WASHline

SASH Picnic

SASH held its annual picnic. See this page and page 7 .

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SASH members attend the Fall picnic. Chapter coordinator Martha Heisel is seated at the front-left.

SASH Picnic

By Martha Heisel

SASH held a picnic in mid-October and we enjoyed seeing each other in person, rather than in those rectangle Zoom boxes. We were pleased to welcome Mike Reid. It was great to catch up with everyone. We had a delightful selection of food and a delicious "cherry dump cake" for dessert. Kevin Whalen entertained us with some of his songs and guitar music. At our next picnic, we might have games or a treasure hunt - next year.

[We have more on this with pictures on page 7.]



About WASH

The Washington Area Secular Humanists, Inc. is an independent 501(c)(3) educational non-profit organization incorporated in Maryland since 1989. It consists of multiple chapters which operate in Maryland, DC, and Virginia.

WASH is a chapter of the American Humanists Association and an affiliate of American Atheists.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in articles in *WASHline* are those of the authors and not necessarily those of WASH or its chapters.

AMERICAN ATHEISTS

AMERICAN HUMANIST ASSOCIATION
GOOD WITHOUT A GOD

Editor's Corner

By Mike Reid

WASH has a new vice president! The WASH Board of Directors has appointed board member and MDC chapter coordinator Clyde Donovan as our new VP. See the article on page 4.

On October 24th, our SASH chapter based in Front Royal, VA held their annual picnic in Strasburg. It was a beautiful day and the event was well attended. Please see the article on page 7.

On Sunday, November 15th, WASH organized a field trip to the Smithsonian's Udvar-Hazy Air & Space Museum near Dulles Airport. People from our FRESH (Frederick, MD) and MAARVAL (Richmond, VA) chapters attended as well as two people new to WASH. We first had brunch at a wonderful Turkish restaurant in Chantilly and then went on to the museum for an afternoon of touring historic aircraft and spacecraft.

Former MDC chapter coordinator Gary Berg-Cross is once again hosting an annual *HumanLight* celebration potluck at his home in Potomac, MD on December 19th. Please see the announcement on page 9 for details.

The November elections will bring in major changes in the U.S. Congress and in our state legislatures. As a non-profit organization, WASH does not endorse or support specific political candidates or parties, but we can advocate for policies. As before, WASH will work with our national affiliates, the American Humanist Association and American Atheists in advancing public policies that protect the separation of church and state, secular government, education, and human rights. The Virginia and Maryland state legislatures will begin their new sessions in January. WASH members and American Atheists' Virginia and Maryland Secular Advocacy Teams will be there. See the article on page 3.

As the year 2026 comes to a close, we thank all of you who participate and volunteer.

We welcome submissions for future editions of *WASHline*. Please send articles, announcements, letters, or other items relating to WASH or to secularism to editor@wash.org.

The Maryland Secular Advocacy Team

By Mike Reid

The Maryland state legislature will begin its new session in Annapolis in January. Although the separation of church and state is not currently under threat in Maryland to the degree that it is in some other states, Christian nationalists are active here too. American Atheists' Maryland Secular Advocacy Team (MD SAT) is gearing up to oppose them and to protect secular government and to keep religion out of public education.

Working with American Atheists and the Center for Forethought Equality (CFE), we are focusing on introducing legislation to protect secular education. CFE and American Atheists are working with local organizations and legislators in several states to introduce **P**romoting **L**iberty & **U**pholding **R**ights of **A**ll **L**earners (PLURAL) acts to do just that. Introducing PLURAL act legislation in Maryland will be the MD SAT's primary focus in 2027. PLURAL legislation prohibits religious discrimination or favoritism, protects academic freedom and the exposure of students to the full marketplace of ideas, and keeps religious leaders and religious texts and iconography out of public schools. It does this while also guaranteeing the rights of all students to participate in non-coercive and non-disruptive religious expressions.

If you are an interested Maryland resident, please consider joining the MD SAT or volunteering as an American Atheists Assistant State Director. You can contact Mike Reid, the American Atheists Maryland State Director and co-chair of the MD SAT at mike.reid@atheists.org for more information.

