

September/October
2025
Volume 35
Number 5

In this Issue

The Scopes “Monkey” Trial
— 100 Year Anniversary 1
President’s Column: 2
Cryptogram 2
News and Notes 3
In Memoriam 4
Opinion 5
Opinion 6
October 2025 Public
Meeting 7
The Frosty Atheist 8
Treasury Report 9
Upcoming Monthly
Events 10
The “Nones” That You
Know 11

The Scopes “Monkey” Trial — 100 Year Anniversary September Public Meeting

(October Public Meeting on page 7)

By Greg Laden

The Scopes “Monkey” Trial (*The State of Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes*) was one hundred years ago. Charles Darwin’s first thoughts on the role of natural selection in the process of evolution were 200 years ago. Carl Linnaeus published *Systema Naturae* almost exactly 300 years ago. 100 years before that? Well, Francis Bacon, often called the father of modern science, died.



The history of modern science, and evolutionary biology in particular, and the parallel history of societal acceptance, rejection, understanding, and mythologizing of science, rests on a framework of major moments, interspersed with long periods of quiescence and hard work. This view of science, which we might describe as “punctuated equilibria,” (the paper first using that term was published 50 years ago by Niles Eldredge and Stephen Jay Gould) may be a useful touchstone for understanding where we are now, in this moment in history in which we appear to be facing the end of science.

Continued on page 9

Sunday, September 21, 2025

1:00 p.m.: Library and Underground
Parking open. Social Time. Zoom
starts.

1:15–1:45 p.m.: Business Meeting

1:45–2:00 p.m.: Break/Social Time

2:00–3:30 p.m.: Program

3:30 p.m.: Leave for dinner

Dinner:

Los Ocampo [Mexican] Restaurant
615 University Ave W
St. Paul, MN 55103
(kitty-corner northeast from the
library)

Rondo Community Library

461 N. Dale St.

St. Paul, MN 55103

(On the light rail line at the corner
of University Ave. & Dale St.)

(There is free underground parking
off of University Ave.)

Online:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/
j/82344512218?pwd=VWNDclk2b-
VUxeWJDTnAzU3BhQnNRdz09](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82344512218?pwd=VWNDclk2b-VUxeWJDTnAzU3BhQnNRdz09)

Or call in:

+13092053325,,82344512218#,,,*6
76832#

President's Column:

It's Been (and Continues to be) a Busy Year

By Heather Hegi

This has been an active year with the American Atheists Convention and our Day of Reason event at the capitol, but the year is not over yet! There is still time to get involved and become an active member of Minnesota Atheists if you haven't yet. Well, you can drop in and out of events at any time really. That's the nice thing about being an atheist: there's nothing obliging you to be involved. But I hope you **will** get involved and become a member!

The monthly programs are starting back up for the fall; please see the announcements on pages 1 and 7 for details. The beginning of the year featured engaging talks. To reminisce:

In January, Dr. Anthony Pinn spoke on his

book *Humanism: Past, Present, Future*. February was a preview of the American Atheists National Convention that was held in April. In March we hosted a live online interview with the of President of Atheist Alliance International, Tonoy Emroz Alam from Germany and Onur Romano from Canada; both ex-Muslims from countries where it is not safe to be an atheist in public. They spoke about a refugee program to relocate atheists from countries, where there are eminent harm and threats to their lives, to safer countries. April was the American Atheists Convention. And in May we held an event to introduce Minnesota Atheists to newer members of our organization who may have learned about us from the convention.

Looking forward, we will be hosting this year's Solstice Celebration, so keep posted for

Continued on page 8

Cryptogram

By George Francis Kane

JVZ UQLUBEZ BY EZUKLKJWBH BY TVQLTV KHS

EJKJZ WE JB FZZU YBLZMZL YLBO JVZEZ EVBLZE

JVZ TZKEZDZEE EJLWYZ JVKJ VKE EBKFZS JVZ EBWD

BY ZQLBUZ WH CDBBS YBL TZHJQLWZE.

