

## Freethought Rainbow Picnic

Celebrate Pride Month with June's Freethought Picnic!  
Sunday, June 16 at Noon  
Jaycees Shelter, 2540 Lexington Ave N, Roseville

Minnesota Atheists will donate \$5 per attendee to an organization called RECLAIM (whether you're an Ally or LGBTQ+ yourself). All you have to do is attend!

RECLAIM's mission is to increase access to mental health care for queer and trans youth so they may reclaim their lives from oppression in all its forms. They are one of the only organizations in Minnesota that offers financially accessible, specialized mental health care to this population. <https://www.reclaim.care/>

PICNIC: will be a potluck. If you can, bring an item to share. We can bring food items of all the colors of the rainbow! If you don't feel comfortable partaking in a potluck feel free to bring food just for yourself or just come for the camaraderie. You are welcome to arrive early if you want to fire up one of the two charcoal grills that are available. We have the shelter reserved from 9:00 AM-3:00 PM.

Park in the parking lot off Lexington Ave N (it's in line with Oakcrest Ave). Follow the trails eastward (away from Lexington) to the shelter, you can't miss it.

The atmosphere of this event is very social and energetic, rain or shine. Please feel free to bring yard games or table games. There's a playground close by.



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About the picnic:

- This is typically a potluck picnic, so bring some food to share if you can. You may also bring your own if you choose to not potluck or opt out of the meal.
- Bringing your own beverage, plate, and utensils helps out. We will have utensils available.
- The picnic takes place in a shelter so it will occur rain or shine.
- The shelter area has electrical outlets, a sink, and bathrooms.

There will be:

- Lots of friendly people!
- Lively discussion
- A playground for the kids
- Plenty of room for Frisbee, Ladder Ball, etc.

July picnic will be hosted by HumanistsMN.

August picnic will be hosted by Minnesota Atheists on Sunday, Aug 8 at Noon, also at the Jaycees Shelter.

## Cryptogram

*By George Francis Kane*

Opvv sahywas uvdtb ovdpgvbb sahywas. Cs cb ths  
zvspppvz mj gvwdg lvtgdscvb, thp mj blcpcsydg  
qhtbvnyvtqvb. Zcbbvts ophu sav Mcmgv zhvb ths  
dgdpu sav spyv ctkvbscwdshp, xah sdrvb spysa ohp  
dysahpcsj ths dysahpcsj ohp spysa.

Wvhpwv Fdqhm Ahgjhdrv, "Sav Hpcwct dtz Tdsypv  
ho Bvqygdpcbu"



## News and Notes

### Day of Reason

By *George Francis Kane*

Gathering at the State Capitol in May to celebrate the Day of Reason is one of the favorite traditions of Minnesota's free-thought community, probably surpassed only by the Winter Solstice party and picnics in the summer.

The National Day of Reason arose as a display of opposition to the National Day of Prayer, which is annually declared in accordance with a 1952 law. The Day of Prayer declaration is blatant government promotion of the Christian religion, but the courts have rejected Establishment Clause challenges for lack of standing. This reasoning holds that only the president can claim to be harmed by the law because it orders only him to do anything — to issue each year a proclamation declaring the Day of Prayer observance on the first Thursday in May. Even if some president were ever inclined to dispense with the proclamation, proceeding with such a suit would be political suicide.

Since a direct Establishment Clause challenge was foreclosed, in 2003 the American Humanist Association proposed a National Day of Reason as a counter-observance. Official support for the concept has been developing slowly. A resolution calling for a Day of Reason proclamation was sponsored by Rep. Pete Stark in 2011, and others have been proposed several times since. This year, Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-MD), on behalf of the Congressional Secular Caucus, introduced a resolution to officially designate an annual National Day of Reason on May 4, ending the intentional conflict with the National Day of Prayer. The resolution encouraged all Americans to focus “on the central importance of reason... to resolving social problems and promoting the welfare of humankind.”

The featured event nationally was the Congressional Reason Reception Wednesday evening, produced by the Freedom from Religion Foundation, the American Humanist Association and the Secular Coalition of America. The Secular Free-thought Caucus has been around for 6 years now, and has 22 members, all Democrats, and all in the House.

Minnesota Atheists in 2006 began an annual noon observance of the Day of Reason in the Capitol Rotunda. It typically featured a series of speakers from local secularist organizations, and recognition of all legislators who stopped by. We were always greatly outnumbered by Christians on the Capitol steps outside who were celebrating the Day of Prayer, but we frequently were on a par with them in media coverage that we received. Both groups had to rearrange their events due to the restoration work at the Capitol and then the event restrictions enacted to contain the Covid pandemic.