The Virginia Secular Advocacy Team

By Aiden Barnes

In partnership with American Atheists, Virginia's Secular Advocacy Team (VA SAT) put in a lot of work during the General Assembly session this year, and now with the midterm elections over we get to see even more fruits of this labor.

Virginia made history this year! Twenty years after a ban on same-sex marriage was added to our state constitution, a majority of Virginians (by a margin of over 500,000 votes) showed up to the polls and voted YES to protect marriage in our state constitution! With this victory, discriminatory language banning same-sex marriage will be removed from the Virginia constitution and replaced with an affirmative right that ALL Virginians have the freedom to marry whom they love. Virginia is now the first state in the South and the fifth in the country to remove a same-sex marriage ban from its constitution! This is a historic victory for LGBTQ+ Virginians, for every family who has fought for their dignity, and for every young person who will now grow up knowing that they belong in their community. The amendment goes into effect on January 1, 2027.

Marriage equality wasn't the only historic win that night. Virginians also voted to enshrine access to reproductive care, and restore voting rights to formerly incarcerated folks in our constitution. And across the country, voters delivered a pro-equality majority in the U.S. House and Senate. This is an incredible win for reproductive freedom in Virginia! The protections offered by the Reproductive Freedom Amendment are critical in ensuring a future in which all Virginians

are in control of their lives, bodies and futures, no matter who is in office.

Many thanks are owed to our comrades at Equality Virginia, Planned Parenthood, the ACLU of Virginia, and many others who worked to push these amendments over the goal line!

The Virginia Secular Advocacy Team is busy gearing up for 2027, as there's still a lot of work to be done on getting Medical Aid In Dying passed, along with our other priorities like comprehensive sex education and healthcare transparency. So if issues like these are important to you, please consider joining our Secular Advocacy Team, or volunteer as an Assistant State Director for American Atheists. Our movement is built on resilience — and with your advocacy, we will keep pushing forward until Virginia is a state where everyone can access the care they need, free from barriers, fear, or discrimination.

Reach out to Virginia State Director and VA SAT co-chair Aiden Barnes via email at abarnes@atheists.org for more info.

WASHINGTON AREA SECULAR HUMANISTS
WE BELIEVE IN GOOD
www.wash.org

WASH Has A New Vice President

At their November 17th meeting, the WASH Board of Directors appointed board member and Maryland-DC (MDC) chapter coordinator Clyde Donovan as WASH's vice president.

Clyde was born and raised in Washington, DC. He works to make secular communities more inclusive, and he focuses in particular on including women, people who are not white, and LGBTQ people. He came to this advocacy through a long religious history that ended in 2007.

That history moved in stages. He was baptized as a child and spent twelve years in Seventh-day Adventist schools in Maryland. He nearly enrolled in an Adventist college. He then left Adventism for nondenominational Christian fundamentalism and nearly became a pastor. After that, he moved to progressive Christianity. Each change felt like a correction at the time, not a retreat. In 2007, he met Christopher Hitchens in DC. That meeting and several other factors led him to leave religion entirely. He then began deconstructing. This history gives him a perspective on faith, belief systems, and the challenges of deconstruction.

He joined the Washington Area Secular Humanists (WASH) in an organizing role in 2024. The work matters to him because it makes a real difference in the lives of secular people. His central themes are inclusion, science, critical thinking, meaningful connection among secular people, and the worth, dignity, and rights of all people.

We thank Clyde so much for stepping into this role. You can contact him at clyde@wash.org.

"End Times" Are Human-Made

By Charles Murn

U.S. Vice President J.D. "Hillbilly" Vance recently told a Christian podcaster that he was OK with the idea that his official work might lead the world into "end times." When I read a report about it, I immediately flashed back to a day in college, when my work in university student government in Wisconsin took me around the state. At one contentious morning meeting, I was taking a break when I heard what sounded like an air-raid siren go off. I was shocked by the possibility that I might have only ten minutes before a Soviet nuclear warhead exploded overhead. All I could think was, "Those idiots, what have they done!"

