line.



### FREETHOUGHT OF THE DAY

“When you’re black, there’s like no religion to turn to. It’s like, Christianity? I don’t think so. White people justified slavery and segregation through Christianity, so a black Christian is like a black person with no f\*\*\*king memory.”

### Chris Rock

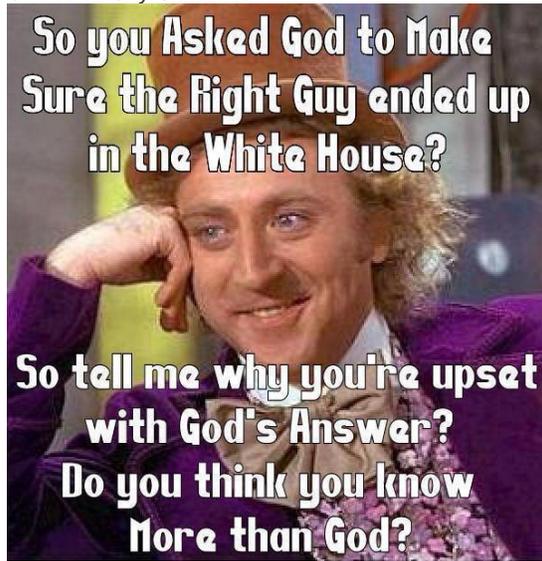
Outtake from the documentary short, “Who Is Chris Rock?” (1989)  
© 2018 Freedom From Religion Foundation

According to Johnson, this meant that Trump would be re-elected. At least Johnson had the grace to admit that he was wrong. He posted an apology online: “I was wrong, I am deeply sorry, and I ask for your forgiveness. I would like to repent for inaccurately prophesying that Donald Trump would win a second term as the President of the United States.” The Times notes there were so many prominent Christians predicting Trump’s victory that it is causing a crisis of belief.

Covid-19 has been tough on the prophecy business, too. Cindy Jacobs led a global day of prayer to contain the virus last March. Obviously, that did not work out.

Many of the “prophets” are independent evangelists who work mostly online, speaking at conferences or churches, flying well below the radar of the mainstream media. In this tight world, Johnson’s apology caused a firestorm. He noted on Facebook that he received “multiple death threats and thousands upon thousands of emails from Christians saying the nastiest and most vulgar things I have ever heard toward my family and ministry.” Financial support from donors evaporated; they accused him of being “a coward, sellout, and traitor to the Holy Spirit.”

Still Here? Silly Christians



The *Times* posits that the increased interest in prophecy is part of a desire for certainty and answers that has affected other parts of American culture. The article notes that more than 40% of Americans believe in psychics, and astrology is undergoing a resurgence.

A fellow prophet, Scott Wallis, believed Johnson's prophecy, in part because Johnson had correctly prophesized that the Dodgers would win the World Series. Prophets believe that God is involved in every detail of human life, and with the internet, it's easy for them to disseminate their predictions. Apparently, there is a radio interview show, "It's Supernatural!", that can make a prophet's career.

Other means of getting the word out include the Elijah List newsletter (240,000 subscribers), Charisma magazine and the Christian Broadcast Network.

Mike Killion, who took up prophecy when his charter-bus business disappeared in the pandemic, looks for "synchronicities," or what other people call coincidences. Killion points out that prophecies don't have to be right immediately; some biblical prophecies didn't come to fruition in the prophet's lifetimes. He doesn't think Johnson should have apologized for predicting a Trump victory. He says, "Jeremiah Johnson should have kept his mouth shut. It still may happen."

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### Who Knew?

East Timor officials have accused a defrocked American priest of abusing young girls at a shelter he ran there, according to abcnews.go.com.

An all-too-common story, unfortunately. But in the midst of the reporting, it was casually mentioned that East Timor is the second most Catholic place on earth, next to only Vatican City.



