

# Atlanta Freethought News

An AFS Publication • Volume 8 Number 12 • December 2002

## Our December Meeting

Our December 8 AFS meeting will feature a speech by **Sharon Reynolds**, a registered nurse and Doctor of Naturopathy who has studied and practiced a wide variety of healing techniques, both allopathic (normal) and alternative.

Sharon says she was raised in a religious home, but became an atheist later in life. She has always been close to nature, and so is interested in the more natural methods of healing and maintaining health.

Sharon will talk about some of the popular alternative healing methods and explain why they do, or do not, work.

The AFS meeting will be at 1:00 at the **AFS Center**, Suite 500, 1170 Grimes Bridge Road, in Roswell, GA. To get there from Atlanta, take I-400 north past I-285 by 8 miles to Exit 7B, which is GA-140. Take GA-140 (Holcomb Bridge Road) west about 1 mile and turn left at Grimes Bridge Road. Go 0.2 miles to 1170 Grimes Bridge Rd., which is on the right.

## SOS Meets at AFS Center

The **Secular Organizations for Sobriety** meets at the AFS Center every Tuesday evening at 7:30 PM. SOS is the secular replacement for AA (Alcoholics Anonymous).

## Fellowship of Reason Meeting

The **Fellowship of Reason** will have their next meeting at 12:30 PM on January 5 at the Northwest Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 1025 Mount Vernon Hwy, in Atlanta. For details, see [www.fellowshipofreason.com](http://www.fellowshipofreason.com).

## Email Version of AFNews

The Atlanta Freethought News is now available by email in Adobe Acrobat® format. Please consider receiving your newsletter this way; it will save AFS about \$1.00 per newsletter.

To receive AFNews by email, request this issue in an e-mail to [SteveYoth@aol.com](mailto:SteveYoth@aol.com). If there is any problem, just let Steve know and he can return you to the paper mailing list.

## AFS Meetings and Activities

Dec 8: AFS General Meeting at AFS Center, 1:00 PM.  
Dec 13: AFS Social, Athens Pizza House, 7:00 PM.  
Dec 15: AFS Discussion Group at AFS Center, 4:00 PM.

## AFS Activities

The **AFS Discussion Group** will **not** meet this month. Instead, we will have a Holiday Open House and Book Sale. (See the article below.)

There will be no **AFS Hike** this month.

The next **AFS Social** will be at Athens Pizza House, 1341 Clairmont Road, on Friday, December 13, at 7:00 PM. (It's on Clairmont Road near North Decatur Road in Atlanta.)

To get there from north of Atlanta, take I-85 South to Exit 91, the Clairmont Road exit. Turn left at the light and go 3.5 miles to Athens Pizza House, which will be on the left before you cross North Decatur Road.

To get there from the south, take I-75/85 north to Exit 251, the I-85 exit. Take I-85 north to Exit 91, the Clairmont Road exit. Turn right onto Clairmont Road and go 3.5 miles to Athens Pizza House, which will be on the left.

The phone number at Athens Pizza is 404-636-1100.

## The Tuesday Lunch Bunch

A group of AFS members meets every Tuesday at 12:00 at Panahar Restaurant. The address is 3375 Buford Hwy, Suite 1060, in Atlanta. Come on down and enjoy the Bangladeshi food buffet and the great company.

## AFS Open House and Book Sale

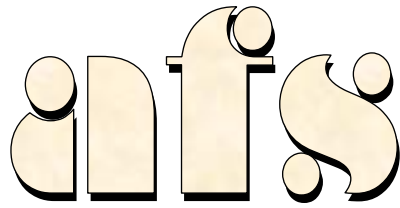
On Sunday, December 15 at 4:00, AFS will have a Holiday Open House and Book Sale at the AFS Center. AFS will provide drinks (including eggnog and other festive drinks). This event is both a holiday party and a mini-fundraiser for AFS. Members are asked to bring party food and any books that they don't mind giving away.