At last, I realized that the siren I heard was merely announcing the noon hour, and I had lost track of time. But I think now of Vance, and US President Trump and US Defense Secretary Hegseth, and wonder what those idiots might do. While Vance's rhetoric is clearly geared toward the messianic wing of Christianity, if "end times" were to come, they would have nothing to do with the return of any deity. Instead, they would be the result of explicit actions by leaders like Trump, Vance, and Hegseth who have the power to rain them down on us.

In contrast, natural disasters have nothing to do with "end times." Natural disasters like hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and tsunamis are certainly bad. They are scary because we have so little control over them, although scientists have pointed out for decades the many ways our human activities worsen the damage and casualties. They can kill tens or, in extreme cases, even hundreds of thousands of humans. Yet they are all relatively localized. They may set back civilization in the areas they strike, but they don't result in anything like "end times." One could imagine something like a large meteorite blackening the atmosphere for a few centuries as bringing on "end times," but scientists have not found any objects that might come close enough to earth to cause anything like that. No, Vance is not talking about natural disasters, he's clearly talking about human-made ones.

Vance's glib attitude hides the reality of what he is talking about. Christians assume "end times" are when Christians are rejoined with their trinity of gods. But by every description, all they really consist of are the destruction of civilization, loss of civility, desperation, impoverishment, starvation, and death. How he can casually approve of the arrival of those conditions on the ground is beyond me. Objectively, it seems a long way from values that Christians claim to hold.

Vance presumably believes that it would be the will of his deity that brought on the "end times." Yet he is one of the people who actually have the power to prevent it from happening. He shows no sense of his own responsibility and agency. He has a major role in preventing any of the human-made causes of his "end times." Instead of cheerily accepting the possibility of it happening, he should be doing everything within his power to prevent it and to get others in positions of power to prevent it. Especially Trump, who is not particularly religious, but is nonetheless belligerent and reckless enough to trigger one of the global human-caused catastrophes that would result in anything near "end times."

Instead, the obvious reference is Trump's playing with fire in the Middle East by attacking Iran. He has lit a match near the gas can, and now can't seem to bring himself to extinguish it. He has set conflict in motion that he cannot control and, depending on his actions, could bring about a

nuclear exchange that could severely or completely disrupt civilization globally. Worse, Trump and Vance, along with too many members of Congress, are oblivious to the other potential human cause for conditions resembling "end times": climate change. They seem to be doing everything in their power to promote production of more and more greenhouse gas pollutants. While climate change as a cause of something like "end times" is more ephemeral and slow-acting, the problem is that once the extreme consequences start happening, it will be too late to do anything about stopping it.

All of these people need to be removed from office. Short of that, a new Congress needs to rein them in once and for all. Congress needs to enforce its power to declare war by ending the Iran war. Congress must act at once to reverse Trump's firehose of greenhouse gases. We must challenge all elected officials and candidates for elected office to promise to do everything in their power while in office to prevent these human-made catastrophes.

At the very least, Democrats and other people opposed to letting these messianists break down society to the point of generating something like "end times" should be protesting at maximum volume. Likewise, Vance has shown he is not fit to be US Vice President. All public officials and anyone with a public profile should be attacking this lunacy and religious fantasy.

Vance is of course hardly the first Christian to be OK with the "end times." Since the first century C.E., some Christians have yearned for "end times," even declaring them imminent, because they believe "end times" would bring the return of at least one of their deities back to earth. Christianity is also not the only religion to inspire this kind of messianism. Whatever its source, humanism rejects this kind of thinking, because it has no basis in reality and detracts from the task at hand.

Humanism calls for us humans to work together to prevent dangers to civilization like nuclear war, world war, and dangerous climate change. Humans create these dangers, and humans are the only ones who can stop them. We must fight the forces that produce them and not acquiesce in their growing possibility. That means rejecting leaders who refuse to accept their own responsibility and power to stop them. We have the power to do that, and humanists must strive to educate and motivate others to exercise that power.

