

Humanism is a way of life and I think we are seeing many of our core values on full display, maybe more so because of the conflict (at least in the US ) between science and superstition, willful ignorance and extreme religious beliefs. The success stories in the struggle against COVID-9 come from the sciences, not from the religious communities. God is not protecting the true believers from the virus, masks, social distancing and rigorous hand washing is.

As Humanists we do not assign the baggage of malevolence to the virus, it is a part of nature. It is a reality and we strive to learn more, we strive to understand. We follow the scientists recommendations.

We wear masks, wash our hands, stay home, commune with nature and miss visiting our friends and family.

Another humanist value is our need for other humans, for the human connection; so

We learn Zoom, Google Hangouts, FaceTime. Long lost friends are finding each other either because finally, there is time, or we have a need to connect with someone, anyone.

We bake, eat too much, go for long walks alone or sit at home on the couch, engaged with our phones, our media stream or talking with friends.

Some of us have doubled down and are working harder at organizing, or finally reading that book, or learning that foreign language. Others have become immobilized. Is it a time to relax and regenerate our internal batteries, taking a personal time out or is it the paralysis that comes with fear and depression?

We trust in science and more than ever put our lives in the hands of our fellow humans, understanding that the majority of us want to do what is reasonable, all the while hoping that the selfishness of our President does not kill us, or anyone else, altho we know it will take many.

I reached out to a number of organizations and fellow travelers to see how they were handling it, since in much of North America we are settling into a way of life that has given us excessive amounts of time on the couch or in front of a computer

As humanists we have compassion and empathy and a strong need to do more, to somehow contribute something to help others.

I found that many individuals have turned to making masks, using their 3-D printers to make face shields.

They have given them to first responders, healthcare workers, and sometimes sold them; giving the proceeds to food pantry's and the various opportunities to donate to support those who have become out of work and have lost their paychecks.

Many of the creatives in our communities have gone online to share their skills; a comedian in New York started a Youtube channel to share a bit of humor, musicians are going on line sharing new songs, and old.

One especially creative and energetic group leader, had an Elmo costume on hand, her grandson drives her around their community as Elmo stands up through the SUV's sunroof as she waves to children and tosses small gifts to them, its her own one woman Mardi Gras parade! Any donations that come in are directed to The Freethought Society.  
<https://www.ftsociety.org/>

The American Humanist Association understands that people are continuing to rely on the AHA to continue to support civil liberties and secular governance while providing assistance and comfort to the members who are suffering isolation, illness and grief. AHA has moved most activities on line this has had the side benefit of allowing folks outside their geographical areas to participate. The Speaker series has proven to be especially helpful as individuals and chapters all around the country and world can now “tune in”, or watch it later on the AHA's Youtube channel. This is a good resource for anyone. The Center for Education continues to produce events, on line and then post them on that same Youtube channel

Their legal center and government outreach is working diligently to challenge the US government's efforts to use the pandemic as an excuse to merge church and state and even directly fund religion.

AHA is supporting those who are greatly impacted like immigrants and others lacking government support or highly susceptible to the disease.

So outreach and participation has actually increased, something I found in a number of organizations.

Local groups also have increased access to speakers, many they wouldn't have been able to afford in the past, but now, without travel, Zoom allows for a greater variety of speakers for little or no financial commitment.

The Chicago area “Prairie State Humanists” have, like most other groups gone to Zoom meetings, they have lunch events by Zoom and are taking advantage of the out of town speakers that they once could not afford.

The Freethinkers and Humanists of Colorado Springs has been hosting Zoom based racial diversity workshops using “Cracking the Code” and “Making Whiteness Visible” these offerings are open to anyone and many community members have participated. This has widened the circle of people who are aware of the group and now have a better understanding of what it means to be humanist or nontheist.

Coffee and conversation meetings have turned to Zoom gatherings as have book clubs and even crafting circles.

The Freethought Equality Fund, <http://www.freethoughtequalityfund.net/> is a political PAC focused on increasing the numbers of secular and secular supporting politicians. They have been hosting Zoom presentations with the various candidates and politicians that they have endorsed. Again, giving a much wider audience than was previously able to attend physical events that were often geographically distanced.

The American Ethical Union's St Louis group has not only increased their offerings (all online) but they offer them to anyone in the world for free. Their week's events are posted each Monday morning <https://ethicalstl.org/>

Some organizations talk of actually tripling the number of events that they offer.

There is much upside to what we have been forced into by COVID. We are getting broader outreach, more people participating, reaching people who previously were left out due to being home bound or financially unable to travel.

I see a great potential to genuinely connect humanists from all over the globe, to share humanism with more people and keep people engaged and enthusiastic about our philosophy and our direction.

It isn't all rosy skies, we are at risk of more than just the disease. Our human capital is being stressed.

In one of AHA's Education Center zoom discussions (available on Youtube) Jason Callahan, a Humanist hospital chaplain spoke to the stress that the healthcare workers are under, he has seen some movement among chaplains from providing support to patients to helping the healthcare providers.

Jeremy Kridel, a secular humanistic Judaism rabbi referred to being Zoom bombed, and the fatigue resulting from the demands required to meet the needs of his congregation. eular Humanistic Judaism

A local volunteer leader talked about dealing with her own anxiety and frustration in trying to keep the children's programming going while preparing to homeschool her own child and her own loss of drive.

The US government is using the pandemic as an opportunity to theocratize the government; giving economic support to churches, church schools and other religious organizations. This is transferring resources from secular organizations that serve everyone to religious organizations that serve only their own.

As non profits, that must support our activities by donations we are finding that the financial strain on individuals has dropped donations.

The greater demand for programming and services is showing a strain on the volunteer base that so many of these activities rely on. Even paid staff are feeling the strain and burn-out may not be far off.

We need more of the Pikes Peak Atheists and Families Zoom virtual Happy Hours!  
Imagine an International Zoom Trivia Night?

It is in the sharing of activities such as this discussion that are the critical component to keeping our movement strong and healthy. It provides the evidence that, as humanists we want to put our hands out to share with others. If we can't hug you in person we can help shoulder the load and give the encouragement to keep ourselves going.