## AFS E-mail Lists

We now have more email lists for freethinkers to enjoy. (You don't need to be an AFS member to join these lists!)  
[AFSforum@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AFSforum@yahoogroups.com) – the AFS discussion forum  
[AFS-Announce@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AFS-Announce@yahoogroups.com) – AFS announcements  
[Free-Thought-Humor@yahoogroups.com](mailto:Free-Thought-Humor@yahoogroups.com) – for Jokes only  
[Free-Thought-Activism@yahoogroups.com](mailto:Free-Thought-Activism@yahoogroups.com) – for Activism  
[FLWC-GA@yahoogroups.com](mailto:FLWC-GA@yahoogroups.com) – the Freethinker's Letter Writing Cooperative of Georgia (for Georgia LTEs)  
[FLWC-USA@yahoogroups.com](mailto:FLWC-USA@yahoogroups.com) – The Freethinker's Letter Writing Cooperative, nation-wide (for national LTEs)

To join a list, send a blank email message to [xxxx-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:xxxx-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). To unsubscribe, send a blank email to [xxxx-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:xxxx-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com).

"Do you not know that every religion in the world has declared every other religion a fraud? Yes, we all know it. That is the time all religions tell the truth – each of the other." – Robert Ingersoll, from a lecture titled "Hereafter"



**Atlanta  
Freethought  
Society**

## Programs and Speakers

All programs are on the second Sunday of each month at the AFS Center, 1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Roswell, GA, unless otherwise noted. Programs start at 1:00 PM, but feel free to arrive at 12:00 for socializing. Visitors are always welcome.

Dec 8: Sharon Reynolds, a registered nurse, will speak on the pros and cons of alternative medicine and related legislative issues.

Jan 12: TBD

Feb 9: TBD

To join the AFS Forum e-mail list, send a blank message to [AFSforum-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AFSforum-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). To join the AFS Announcements list, send a blank email to [afs-announce-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:afs-announce-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). To join the Georgia Freethinkers Letter Writing Cooperative, send a blank email to [flwc-ga-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:flwc-ga-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).

You can unsubscribe by sending an email to [xxxx-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:xxxx-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com).

The Atlanta Freethought Society is a member-run organization dedicated to advancing freethought and protecting the rights and reputation of freethinkers, agnostics, atheists and humanists. We welcome anyone who is interested in learning about the advantages of living life free of religious dogma through speeches, debates, discussions, protests, letters to the editor, broadcast appearances, and any other reasonable and civil means available.

We define freethought as "the forming of opinions about life in general and religion in particular on the basis of reason and the evidence of our senses, independently of tradition, authority, or established belief."

We actively support a strict separation of church and state as the best means to guarantee liberty for all, regardless of religious belief or, especially, lack of belief.

We seek to educate ourselves on many topics but especially on religion and non-religion, primarily through having a series of thought-provoking speakers and programs and by maintaining and using our own extensive library of freethought, religious, and related books, pamphlets, videotapes, and audiotapes.

We provide an organization where freethinkers and non-theists can develop friendships, talk freely, socialize and enjoy each other's company. We do not discriminate against anyone on such irrelevant grounds as race, sexual orientation, age, gender, class, or physical disability. We welcome members and leaders of all political parties and preferences.

Because we are designated by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) educational organization, contributions to AFS are tax deductible.

Any who are like-minded are welcome to join us.

**Atlanta Freethought News  
an AFS publication**

**Editor**

Steve Yothment

**How to Contact the Editor**

Send correspondence to AFS at:  
1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Suite 500  
Roswell, GA 30075-3905  
or phone Steve at 770-339-8394  
or send e-mail to [SteveYoth@aol.com](mailto:SteveYoth@aol.com).

**Atlanta Freethought Society**

**President**

Judy Thompson – 404-296-2020

**VP for Internal Communication**

Tony King – 706-886-9224

**VP for External Communication**

Steve Yothment – 770-339-8394

**Treasurer (Interim)**

Bill Burton – 770-469-1228

**Board of Directors**

Joel Kollin – 770-392-7958

Pierce Mahony – 404-634-1697

Kate Miller – 770-642-2164

Lew Southern – 770-509-8272

**The Atlanta Freethought News**

Vol. 8, Number 12, December 2002

is copyright © 2002 by The Atlanta  
Freethought Society, Inc.

Signed articles are all copyright ©  
2002 by their respective authors.