GKOZE OKSWEBH, WH K DZJJZL BCGZTJWHX JB

JVZ QEZ BY XBMZLHOZHJ DKHS YBL TVQLTVZE



News and Notes

Johnson Rolls in His Grave

By George Francis Kane

In July, the Internal Revenue Service filed a consent agreement with National Religious Broadcasters in a District Court in Texas to cease enforcing a restriction in the tax codes that prohibits 501(c)3 tax-exempt organizations to engage in electoral campaigns, or to endorse candidates. That restriction, known as the Johnson Amendment, was enacted by Congress in 1954. In the 2010s, Protestant organizations began objecting to its application to churches as a violation of religious freedom. It has ever since been a contentious issue in the struggle over the separation of state and church. The IRS consent agreement has been celebrated by the religious right as an historic victory, but on closer examination it is neither conclusive nor, at this point, especially important.

A search of court cases shows that there has been only one instance in which the IRS revoked the tax exemption status of a church for violating the Johnson Amendment, *Branch Ministries v. Rossotti*. During the 1992 presidential election campaign, Branch Ministries bought full-page newspaper advertisements urging Christians not to vote for Bill Clinton because of his positions on moral issues. The Internal Revenue Service revoked the church's tax-exempt status and was upheld when Branch Ministries sued.

Although the IRS has not since used the Johnson Amendment to revoke the tax exemption of any church, it feeds Christian nationalists' sense of victimization that their freedom of religion and freedom of speech are under attack. For several years the Alliance Defending Freedom promoted a "Pulpit Freedom Day," on which it encouraged ministers to openly endorse candidates in their sermons. They were trying to provoke the IRS to revoke the tax exempt status of some churches, confident that sympathetic Justices would invalidate the Johnson Amendment when their appeals reached the Supreme Court.

Posing as the champion of Christian National-

ism in each of his terms of office, Donald Trump claimed he revoked the Johnson Amendment with Executive Orders. In 2017 the Freedom from Religion Foundation sued the IRS, which admitted in court filings that it was still bound by the Johnson Amendment. That is a law, which can only be repealed by an act of Congress, not an agency regulation that the President could rescind. This term, Trump ordered every federal agency to seek out all ways that government is discriminating against Christians. It is in this effort that the IRS agreed not to enforce the Johnson Amendment in the *National Religious Broadcasters* case, to the delight of Christian Nationalists.

The trouble is that the Johnson Amendment remains the law and cannot be repealed by executive action alone. The consent decree stopped IRS use of the Johnson Amendment to revoke tax exempt status only in the case of *National Religious Broadcasters*, but courts could still force such an action by issuing a *writ of mandamus*.

The separation of church and state function the Johnson Amendment serves is to prevent donations to political campaigns from becoming tax-deductible simply by laundering them through a nonprofit. Our efforts should be focused on safeguards against tax-free donations to churches making their way into political campaigns. If a minister announces in a sermon that it is a requirement of faith to vote against a certain candidate who supports abortion rights, there is no expense and there should be no offense to the law. If they print flyers for their preferred candidate to insert into their newsletter, or donate money to any political campaign or PAC, there should be penalties. If anyone claims an itemized deduction for donations to this church, it should be scrutinized and perhaps disallowed.

The safeguards against mixing tax-free charitable donations with electoral political activity must be clear, robust and rigorously enforced. If a tax-exempt organization wishes to actively participate in an electoral campaign, including a referendum, it should be able to do so as long as it can document that it has segregated tax-deductible contributions from non-tax-deductible funding for their political activity. This may be done by establishing a separate, non-tax-exempt PAC.

Trump claimed he revoked the Johnson Amendment with Executive Orders

In Memoriam

Dick Hewetson



Honorary member Dick Hewetson died on July 19, 2025 at the age of 95. Dick lived a long, productive and active life. Dick was a trusted advisor when we incorporated and started forming Minnesota Atheists, helping to write both our Constitution and bylaws.