I was surprised that this year there was no Day of Prayer event at the State Capitol. There were about 30 gatherings around the state, but none closer to the Twin Cities than Chanhassen and Eden Prairie. The national main event was no longer a massive production in Washington DC, but an online gathering held at the Christian Cultural Center in New York called the “National Prayer Gathering.”

Minnesota Atheists did not resume its Day of Reason speakers, in part because the Rotunda is no longer available during the noon hour. Also, there is now a larger event in the morning, a breakfast in the Capitol's basement, sponsored by the Twin Cities' three Humanist organizations, the First Unitarian Society, Or Emet and Humanists MN. The featured speakers at that breakfast were Deepinder Singh Mayell, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union, and Ron Millar, Political Action Committee coordinator for the American Humanist Association's Center for Freethought Equality. Filling out the event were cameo speeches by members of the Minnesota Secular Government Caucus who dropped by and representatives of participating organizations, who staffed tables in the room. Director-at-Large Heather Hegi represented Minnesota Atheists.

Among the groups represented was the Grand Rapids Area Freethinkers. Members recently learned that the new Itasca County Jail has the Ten Commandments painted on a wall in its gym. They contacted the Freedom from Religion Foundation, which was also in attendance, to initiate a suit to force the display to be removed because it violates the Establishment Clause. Two weeks after the Day of Reason breakfast Itasca County

## May 2024 Meeting Review

### An Atheist Speaker At A Christian High School

By Cathy Prody

Southwest Christian High School has for the past ten years invited August Berkshire to provide an atheist perspective to its junior and senior level philosophy and worldview classes. In return, August invited a group from the school to come to our public meeting to give their perspectives and engage in a discussion with atheists. The participants from Southwest Christian High School were faculty members Brian Goldie, Dr. Don Carlson, and two graduating seniors, Savannah Larson and Addie Anderson.

August started the discussion by asking the panel about their experiences meeting with atheists. Addie thought August was more passionate than other atheists she met or knew. Savannah has friends who aren't Christian, and struggled with how to love atheists although they don't believe as she does. Don Carlson remarked that he knew many atheists — some kind, some mean — but had developed the most meaningful relationship with August. Brian Goldie remarked that he has met atheists who act like Christians and Christians who act like atheists, and Christians who act like Christians; but that people and groups come together and find what's good and true.

August's next question was whether Christians believe that others who don't believe as they do will be damned. Don's response was that when some Christians say that, it indicates an extinction of the human heart. Brian mentioned that he has read *Atheist Voices of Minnesota*. It struck him that the writers found that religion was more of a threat. It saddened him to hear that in their experience Christians were so judgmental. Savannah said that she finds salvation in Christianity from being lost and alone. She believes in life after death, but others who are not Christian could get stuck. Addie said that if the foundation of a Christian's belief is fear, those are not true beliefs. They concluded that Christianity has nothing to threaten people with; the fate of others is not for them to determine.

After that the questions came from the audience.

Question: What did you take away from your sessions with an atheist?

Don said that he felt that the god that August says he doesn't believe in, he doesn't believe in either. God is not explained by using the scientific method. He said that when you keep scaling up existence, whatever is at the top is a god. People believe in whatever is at the top of their value structure. Brian concurred, saying that everyone has something at the top of their value structure. Savannah said that the things she has learned cannot be put into words, and that many words have different definitions to different people, leading to misunderstandings between people of different faiths. Addie added that she used to think that atheists have no morality, but that she no longer believes that.

Another question from the audience asked what the conversations among the students and teachers were like after August spoke at the school. The students said that they had discussions about the things they heard, and found arguments they could rebut. They liked that her school allows them to have those conversations. Goldie said that students spoke about specific ideas that rattled them. The teachers don't try to provide responses that are all "neat and tidy." He said that where Christians have been remiss is to try to find a proof for their faith, which is impossible. They are aware of limitations in Christian faith. Christian tradition says that there is no proof for God. The school approves of the faculty bringing in speakers with alternate views.

The next questioner asked about the statement of faith that the students are required to sign to enroll at the school. Addie said that she signed because her parents wanted her to sign it. She added that the high school allows students some doubts. Brian commented that the statement has evolved over time and that it helps students who want to follow Jesus. However, they did not have a policy of expelling nonbelieving students from school.

The next questioner asked if Christians need Christianity's promise of an afterlife to confront their mortality. In other words, if death is the end, would you still believe in Christianity? Don restated the question, as "If this is all there is, is it enough to believe in Jesus? Don't you believe that you have to posit something on the other side?"