For membership and subscription  
information, contact AFS at:

1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Suite  
500, Roswell, GA 30075-3905

Membership in AFS is \$25 / year for in-  
dividuals, \$35 for households, and \$10  
for students/low income/under 21. Sus-  
taining members (individual) \$100 and  
sustaining members (households) \$125.

Subscriptions alone are \$20 for 12 is-  
sues, \$25 to Canada/Mexico, \$30 for  
other addresses. Please make checks  
and money orders payable to  
Atlanta Freethought Society, Inc.

**Visit our World Wide Web site at**

[www.atlantafreethought.org](http://www.atlantafreethought.org).

**Send E-mail to**

[afs@atlantafreethought.org](mailto:afs@atlantafreethought.org).

**AFS Webmaster:** Ken Cummings  
Call the **AFS Infoline:** 770-641-2903

---

---

# Judge Thompson Rules Against Judge Moore

A federal judge ruled on November 18 that the Ten Commandments monument installed in Alabama's judicial building by the chief justice violates the constitution's ban on government promotion of religion and must be removed.

U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson gave Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore 30 days to remove the 5,300-pound granite monument from the rotunda of the state building. The judgment also states "the court retains jurisdiction to impose and enforce an injunction should one become necessary."

Thompson said in a 96-page opinion that he does not believe all Ten Commandment displays in government buildings are illegal, but that the monument in the judicial building crosses the line "between the permissible and the impermissible."

Moore claimed during the trial that the commandments are the "moral foundation of American law." He said the monument acknowledges God, but does not force anyone to follow his religious beliefs.

But Thompson, who visited the judicial building before the trial, said in his ruling that he found the monument to be more than just a display of the Ten Commandments and other historical quotations.

"The court is impressed that the monument and its immediate surroundings are, in essence, a consecrated place, a religious sanctuary,

within the walls of the courthouse," Thompson wrote.

Thompson said that previous court rulings have allowed displays on government property if they have a secular purpose and do not foster "excessive government entanglement with religion." He said the Ten Commandments monument fails this test.

"His fundamental, if not sole, purpose in displaying the monument was non-secular; and the monument's primary effect advances religion," Thompson said.

Rev. Barry W. Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said Thompson made the correct decision. "This ruling is a big setback for Roy Moore's religious crusade," Lynn said. "Many Americans revere this religious code. However, it is not the job of government to single out one religious code and hold it up as the state's favorite. Promoting the Ten Commandments is a task for our houses of worship, not government officials."

"It's high time Moore learned that the source of U.S. law is the constitution and not the Bible," Lynn said

Lynn's organization, along with the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery and the American Civil Liberties Union, represented the three attorneys who objected to the monument.

One of Moore's supporters, Alabama Christian Coalition President John Giles, claimed he was "shocked" that

Thompson would order the monument removed. "I am afraid the judge's order putting a 30-day limit on removal of the monument will lead to an uprising of citizens protesting removal of the monument," Giles said.

Another Moore supporter, Dean Young, executive director of the Gadsden-based Christian Family Association, called the ruling a case of "a liberal federal judge standing up and saying we can't acknowledge God in our courtrooms."

"What we're seeing is the systematic removal of God from society," Young said. He questioned whether Thompson has the authority to order Moore to do anything. "No judge in the nation has more authority than Judge Moore because he's the chief justice and was elected by the people of the state of Alabama."

Moore installed the monument late on the night of July 31, 2001, without telling any other justices. But he did tell Florida television evangelist D. James Kennedy, who had a crew from his Coral Ridge Ministries film the installation and offered videotapes of it for a donation of \$19. Moore has appeared numerous times on Kennedy's national syndicated religious television show.

Thompson, in his opinion, said the founders were very clear in the First Amendment of the Constitution that there was to be no governmental interference with religion, including endorsement of it.



**PANAHAR** ~ a Bangladeshi place

3375 Buford Highway; Suite: 1060 Atlanta, GA 30329

(inside Northeast Plaza Shopping Center)

phone: 404-633-6655 cell: 404-805-2020

e-mail: panahar@aol.com www.panahar.com

**ONE COMPLIMENTARY ENTRÉE WITH THE PURCHASE OF  
AN ENTRÉE OF EQUAL OR GREATER VALUE.**

USE UNLIMITED TIMES (alcoholic beverages not included in this offer)

**MONDAY THROUGH THURSDAY ONLY**

---

---

## Judge Thompson Rules (*continued*)

Legal experts say the case could eventually be the one the U.S. Supreme Court uses to decide if such monuments in and around government buildings are constitutional. [This article is from a November 18 article in the *Montgomery Advertiser*.]