At a 1992 Spring Equinox gathering we presented Dick with honorary membership recognizing his past Minnesota Atheists involvement. When Dick accepted the honorary membership, he also announced to all that he was following a lifelong dream to move to San Francisco, California. This disappointed many in attendance, but then he announced he was donating to Minnesota Atheists his first retirement check from his years working as a minister. That brought down the house with applause, laughter and joy!

Dick Hewetson Obituary

Written by the deceased.

On July 19, 2025, Richard Walton “Dick” Hewetson died by doctor-assisted suicide at Brookdale Senior Living in San Jose, California. He had a wonderful life but was discouraged by the state of the world and the USA. At the age of 95, he was ready to go.

Born in a suburb of Chicago on March 31, 1930, he grew up in a world where homosexuality was considered illegal, immoral, and an illness. For the first 42 years of his life, he did everything to appear normal. Two outstanding examples:

- From ages 16 to 20, he had a steady girlfriend, even though he was never in love with her.
- Eventually, he chose the Episcopal priesthood as his career. As an Episcopal clergyman, he thought he would be accepted as an unmarried man.

At the age of 42 he became involved in the budding gay rights movement. He emerged from the closet (“ripping the door off its hinges,” according to a friend). He was instrumental in getting a gay rights ordinance passed in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1977. Because lesbian Carla Messman and he were active union members, Minnesota state employees had the first union contract protection for LGBTQ+ employees in the nation.

He helped his partner David Irwin, (an avid reader and book collector), in establishing the Quatrefoil Library. Opening to the public in February 1986, it is one of the largest LGBTQ+ lending libraries in the country, and it has become the de facto LGBTQ+ Center for the Twin Cities.

We soon reached the conclusion that the greatest enemy of LGBTQ+ people was religion.

In 1978, David and he joined the Freedom From Religion Foundation, an organization that upholds the separation of state and church.

Dick continued a life of activism including mental health issues, women’s rights, LGBTQ+ rights and the separation of state and church.

At the age of eighty, he met the love of his life, “John,” a Vietnamese refugee. Dick is also survived by his beloved niece and nephew, Kim and Ron Spawn, and countless cherished friends.

Please remember the good times we had together.

Memory by August Berkshire

I knew Dick Hewetson since the beginning of our current local atheist movement in 1984. Even back then he was an out-of-the closet gay atheist. Forty years later I still remember him telling me that it was harder for him to come out as an atheist in the gay community than it was to come out as a gay person in the atheist community. Even back then our atheist community in Minnesota supported same-sex marriage. I am proud, but not surprised, that our rejection of religious dogma enabled us to be so far ahead of the rest of the country, and that Dick felt totally comfortable supporting us

Memory by Marilyn Nienkerk

Two years ago, I was in Redwood City for a family party which Dick and John were able to attend. We had a delightful time. And in June I was back for a family graduation. Dana Treadwell, FFRF leader in San Francisco, was kind enough to shuttle me from the airport to Sunnyvale where Dick was a resident and under hospice care. We had an hour visit reminiscing over all of the old organizing days in Minnesota. During that visit, I told him of Shirley Moll's hobby of making blankets for anyone who wanted one and he said he would love a rainbow colored one. Subsequently she made that. It was mailed out and delivered to him by Dana.

Dick never lost his sense of humor. We will treasure his memory forever.

Memory by Steve Petersen

When Dick entered hospice a few months back I sent him a message using an Ingersoll quote: "Happiness is the only good. The time to be happy is now; the place to be happy is here; and the way to be happy is to make others happy." My message to Dick was that this quote reminds me of how he lived his life. Dick was a regular at FFRF conventions and he was quick with a smile and a hearty laugh. At the same time, he was an activist who made a difference.

The note included a rainbow fleece blanket made by Shirley Moll for Dick in hospice care. "If this blanket brings you joy for one minute or one hour or one day or one week or longer the effort was well worth."

Opinion

Evolution vs. Creationism

By August Berkshire

[The following letter to the editor / opinion piece was submitted to the Minnesota Star Tribune newspaper on July 25, 2025. As of August 17, 2025 it had not been printed.]