This essay was previously published on the author's Substack blog, @appliedhumanist.

Charles Murn is a lawyer and humanist philosopher blogging on Substack. He edited and contributed 12 essays to The Best of the Humanist*, Humanist Philosophy 1928–1973, published by Humanist Press. He lives in Washington, DC.*

WASH Logo Merch

Get cool WASH logo apparel and other merchandise at our online Zazzle store. We have stuff with both WASH main and chapter logos. Check it out!
https://www.zazzle.com/store/wash_store





SASH members attend the Fall picnic. Kevin Whalen (U-R) and Brent McCoryn (L-R) entertain with original songs.

SASH Fall Picnic

By Mike Reid

WASH's Shenandoah Area Secular Humanists (SASH) chapter held its Fall picnic at Strasburg Town Park in Strasburg, VA on Saturday afternoon, October 24th. Fifteen people attended and brought lots of delicious food. It was a wonderful afternoon of socializing, conversation, food, and company. The weather even cooperated. One member brought some books on secular topics and church-state separation that others could peruse and discuss.

Kevin Whalen and Brent McCoryn entertained the gathering with guitar playing and songs, including some originals that they composed.

It was a great day and we all had fun.

SASH provides community for secularists in an area that is often not friendly to non-religious persons. They usually meet remotely these days, but are planning more in-person events for the next year. SASH is particularly known within WASH for placing a sign expressing humanists principles on the lawn of the Shenandoah County Courthouse during the winter holiday season.



This provides a positive, humanist message alongside the Christian displays setup there.

Thanks so much to SASH chapter coordinator Martha Heisel for organizing.

Chapter Reports

Baltimore Secular Humanists (BSH)

BSH has meetings at various times and places around Baltimore, Baltimore County, and Hartford County. Watch the meetup site for the latest events: https://www.meetup.com/bsh-wash/

There are also several other non-WASH meetup groups in the Baltimore area, including Human Values Network Meetup and Baltimore Atheists that hold monthly discussion groups. BSH also posts notices of university lectures that are held in-person or on Zoom. These are posted with about a week's notice.

We have posted events that are sponsored by Profs & Pints with lectures from university professors. They charge an admission fee. Some of their past lectures can be found online here.

Frederick Secular Humanists (FRESH)

FRESH meets twice monthly in Frederick, MD. Our regular meetings are held on either the third or fourth Sunday of each month (based upon library availability) at the C. Burr Artz Public Library at 110 E. Patrick St., Frederick, MD 21701. Occasionally, if that venue is not available, we will meet at the Urbana Regional Library at 9020 Amelung St., Frederick, MD 21704.

Additionally, FRESH meets on the second Monday of each month at 6 pm for an informal social hour at the Brewer's Alley restaurant at 124 N. Market St., Frederick, MD 21701. Our events are announced on our Meetup Page.

Check our Meetup Page for announcements of monthly Sunday meetings.

FRESH will begin its fourth annual Clothesline Project, a public awareness event for survivors of power-based violence early in the new year.

For more information, please visit our webpage at http://wash.org/fresh

For event details please visit our Meetup Page: https://www.meetup.com/fresh-wash/

All are welcome to attend our events, but an RSVP on Meetup is appreciated.

Shenandoah Area Secular Humanists (SASH)

The Shenandoah Area Secular Humanists (SASH) continues its pattern of online meetings. Each month, the second Sunday morning is a two-hour discussion on a topic pertinent to humanists. SASH also hosts a monthly book club meeting online on the last Sunday morning of each month. For more information on our activities, SASH can be contacted at sash@wash.org.

https://www.meetup.com/shenandoah-area-secular-humanists/

Northern Virginia Chapter (NVC)

NVC announces its events on the main WASH Meetup page. For upcoming events, please check

https://www.meetup.com/humanism-218/

Southeast Virginia Atheists, Skeptics & Humanists (SEVASH)

The SEVASH calendar remains quite busy with all of our regularly scheduled social events across the Greater Hampton Roads area, from Virginia Beach to Williamsburg, which has included gaming socials, weekly team trivia, brunches, dinners, coffee get-togethers, etc. We frequently have so many folks showing up for weekly trivia that we've registered 3 separate teams for the Challenge Entertainment league: Hail Sagan, Occam's Hell Razors, and The Kids' Table.