---

### MORRIS DEES REFLECTS ON LAWSUIT

In a November 18 *Montgomery Advertiser* editorial, attorney Morris Dees of the Southern Poverty Law Center reflected on the Judge Moore lawsuit. "Winning the Ten Commandments monument case should make me feel victorious and happy. Instead, I feel sad," he said.

"I am disappointed because a lawsuit had to be filed in the first place to end a public official's clearly illegal conduct. Over and over again, Alabama civil rights lawyers have been forced to go to court to stop what the collective disapproval of good citizens should have eliminated. This tragic Alabama legacy of defying the law for political gain continues with Chief Justice Roy Moore's religious demagoguery.

"Justice Moore sneaked his monument into the Alabama Judicial Building under cover of darkness, keeping it secret from the other justices. He was after drama and publicity. Only the cameras of Coral Ridge Ministries were rolling, creating videos that this fundamentalist television ministry later sold for \$19.95 as part of a fund-raising campaign that must have grossed at least \$4 million.

"Moore's fellow justices were keenly aware that he had recently defeated a well-qualified jurist by campaigning on his Ten Commandments stand. Only one courageous justice spoke out against this 'movement to govern in the name of God.' It is highly unlikely that the others agreed with Moore's illegal actions, but they remained silent. Had all eight justices promptly opposed Moore, public opinion might have turned against his use of religion for personal gain.

"Gov. Don Siegelman and Attorney General Bill Pryor could have added

their voices in opposition, probably eliminating the need for our suit. Instead, both stood with Moore.

"The late former Gov. George Wallace, of course, was the high priest of the art of winning votes by vilifying the unpopular and defying the federal courts in the process. He learned from his 'schoolhouse door stand' that his strategy of pitting races against one another and defying federal authority was more popular than following the law.

"Hopefully, Justice Moore – Alabama's latest high priest – will spare Alabama's youth the spectacle of standing in the Supreme Court door to prevent the removal of his illegal monument.

"I fear that many will see the federal court rather than Justice Moore as the culprit in this dispute over religious freedom. They will forget our country's history and our Bill of Rights. Because many colonists came to these shores to escape the yoke of religious zealots, our nation's founders erected a solid wall between church and state. This wall has withstood numerous assaults by those who would substitute their theology for our democracy.

"Our troops recently defeated the Taliban who used strict religious doctrine to enforce their twisted values. Executions were the order of the day for offenses ranging from homosexuality to blasphemy. Americans were shocked at this cruelty committed in the name of religion.

"People who govern in the name of God attribute their own personal preferences to God," said Justice Douglas Johnstone about Moore's placement of his monument, "and therefore recognize no limits in imposing those preferences on other people."

"He could have said the same thing about the Taliban.

"Justice Moore has already begun his inquisition. This past February, he drafted an opinion in a child-custody case blasting gay and lesbian parents who just want to be with their children. In the decision, which quotes the

Bible several times, Moore asserted that homosexuality is 'detestable and an abominable sin.' Even more alarmingly, he wrote that the state must use "the power of the sword" – including the power of "execution" – to stop gays and lesbians from influencing our youth.

"From the Taliban, we might expect words like these. From a public official who wields power in the name of all the people – whether they be believers or nonbelievers, straight or gay – they are shocking.

"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil," wrote Edmund Burke, the British statesman who pleaded the cause of the American colonists in Parliament, 'is for good men to do nothing.' The next time an elected official seeks political power by wrapping himself in religion or demonizing unpopular groups, I hope men and women of good conscience will rise up in indignation."

---

### SO, THE MONUMENT WILL BE REMOVED, RIGHT?

On November 19, one day after the ruling by Judge Thompson, Judge Moore held a press conference in the rotunda of the State Judicial Building. In the press conference, Judge Moore vowed to appeal the federal judge's order that he remove the Ten Commandments monument. He also stated that he does not intend to remove the display from the rotunda despite the order from a federal judge.