The 100 year anniversary of the Scopes Trial has elevated, but only slightly, the ongoing debate in some religious circles as to whether evolution is true. I am not a scientist, but I am able to identify some bad religious arguments.

The Argument from Incredulity: The claim that because someone can't imagine how natural causes could have produced something, that therefore they couldn't have.

The Argument from Ignorance: A lack of knowledge as to how much evidence actually exists to support a naturalistic explanation.

God-of-the-Gaps: Concluding, without evidence, that because you can't believe or are unaware that a natural explanation exists, that therefore "God did it."

Special Pleading: Claiming that something is a solution to a problem, while exempting that solution from the problem. Example: "Everything needs a creator, but the ultimate creator, God, doesn't need a creator."

Explanations are supposed to provide us with information. We don't know what a god is or how it operates. We don't know what "spirit" is and we don't know how "miracles" work. Therefore, "God" is never an answer because it provides us with no information. We are no wiser than when we began. "God" is just a more complex question and problem.

None of this, of course, disproves the existence of at least certain types of gods — especially those that are "undetectable" and therefore unfalsifiable. Still, it remains a leap of faith to believe in anything supernatural.

August Berkshire

Past president and current associate chair of Minnesota Atheists

Opinion

What I Gained by Giving Up God

By *Charles Owens*

I was an ordained minister for over a decade, but now I say, “I’m an atheist,” whenever someone asks about my religious beliefs. This is not my deconversion story. Instead, this story is about what I’ve gained by giving up God, and how embracing atheism has led to living a fuller and more authentic life.

At the age of twenty I had a terrifying realization. I don’t remember what triggered it, but suddenly a thought crept into my mind that left me numb and frightful. I realized that someday I was going to die. At that age I assumed I still had more years ahead than I had years in the rear-view mirror, but in the back of my mind was this nagging voice that said each passing day was one day closer to my inevitable end.

Looking back, I see how my existential crisis at age twenty propelled me to take a deep dive into the Christian faith. Christianity promises that there is a God who loves humanity, who listens to our prayers, and who prepares a heavenly home for us when it is our time to die. I took that message and wrapped myself in it like a baby would a blanket.

Fast-forward to my early thirties, and a new existential crisis took hold of me. This time, it was a crisis of authenticity. I stood up at the pulpit every Sunday and assured people there was a creator God who cared about humanity, and I preached at funerals about how someday we’ll be reunited with our loved ones in heaven with God — but did I believe any of this was true? I lived a double life where in public I was a Christian religious leader, but in private I had my doubts.

Leaving Christianity and giving up my career as an ordained minister was one of the most painful chapters of my life, yet it was also one of the most life-giving decisions I’ve ever made. I can look back and see how clinging to Christianity was an immature response to a serious crisis I faced as a young adult. I took off the security blanket of religion, and made peace with the knowledge that this life is all we have.

Every spring, wildflowers carpet the forest floors throughout Minnesota. Rarely do these

flowers last longer than a few weeks. The sunlight no longer reaches the wildflowers once the trees are full of leaves. The wildflowers wither and die. I treasure the moments when I’m on a hike and the wildflowers are at the peak of their beauty, because I know the moment is fleeting.

The same is true for our lives. Our life doesn’t have meaning because there is a God or because there is an eternal life. Instead, our life has meaning because when it’s over — it’s over!

Each of us has one life to live, so how will we spend that life? Who are the people we choose as our loved ones? What kind of work will we do? What causes will we devote ourselves to? How will we make space for beauty, art, and creativity? How will we balance adult responsibilities with the need to occasionally indulge in childlike playfulness? How will we continue to learn and maintain a sense of wonder as we grow older? How will we help others so they can live their lives to the fullest? What do we want our legacy to be?

We are all going to die, so how will we make the most of this limited time that we have? Religious belief stunts our ability to live a full and authentic life by emmeshing us in a fantasy that says this is not the only life we have to live.