SEVASH volunteers continue our mutual aid efforts stocking and maintaining our Free Food Pantries in both Norfolk and Newport News, as well as working with the LGBT Life Center's Pride Pantry. Our Free Little Humanist Library in Norfolk continues to be actively used, especially with all of the recent books and DVDs contributed by the American Humanist Association.

SEVASH events are announced on

https://www.meetup.com/sevash/

https://www.facebook.com/groups/sevash/

HumanLight

DC AREA 2019 HUMANLIGHT CELEBRATION



Saturday December 19, 2026

Venue: 13 Atwell Ct, Potomac MD there will be a HumanLight Celebration.

Light a humanist candle in the hope of making the world a more peaceful and better place. Enjoy a modern, Humanist "holiday" celebration sponsored by the WASH MD chapter (contact point: Gary Berg-Cross; gary@wash.org)

The event is free we'd like to know who plans on coming to make proper arrangements.

We will have a rolling pot luck "dinner" (bring what you like bur something that you will enjoy. We will have a few games, for children but you might want to bring something else to entertain them. Either way, you'll need to provide your own supervision for them. Around 7-8 we have our annual free raffle of prizes.

Parking on the street

Maryland-DC Chapter (MDC)

Saturday, December 19th, 4-9 pm: We will hold the annual Humanlight Celebration at Gary Berg-Cross's house at 13 Atwell Ct., Potomac, MD. Please bring a dish to share if you wish. Please see the ad on the previous page for details. All are welcome.

MDC announces its events on Meetup.MDC events are posted at https://www.meetup.com/

The Mighty Atheists & Agnostics of RVA League (MAARVAL)

We serve the greater Richmond, VA area. Our events are announced on

https://www.meetup.com/maarval-wash/

https://www.facebook.com/groups/1310789454165892

Lynchburg Area Secular Humanists (LASH)

LASH is back! If you live in the Lynchburg, VA area, please come join your fellow secularists!

Our events are announced on Meetup.

Please email lash@wash.org for questions.

Other Chapters

For information on WASH's other chapters, please see the Chapter Contact Information on the chapter pages at wash.org.

DC Atheists, Humanists & Agnostics (DC-AHA)

DC-Atheists, Humanists, and Agnostics group (DC-AHA) meets at Madhatter (1319 Connecticut Ave NW, DuPont Circle) for happy hour the first Wednesday of the month at 6-8pm.

https://www.meetup.com/DC-Atheists-Humanists-Agnostics/

https://www.facebook.com/groups/823463147714903

DC Region Atheists (DCRA)

We host a Secular Zoom Community meeting on the second Thursday of each month at 7 pm. We nourish our connections with like-minded secular people and discuss a broad range of topics on religion, science and secularism. Please RSVP for a monthly meeting at:

https://www.meetup.com/dc-atheists

WASH Contact Information

Web: www.wash.org

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WASH Volunteers
Heatherly Hodges, *President*
Clyde Donovan, *Vice President*
Bill Creasy, *Secretary*
Matt DeGrave, *Treasurer*

Mike Reid, *WASHline Editor*

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wash.org/bsh

3. **Hartford County Secular Humanists (HCSH)**
(A Subgroup of BSH)
Bel Air, MD
bsh@wash.org
wash.org/bsh

4. **Charlottesville Atheists and Secular Humanists (CASH)**
Charlottesville, VA
inquire@wash.org
wash.org/cash

5. **DC American Humanists (DC-AHA)**
Washington, DC
dcaha@wash.org
wash.org/dcaha

6. **DC Region Atheists (DCRA)**
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7. **Frederick Secular Humanists (FRESH)**
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8. **Fredericksburg Secular Humanists (FSH)**
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9. **Mighty Atheists & Agnostics of Richmond, VA League (MAARVAL)**
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