"I have no plans to remove the monument," Moore said. "If I do I'll let you know."

Phillip Jauregui, one of Moore's attorneys, said one of the grounds for appeal will be that Thompson refused to define the word "religion" in his opinion.

"The constitutional question is whether (the monument) establishes a religion and in order to answer that question, you've got to know what religion is," Jauregui said. "The court has essentially said 'I don't know what religion is, but you've established it.'"

---

---

# Posting religious codes is but first step for Ten Commandments movement

By Charles Haynes, Senior Scholar, First Amendment Center

**G**round zero in the nationwide battle to put the Ten Commandments on government property is the state Supreme Court building in Montgomery, Ala. Last August, Chief Justice Roy Moore personally helped drag a 5,200 pound granite monument engraved with the Decalogue into the rotunda (in the middle of the night no less).

This past month – after a contentious trial – a federal judge decided that Moore’s actions violate the establishment clause of the First Amendment. The case will likely be appealed all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

What’s really at stake in this lawsuit and in similar legal battles now being waged all over the United States? For Moore and other leaders of the “Ten Commandments movement,” the fight is about far more than putting up a monument in a courthouse or on a classroom wall. The underlying struggle is over what kind of nation we are – and what kind of nation we’ll become in the 21st century.

To hear Moore tell it (in one of his famous poems), the United States has become a “moral slum” with “Godless Judges who throw reason out the door.” Moore’s solution? Restore what he calls the “moral foundation of law” by using the engine of government to return the nation to God – before it’s too late.

The movement’s immediate strategy is to begin with popular symbolic gestures (how many legislatures will dare vote against the Ten Commandments?) to “restore morality” by first recognizing “the source from which morality springs” (as Moore put it when he unveiled the monument).

But the long-term aim of the movement – which includes a number of leading television evangelists – is to restore the Christian America they believe has been lost. In the America

they envision, the final legal authority isn’t the Constitution – but rather the Law of God (as they interpret it).

What would this mean in practice? Moore is already well-known for using his courtroom to promote his faith by doing everything from post-ing the commandments to involving jurors in prayer. But for a deeper insight into Moore’s “Christian America,” read his speeches and legal opinions where he makes clear that a biblically correct view of morality must dictate the legal outcome in our judicial system and in our legislatures.

Moore and his supporters face one great obstacle: the establishment clause of the First Amendment as interpreted by the U. S. Supreme Court. Even if the Supreme Court were to allow the monument to remain in the Alabama courthouse (which is unlikely), it would surely put a stop to any effort that would establish a biblical interpretation of the Constitution and our laws.

We are not now – and we were never intended to be – a biblical commonwealth or a Christian nation. Yes, a majority of Americans call themselves Christian. But the framers of our nation decided to break with the precedents of history – a bloody story of religious repression and coercion because of state entanglement with religion – and create a nation with “no religious test” for public office (Article VI of the Constitution) and full religious liberty for people of all faiths or none (the First Amendment).

But even if Americans ignored the First Amendment and decided to privilege a Christian view of the law, whose Christianity would it be? America has hundreds of Christian sects with deeply different views about what the Bible requires. We have no religious consensus in this country – even among Christians.

And to impose one would be both unconstitutional and unjust.

The truth of the matter is this: The founders of our nation drew on a great variety of sources – the Enlightenment, Greek and Roman law and philosophy, Deist ideas and, yes, biblical principles – as they formed the new nation. But whatever the sources, the Republic established by the Constitution bars the government from imposing a biblical (or any religious) interpretation of the law.

What’s surprising about the Ten Commandments movement is how many Christians applaud Moore’s tactics – but fail to see the full implications of his Christian America for their own religious community. Have they forgotten what happens to freedom of conscience when government presumes to speak for God?

Today it may only be a monument in the courthouse, but tomorrow it could be your religious liberty. As James Madison warned when arguing for complete disestablishment in Virginia more than 200 years ago:

“Who does not see that the same authority which can establish Christianity, in exclusion of all other religions, may establish with the same ease any particular sect of Christians, in exclusion of all other sects?”

Fortunately, most judges across the land – in courageous, unpopular decisions – are ruling against attempts to promote religion through the state. These judges see through the argument that these monuments and postings are mere “historical reminders” of our roots (as proponents would have us believe). The real purpose is to promote one religious vision of our nation and one religious interpretation of our laws above all others.