As someone who has said no to God and yes to accepting that this is the only life I have to live, I find myself to be more at peace. I savor life’s moments — whether it’s a conversation with my wife, a delicious meal, a hike in the woods, a good book, and so on — because I know it will all someday come to an end.

You are welcome to contact the author by emailing him at cdowens001@gmail.com or calling/texting at (218) 474 0202.



October 2025 Public Meeting Standing Up to Christian Nationalism

Presentations by:

***Matt Lewellyn-Otten of Minnesotans
Against Christian Nationalism
& Jerry Gale of Christians Against Chris-
tian Nationalism***

MATT LEWELLYN-OTTEN of
Minnesotans Against Christian
Nationalism

This presentation explores the rise of white Christian nationalism in the United States, examining how it has shaped political and cultural life. By unpacking its blend of racial hierarchy, religious fundamentalism, and claims of divine authority, we will uncover how this movement wields faith as a tool for power, control, and exclusion. Matt will also give us a glimpse into the ways in which Christian purity culture, his own experiences with Christian nationalism as a teen growing up in South Carolina, and ways in which we can begin to thoughtfully critique white Christian nationalism.

We will also focus on the tangible consequences of Christian nationalism in contemporary policy and legislation, highlighting its profound impact on queer communities. From



anti-LGBTQ+ laws to religious freedom exemptions that sanction discrimination, this ideology fuels systemic harm while masking itself as moral righteousness. Participants will gain a deeper understanding of the intersecting forces of religion, race, and politics—and leave with tools to critically engage, resist, and envision liberating alternatives.

Matt joined the OutFront team in the fall of 2021 as the Religious Organizer. Before joining the team, Matt spent the majority of their career in Youth Ministry working in the United Church of Christ, Episcopal, and Presbyterian churches. In their current role as the Director of Religious and Community Organizing, Matt works with faith communities across the state to bring them along in the advocacy and inclusion of queer people in all faith practices. Additionally, he works with communities across the state to build power of the LGBTQIA+ community, listen deeply to the needs of queer people and their allies, educate the public on issues affecting the queer community, and mobilize communities to create systemic change. Matt is a Minnesota transplant originally from South Carolina where he attended Erskine College and studied Bible and Religion. Later, Matt earned their Master of Public Administration degree from the College of Charleston and their Master of Divinity from Boston University School of Theology.

Continued on page 9

Sunday, October 19, 2025

1:00 p.m.: Library and Underground Parking open. Social Time. Zoom starts.

1:15–1:45 p.m.: Business Meeting 1:45–2:00 p.m.: Break/Social Time

2:00–3:30 p.m.: Program

3:30 p.m.: Leave for dinner

Dinner:

Los Ocampo [Mexican] Restaurant
615 University Ave W
St. Paul, MN 55103
(kitty-corner northeast from the library)

Rondo Community Library

461 N. Dale St.

St. Paul, MN 55103

(On the light rail line at the corner of University Ave. & Dale St.)

(There is free underground parking off of University Ave.)

Online:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82344512218?pwd=VWNDckk2bVUxeWJDTnAzU3BhQnNRdz09>

Or call in:

+13092053325,,82344512218#,,, *676832#

The Frosty Atheist

By Ross Meisner

Allow me to switch gears entirely. Last month in my first column referencing Carl Sagan's Pale Blue Dot, I concluded that our existence on a mote of dust in the infinite cosmos is, unfortunately but unavoidably, insignificant. The universe just doesn't care that we are here.

Today I'm delighted to inform you that I am entirely wrong about this. Even though I was, in fact, right. How can this be, you ask?

As atheists, we try understand reality with unadorned clarity and objective detachment. We do not subscribe to pleasant fictions that might reassure us against our natural fear of death and the unknown. We know what we are, recognize our innate humanity and morality, and accept that our lives are finite. We are, indeed, just part of the natural universe.

And yet we must also admit that we are incredibly, fantastically, outrageously special. Against unfathomably astronomical odds, I am sitting here writing these words, and you are sitting there reading them. The odds of life occurring on earth? Perhaps common. The odds of intelligent life evolving? Perhaps very rare. The odds of 117 billion homo sapiens having ever existed? Almost impossible. And the odds that we're one of them, alive now, boggles the mind.