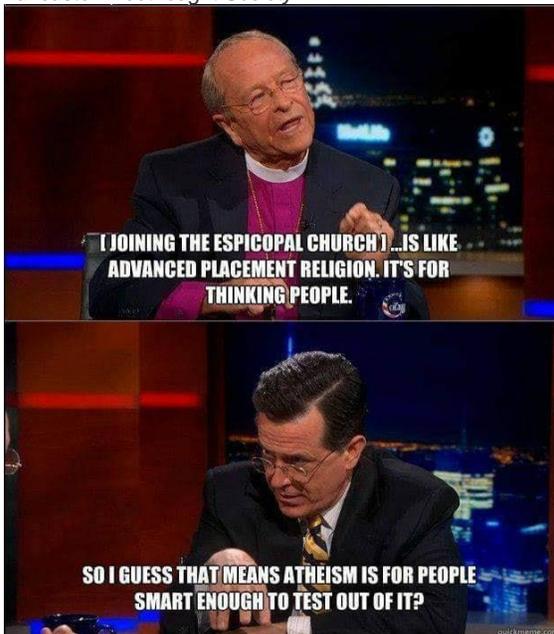
How is that possible? According to encyclopedia.com, East Timor was a Portuguese colony, originally conquered by them in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. After a long and complicated history with the Portuguese, East Timor fell under the control of Indonesia. East Timor fought back, and there were vicious battles. Catholic missionaries defended the rights of East Timor residents; one bishop won the Nobel Prize for his work. When East Timor eventually gained independence in the 1990s, Indonesian troops set fire to every town and village. Priests and nuns offered East Timor residents shelter, and several of the clerics were executed by the Indonesians because of it. East Timor remains loyal to the Catholic church.

In the recent abuse case, Richard Daschbach (who is from Pennsylvania) is charged with 14 counts of sexual abuse of children under age 14, as well as child pornography and domestic violence. Some of his donors admit that Daschbach confessed to them, but he has not said anything publicly. He was defrocked in 2018, when the accusations first surfaced.

Approximately 100 supporters of Daschbach tried to attend his first hearing, but it was closed, according to Aljazeera.com. The accusations have been extremely controversial, with accusers afraid of being targeted if their names are revealed. The former president of East Timor, Xanana Gusmao, attended the hearing with Daschbach; Gusmao is a popular former revolutionary, whose children wondered publicly why he would support Daschbach. Even if somehow Daschbach avoids imprisonment in East Timor, his problems aren't over. He is wanted in the US for wire fraud, as a result of his fund-raising activities here.

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Lancaster Freethought Society



### Another Way to Avoid Prosecution

The New York *Times*, nytimes.com, reports on a priest who had been accused of sexual abuse in New York. The story noted that the Catholic archdiocese of New York had difficulty investigating the allegations for a reason that isn't often publicized: the accused priest belonged to the Dominican religious order, and the Dominicans, not the archdiocese, were responsible for the initial investigation.

Many people do not understand that there are two types of Catholic priests: those who are unaffiliated with a religious order, and report to the diocese in which they work, and those who do belong to a religious order (Dominicans, Jesuits, Franciscans, etc.) and who report to that order. As the article makes clear, this wrinkle can make it difficult to bring religious order priests to justice.

What happened in this particular case is what happens all the time: the religious order investigated, cleared the priest, and transferred him before a legal case was filed against him. The *Times* quotes Jeff Anderson, who works on clergy abuse cases: "The worldwide moving around of religious order priest offenders is the biggest unknown scandal. We have found offenders in South America and Africa." Close to one-third of the 464 Child Victims Act cases in New York involve priests from religious orders.

Religious order priests teach in Catholic high schools and colleges, and can be assigned to parishes. But the *Times* describes them as independent contractors; the diocese, and therefore the bishop, has no control over them. The Vatican can intervene, but rarely does so.