Don stated that he believes that “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.” Addie said that the way she has lived her life makes her happiest when serving others. Savannah said that how Christianity deals with death is pivotal for her faith and an afterlife gives her hope. In contrast, for Brian, an afterlife is not a pressing concern. More important for him is the function of God and Christ in his life.

The next question was asked by a public school teacher, concerning LGBTQ students (or students exploring their sexuality). He asked, “If someone comes out at your school, but is still Christian, are they still accepted?” The panel agreed that younger people are more accepting. Older people didn’t grow up in a culture where that was acceptable. They didn’t know LGBTQ people, or thought they didn’t. The questioner followed up by asking if transgender kids are accepted. Savannah said that not all teachers would be accepting, but some would. Most gay or transgender students would probably be reluctant to come forward. Brian said that the school wants teachers with compassion and empathy. Gender dysphoria is a problem or a struggle. With this, there is a fear of students losing their faith.

The last questioner asked what would be the reaction if a group of students wanted to start an atheist group. One of the teachers said that those students are still with their families and the school does not want to split families.

After the meeting Brian Goldie and his family joined a number of atheists for dinner at Q.Cumbers Restaurant.

**Reason** continued from page 3 agreed to paint over all religious texts at the jail.

For the first time, the Minnesota legislature proclaimed the Day of Reason, passing a resolution sponsored by Rep. Mike Freiberg. The Secular Government Caucus now numbers 16 Senators and 11 Representatives. Its major bills currently before this legislature include the Minnesota Recovery Options Act and the Minnesota End-of-Life Options Act. They are proceeding through committee approvals, but both will probably need to be re-introduced next year.

## Treasury Report

November, 2023 - March, 2024

By *Chris Matthews*

### General/Visibility Fund Donations

\$500	Alice Lesney
\$400	George Kane
\$300	Ken Holmbeck
\$250	Ross Meisner
\$250	Paul Sonda
\$200	John Annen
\$200	Art Kallenbach
\$160	Ben Zvan
\$100	Michelle Tjernagel
\$50	Vicky Hagens
\$50	Rajiv Vaidyanathan
\$40	Geraldine Jensen
\$25	Frank Neubecker
\$25	Jody Theis
\$15	Rabih Nahas
\$15	Tim and Joanne Dunnigan
\$15	Terry Rogers
\$15	Pete Holste
\$15	Pete Neuman
\$30	Groundswell
\$2	PayPal Giving Fund
\$192	Cash donations
<b>\$ 2,849</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>

### Building Fund Donations

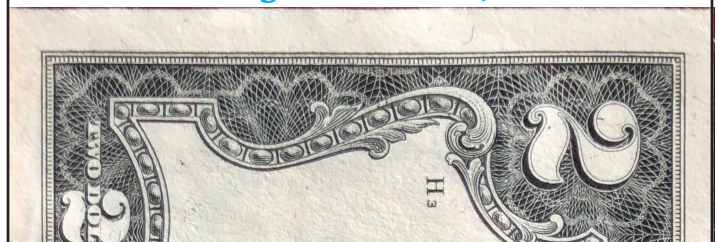
**\$0 Subtotal**

**\$2,849 Total Donations**

### Expenses

\$2,103	Newsletters
\$692	IT, General Exp
\$400	Speakers
\$309	Parade / Booth
\$223	Misc
<b>\$3,727</b>	<b>Total Expenses</b>

**Current Building Fund – \$156,027**



## Upcoming Monthly Events

**Hybrid Freethought Toastmasters Meeting** 1st and 3rd Monday of every month from 6:30–8 p.m. Larpenteur Estates Party Room, 1280 Larpenteur Ave W, St Paul. [freethought.toastmastersclubs.org](http://freethought.toastmastersclubs.org).

**Hybrid Minnesota Atheists Board Meeting** 1st Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. Email [chair@mnatheists.org](mailto:chair@mnatheists.org) for the meeting link.

### Freethinking Females

**Online** 2nd Monday of every month at 7 p.m.

**In Person** Last Monday of every month at 5:30 p.m., Sweeney’s Saloon, 96 North Dale Street, St. Paul.

Shattering the myth that atheist groups are male dominated with a females-only event.