In the sense of statistics, incredibly rare things are, well, incredibly rare. But incredibly rare things DO happen. We're one of them. It's almost enough to make a person religious. Almost.

What it does make me is humble, and awe-inspired, and appreciative of the rare gift I've been given to experience life. Somehow, we get to be intelligent, self-aware, emotional beings. For a limited time. This is insanely special.

And what are we, really? We're essentially just bags of water, mixed with carbon and other elements, that happens to be alive with thoughts and feelings. (I have a silly term I use, AIBEW, for Astronomically Improbable Bags of Emotional Water.) The entirety of existence comes to us through the sense organs attached to this bag. Everything we think, everything we feel, everything we do, is



entirely wrapped up in this bag. In the end, nothing else really matters to us except our own little AIBEW.

It's the most mind-bending paradox. We are Nothing — insignificant in the universe. And, We are Everything — the one and only way to experience the universe. In a real sense, the entire universe exists only because I am alive to know it.

[W]e are incredibly, fantastically, outrageously special.

When I die, so, effectively, does the universe (as far as I'm concerned). Just by being alive and aware: We are Everything.

President continued from page 2

details on that. And we will continue to hold our various reoccurring events. These events include:

Weekly Trivia and Godless Gamers; twice Monthly Freethought Toastmasters and Free-thinking Females (one online and one in person); and Monthly Bowling for Deities, North Metro Happy Hour, Blasphemers' Brunch, Online Book Club, and a Nature Hike. Some other regular events include Theatre Night, the Flying Spaghetti Monster Dinner (Lunch), and a volunteer activity called The Pad Project where we assemble reusable menstrual pads for women in areas of the world where disposable hygiene products are not available.

We wouldn't be able to do all of this without our dedicated volunteers. We don't thank them enough. At your next event, please, take a moment to thank the organizer for coordinating the event. We wouldn't be able to do it without them!

Some of the event details can be found on the last page, but for a complete and up-to-date list of events, please find us on Meetup at: <https://www.meetup.com/minnesotaatheists>

Membership isn't required to attend our events, but I hope you will join or renew your membership today to help support everything we do.

Thank You,
Heather Hegi
President, Minnesota Atheists

September continued from page 7

JERRY GALE of Christians Against Christian Nationalism

Jerry Gale, a member of Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church in Minneapolis, will speak on “Understanding and Responding to Christian Nationalism.”

Christian nationalism seeks to merge Christian and American identities, damaging both the Christian faith and America’s democracy. It implies that to be a good American, one must be a Christian. This presentation provides information about Christian nationalism and ways for Christians, people of other faiths, and secular individuals to respond to Christian nationalism.



CHRISTIANS AGAINST CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM

Gale first became aware of Christian nationalism on Jan. 6, 2021, after seeing footage of Christian symbols being carried by those

who broke into the U.S. Capitol. Shortly after that, he discovered the website Christians Against Christian Nationalism. In January 2024, he formed the Christians Against Christian Nationalism Minnesota group and is sharing his message throughout the state. He is retired, lives in Columbia Heights, and believes that the Timberwolves will win an NBA championship.

Scopes Monkey Trial



John Scopes

Clarence Darrow

William Jennings Bryan

Photo (left to right): John Scopes (teacher and defendant), Clarence Darrow (his attorney), and William Jennings Bryan (special prosecutor for the State of Tennessee).

Treasury Report April–June, 2025

By *Chris Matthews*

Donations

\$220	George Kane
\$150	Ross Meisner
\$60	Ben Zvan
\$55	Steve Petersen
\$50	Terrence Rogers
\$40	Michelle Tjernagel
\$15	Joanne & Timothy Dunnigan
\$2	PayPal Giving Fund
\$430	anonymous & cash

\$1,022 Total Donations

Expenses

\$1,263	Newsletters (printing & mailing)
\$823	IT
\$325	Donations to Organizations
\$266	Parade / Booth
\$304	Misc

\$2,981 Total Expenses

Current Building Fund — \$164,405

October continued from page 1

Scopes isn’t just a moment in that historical timeline, but rather, represents a key tipping point when parallel ideas held by legitimate scientists, opposed to and supportive of the theory of evolution, transformed into the societal battle that we are about to win or lose.