The article cites the case of Rev. Bruce Ritter, member of the Franciscan order, and founded of Covenant House, the well-known New York organization that helps homeless youth. Ritter was accused of sexually abuse by many of Covenant House's clients, as well as financial irregularities. He was forced out in 1990, but he was never defrocked, or officially charged with anything. At one point the Franciscans told him to get counseling, which he refused to do, resigning from the order instead in 1991. The head of the order said that the resignation was "on his own initiative and with

the blessing of his Franciscan superiors in the United States and in Rome.” He joined an overseas diocese, and was still a priest when he died in 1999.

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*Freedom From Religion Foundation*

**School Dropouts**

The pandemic is responsible for a lot of changes in day-to-day life. For example, enrollment in Catholic schools has dropped 6.4% over last year, according to edweek.org. That's the largest one-year decline in at least 50 years.



**Practice  
social  
distancing  
between  
church  
& state**



One of the main problems is many parents have seen their incomes drop, and Catholic schools aren't cheap. The National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) notes that tuition for grade school averages more than \$5,000, and more \$10,000 for secondary schools.

There are now 1.6 million students in US Catholic schools. That sounds like a lot, but in the 1960s, total enrollment was more than 5 million. Of course, that was the baby boom era, and there were a lot more school-age children. Similarly, currently there are 5,981 Catholic schools, as compared to more than 11,000 in 1970.

According to the NCEA, urban schools, which have a large number of Black, non-Catholic, children, have been disproportionately impacted. The largest enrollment losses were in big cities; for example, 12.4% in Los Angeles, 11.1% in New York and 8.2% in Chicago. A few Western cities with significant Hispanic populations bucked the trend; enrollment increased by 5.5% in Las Vegas, 4.6% in Denver, and 2.4% in Phoenix. Nationally, the biggest drop came in pre-kindergarten, 26.6%. Elementary/middle schools saw a decline of 8.1%; the decrease in secondary schools wasn't so bad, at 2.5%.

The NCEA noticed something else. State-funded parental "choice" programs didn't seem to help stop the decline in enrollment. It points out that of 4 states with significant choice programs (Arizona, Ohio, Indiana and Florida), only Arizona has not seen a significant drop. It concludes that school choice programs may not be the Catholic school savior their proponents pictured.

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**True Believer**

Steven Brandenburg made the news recently. He's the Wisconsin pharmacist who deliberately destroyed hundreds of Covid vaccines because he thought they were a hoax.

It turns out Steven has lots of interesting thoughts. Hemant Mehta, the Friendly Atheist, friendlyatheist.patheos.com, quotes from a Daily Beast article about the search warrant the FBI submitted to investigate him. Here goes:

"Some of the conspiracy theories Brandenburg told [the coworker] about included: the earth is flat; the sky is not real, rather it is a shield put up by the Government to prevent individuals from seeing God; and Judgment Day is coming." In a subsequent interview, followed by an email included in the warrant application, Brandenburg confessed that he in fact did spoil the vaccines because he thought they would "alter the recipient's DNA." He also explained that he is involved in a "very

March 2021

contentious divorce” (there’s a surprise). He could be sentenced to 10 years in prison, and a \$250,000 fine for each of the two counts he’s charged with.

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## High School Essay Contest

Every year Americans United for the Separation of Church and State conducts an essay contest. AU’s description of the contest follows below. For more information, to visit [www.au.org/essaycontest](http://www.au.org/essaycontest).

### The Topic:

The Do No Harm Act is designed to restore the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) to its original intent to protect religious freedom, especially for religious minorities, while clarifying it cannot be used to discriminate. RFRA is now being misused to harm others; for example, the Trump Administration has said that organizations can use RFRA to discriminate in employment for jobs funded by taxpayer dollars.

### How would the Do No Harm Act impact church-state separation and the real lives of people in the United States?

- The strongest submissions will weave together personal experience and well-researched information on current and/or historical events to make a persuasive argument.
- Submissions can describe multiple ways that the Do No Harm Act would affect different groups or may focus on one topic (for example, discrimination against LGBTQ people in employment).