**In Person Blasphemer’s Brunch** 2nd Saturday of every month at 10:30 a.m., Pizza Lucé, 800 W 66th St, Richfield

**In Person Bowling for Deities** Last Saturday of every month at noon, (usually) at Flaherty’s Arden Bowl, 1273 West County Road E, Arden Hills

**In Person Trivia Night** Every Sunday from 5:30–8 p.m. Venn Brewing, 3550 E 46th St Suite 140, Minneapolis

**Online M.A.S.H!** (MN Atheists Social Hour!) Every Tuesday (**note the day change**) from 5:30–6:30 p.m. RSVP in Meetup and a Zoom link appears in the announcement.

**Online In Depth – Discussion and Debate** Every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month from 3–4 p.m.

For more events and instructions for connecting to online events, visit:

[www.meetup.com/MinnesotaAtheists](http://www.meetup.com/MinnesotaAtheists) 

## Twin Cities Pride Festival

*By Chris Matthews*

Minnesota Atheists invites you to join us in our Loring Park, Minneapolis, booth on Saturday and Sunday June 29 and 30 as part of this year’s Twin Cities Pride Festival. Pride is one of our major membership recruiting efforts of the year, and we will ask for volunteers to staff the booth and welcome anyone to stop by and spend time with us. We are participating in this year’s Pride March on Sunday with our Wizard of Oz themed float, and we will have a constant presence in our park booth before, during, and after the march. Watch our Meetup event page for additional details on volunteer signup as well as festival and march activities.



## The “Nones” That You Know Rafael Nadal

By *Milo Grika*

Rafael Nadal Parera (born 3 June 1986) is a Spanish professional tennis player ranked world No. 1 in singles by the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) for 209 weeks, and has finished as the year-end No. 1 five times. Nadal has won 22 Grand Slam men’s singles titles, including a record 14 French Open titles.

*“I don’t believe in God. I would love to know if God exists. But it’s a very difficult thing for me to believe”*

— Rafael Nadal

## Cryptogram Answer

Free thought means fearless thought. It is not deterred by legal penalties, nor by spiritual consequences. Dissent from the Bible does not alarm the true investigator, who takes truth for authority not authority for truth.

George Jacob Holyoake, “The Origin and Nature of Secularism”

## Get Famous (Sort of)

Send submissions to The Minnesota Atheist newsletter. Just email your input to: [editor@mnatheists.org](mailto:editor@mnatheists.org) and we’ll do the rest.

## Minnesota Atheists Membership and Donations

### Membership Levels

- Student membership *Free*
- One-year individual membership \$35
- Three-year individual membership \$90
- One-year household membership \$45
- Three-year household membership \$115
- One-year sustaining membership \$75
- Three-year sustaining membership \$200
- Life membership \$600

### Donation Funds

General Fund      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Building Fund      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Atheists Talk Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I would like my donation(s) to be

- private
- public
- attributed by my name only

for reporting in the Minnesota Atheists newsletter and on the website. (By default, each donation will be considered private.)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Just email newsletter      Email address \_\_\_\_\_  
(Required for student memberships and email subscriptions)

Donations are tax deductible. Membership fees are deductible for the amount beyond their fair market value.

Student memberships include a subscription to the PDF version of *The Minnesota Atheist* delivered by email. Student memberships do not have voting rights and are not able to run for the board.

All paid memberships include a subscription to the printed version delivered by postal mail. If you would prefer the PDF version delivered by email, please check the box and provide your email address.

Please make checks payable to:

**Minnesota Atheists.**

Students, please enclose a copy of your fee statement or school identification.

Minnesota Atheists  
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New Brighton, MN 55112

## 8 The Minnesota Atheist

Minnesota Atheists

### Positive Atheism in action since 1991

Minnesota Atheists is dedicated to building a positive atheist community that actively promotes secular values through educational programs, social activities, and participation in public affairs.

#### Minnesota Atheist Board of Directors

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#### Minnesota Atheists Media

**AtheistsWeekly Email (AWE)**  
Chris Matthews  
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**NOTE:** The numbers for “Regular memberships” and “Life members” are based on financial data. These membership numbers undercount actual members, since one household or sustaining membership could represent more than one person.

#### Minnesota Atheists Affiliations

Atheist Alliance of America  
Atheist Alliance International  
American Atheists  
The American Humanist Association  
Council for Secular Humanism  
The International Humanist and Ethical Union  
Secular Coalition for America

#### Minnesota Atheists Membership (as of Dec. 31, 2023)

Regular memberships: 67  
Life members: 53  
Meetup subscribers: 4,089

#### Minnesota Atheists Goals

Minnesota Atheists practices positive, inclusive, active, friendly, neighborhood atheism in order to provide a community for atheists, educate the public about atheism, and promote separation of state and church.



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