Greg Laden is a semi-retired evolutionary biologist and anthropologist. He did his PhD work in the Ituri Forest and elsewhere in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, working with the Efe Pygmies. Two of his main contributions to understanding human evolution have to do with the cause and nature of the chimp-human split, and the rise of the genus *Homo* as a function of a major change in our diet and our control of fire. He lectures on race, evolution, and gender biology. Greg is the author of the satirical novel *Sungudogo*, which explores the origin of the Skeptics movement. He currently tutors students for college test prep and in biological sciences.

Upcoming Monthly Events

In Person Bowling for Deities First Sunday of every month at 11:30 a.m., (usually) at Flaherty's Arden Bowl, 1273 West County Road E, Arden Hills

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.

Online Minnesota Atheists Board Meeting 1st Wednesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. Email 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 Trivia Night Every Sunday from 5:30–8 p.m. Venn Brewing, 3550 E 46th St Suite 140, Minneapolis

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

www.meetup.com/MinnesotaAtheists



The “Nones” That You Know

Robert M. Pirsig

By *Milo Grika*

Robert Maynard Pirsig (September 6, 1928 – April 24, 2017) was an American writer and philosopher. He is the author of the philosophical book *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. And was born in Minneapolis and a family friend!

“Religious mysticism is intellectual garbage. It’s a vestige of the old superstitious Dark Ages when nobody knew anything...It is one of those delusions that isn’t called insane only because there are so many people involved.”

— Robert M. Pirsig

Cryptogram Answer

The purpose of separation of church and state is to keep forever from these shores the ceaseless strife that has soaked the soil of Europe in blood for centuries.

James Madison, in a letter objecting to the use of government land for churches

Get Famous (Sort of)

Send submissions to The Minnesota Atheist newsletter. Just email your input to: 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 \$ _____

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.)

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
PO Box 120304
New Brighton, MN 55112

Name _____

Street Address _____

City, State ZIP _____

☐ Just email newsletter Email address _____
(Required for student memberships and email subscriptions)

12 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

Board Email
board@mnatheists.org

President
Heather Hegi
pres@mnatheists.org

Associate President
Alyssa Ehni
apres@mnatheists.org

Chair
Michelle Morlan
chair@mnatheists.org

Associate Chair
August Berkshire
achair@mnatheists.org

Secretary
Nancy Hertz
sec@mnatheists.org

Treasurer
Chris Matthews
treas@mnatheists.org
763.452.0337

Directors at Large
Steve Petersen
dir1@mnatheists.org

Matthew Hertz
dir2@mnatheists.org

Cathy Prody
dir3@mnatheists.org

The Minnesota Atheist Newsletter

Editorial Board
editor@mnatheists.org

Editorial Board
George Kane
George.Francis.Kane@
gmail.com
651.488.8225

Heather Hegi
dir1@mnatheists.org

Shirley Moll
srmoll@comcast.net

James Zimmerman
zgoatee@gmail.com

Editor
Milo Grika
editor@mnatheists.org

Chief Photographer
Richard Trombley

**Membership and
Change of Address**
Steve Petersen
address@mnatheists.
org
651.484.9277

Minnesota Atheists Media

**AtheistsWeekly Email
(AWE)**
Chris Matthews
awe@mnatheists.org

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

Regular memberships:
79
Life members:
54
Meetup subscribers:
4,517
AWE subscribers:
1,162

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.



The Minnesota Atheist — September/October 2025

Published by Minnesota Atheists

PO Box 120304

New Brighton, MN 55112

612.588.7031

info@mnatheists.org

Copyright 2025 by Minnesota Atheists.

All rights reserved.