### The Prizes:

- **First place:** \$1,500 and essay will be printed on AU’s website and in *Church & State* magazine
- **Second place:** \$1,000 and essay will be printed on AU’s website
- **Third Place:** \$500 and essay will be printed on AU’s website

### The Fine Print:

- The contest is open to high school juniors and seniors in the United States, including the District of Columbia and U.S. territories.
- The essay length should be between 750 and 1,000 words.
- Essays should be well written, well researched and should be the student’s original writing, supported by specific examples and/or properly cited sources where appropriate. Essays can reference current events, U.S. history, primary sources, personal experiences and information from AU.org.
- **Essays must be submitted no later than 11:59 PM on April 19, 2021.**
- Employees and board members of Americans United, and members of their families, are not eligible to participate.

## ***Member Submissions***

Long-time PAN members Cheryl and Carl Huber recently moved to Florida. Cheryl and Carl had both been board members, hosted the York-area winter solstice party, and generally helped out PAN wherever they were needed. In recognition of that PAN's board presented them with the plaque pictured below. Here is their response:

Your plaque is mounted in an honored place in our house.



# FUN!



Word Search Puzzle! Answer Key was not provided, so you are on your own.

ANGRY	APART	BLESSINGS	CHERISH	CHRISTIAN	CONFUSED
DARK	DIVORCED	EXPERIENCE	FAMILY	FORSAKE	FRIENDS
GOOD	HOPE	LIGHT	LOSSES	MOTHERHOOD	OASIS
PAIN	PARENTS	REARRIED	RESPONSBLTY	SBLINGS	STRENGTH
THANKFUL	TOGETHER	TRAIN	TRIALS	TRIPLE	TRIUMPHS
TRUST	TWICE	UNIQUE	UPSET	WORKING	

J U N V W O R K I N G W K T P E H T U Y  
P U T X T R I P L E O F B S V B O Q E T  
O E O P Y T R I U M P H S U T G S T O L  
X I G H T V D P F K G S T R E N G T H I  
K N B R T H S B K C T T I T S U N B F B  
R V B S A E J Z N S M A H E U Q I N U I  
D U G Y T F T T A T L E O X S E L Z Q S  
U J U X X K A I H S R Z V W O J B Z K N  
A L H G A P A R T T R E M A R R I E D O  
J N R S K R A D Z J M G N T I C S W O P  
E S G N I S S E L B C O A J F R H Z X S  
X D W R G R L D F J H O T G U J V V N E  
P N H B Y D E A A N R D T H D P Z S W R  
E E O R Z S M H F K I G V V E A L I Q N  
R I P E U I S O C V S A B D B R O S I J  
I R E F L E R P O L T A P N I E H A M Y  
E F N Y S S C R Y I I B L W M N R O K K  
N O W S A S C I F G A H E H Y T M H O J  
C K O K O E J Z W H N Q I X Q S Q K X D  
E L E Z D Z J N N T V N Y Z Z Q J N Q K

***PAN News & Update***

PAN's Annual Meeting will be held March 6<sup>th</sup>, from 12:00 to 2:00 pm. The Zoom link will be sent out to current members who started or renewed their membership for 2021 before February 27<sup>th</sup>.

**Meetings** –PAN is also holding virtual meetings at 6:00 pm on Wednesdays for the time being. Get more information on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/groups/panonbelievers](http://www.facebook.com/groups/panonbelievers).

When the day dawns that we can have in-person meetings again, this is where and when they will be:

March 2021

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

Chambersburg – Second Thursday of the month, 7:00 pm. Cafe Del Sol  
438 Gateway Avenue  
Chambersburg, PA 17201

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., Anville

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.

Finally, it looks as if the following summer festivals may be held! We'll let you know if PAN will have booths at any of them.

Jubilee Day, Mechanicsburg, June 17

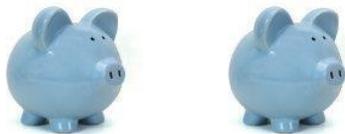
Old Anville Days, August 14, 9AM-2PM

Red Lion Street Fair, August 14

Pumpkin Fest, October 9 & 10

### ***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](http://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.

#### **PAN Board of Directors**

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