Private citizen Roy Moore has a First Amendment right to promote his religious views in the public square –

---

---

## Posting religious codes (*continued*)

and to work for laws that reflect his moral convictions. But Chief Justice Roy Moore may not use his judicial authority to impose his religion through the power of the state. His decisions – and the decisions of every judge in the United States – must be based on what the Constitution

requires.

“Defending the Ten Commandments” is not really the issue in Alabama or anywhere else. For millions of Jews and Christians, the Decalogue has stood the test of time and needs no defense.

What is at issue – and what must

be defended – is religious freedom.

[Your questions and comments are welcome. Write to: Charles Haynes, The Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, 1101 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22209. [www.freedomforum.org](http://www.freedomforum.org)

E-mail: [chaynes@freedomforum.org](mailto:chaynes@freedomforum.org)

This article printed by permission.]

---

## A “Spring Break” AAI Convention

By Mynga Futrell, officer of Atheists & Other Freethinkers, Sacramento, CA

Florida sunshine and the beaches close by. Busch Gardens in full bloom. Balmy breezes. A museum of science and industry at hand. And, best of all—a dynamic free-thought gathering with a diverse program. Might Tampa in April be just the lift in life you need?

Plan now to attend the **2003 Atheist Alliance Convention** to be held **April 18-20**. This convention takes place at the **Tampa Hilton Westshore**, close to the airport and less than fifteen minutes from downtown.

This year’s premier Alliance event is hosted by Atheists of Florida, which has obtained the excellent hotel rate of **\$69 per night!** (You will find no better rate in the Tampa

area during spring break.) Bring friends along to enjoy the scenic area and its many delights in addition to the first-rate presentations and workshops planned for the weekend. Or, if you have youngsters, why not treat the entire family to a fun vacation? (Epcot Center and other Orlando ventures are nearby.)

For a peek at the hotel accommodations, go to <http://www.hilton.com/> and type in Tampa, FL, making sure to select the “Airport Westshore” Hotel at 2225 Lois Ave. The web site also links you to many of the areas’ sights and conveniences. You will find many reasons to mark your calendar and get started on your planning!

---

## Seeking Atheists For A Study

Kimberly Lyle, former AFS president, is conducting a research study of Atheists for an undergraduate honors thesis. She is seeking atheist participants for a one-hour telephone interview. Most questions will have to do with “experiences and influences that lead people to declare

themselves atheist.” If you would like to volunteer for the study, please contact her at 770-246-9016 or email her at [k.a.lyle@attbi.com](mailto:k.a.lyle@attbi.com).

You can find out more about the study at <http://home.attbi.com/~k.a.lyle/study.htm>.

---

## Minutes for November AFS Board Meeting

In attendance: Judy Thompson, Steve Yothment, Bill Burton, Lew Southern, Kelly Wilhoit, Joel Kollin, Kate Miller.

Minutes taken by: Kate Miller

Time/Date of meeting: 2:00 PM, November 17, 2002

- ▶ Steve agreed to take minutes at the Dec. Board meeting.
- ▶ Bill Burton presented the latest Treasurer’s Report.
- ▶ The Suite 400 lease with Dr. Tu was discussed. Dr. Tu has asked for a 3 year lease. AFS is reluctant to enter into such an agreement because we hope to expand our space by eventually annexing his space, thereby terminating our leasing arrangement. To buy time, we will offer him

a one year lease starting in April at his current rate, \$750/month.

- ▶ Judy, our mortgager for Suite 400, agreed to accept interest-only payments to reduce AFS’s expenses.
  - ▶ The Sunday, Jan. 19th fundraising dinner at Panahar was discussed. To augment fundraising activity, the board agreed to compose a pledge letter to be sent to all AFS members. A committee consisting of board members has begun work on this effort.
  - ▶ The board agreed to have a Holiday Open House and Book Sale with BYOB from 4-6 p.m. on Dec. 15. This is in place of the usual Discussion Group meeting.
- 

“I object to paying for the support of any other man’s belief. I am in favor of the taxation of all church property. If that property belongs to God, he is able to pay the tax. If we exempt anything, let us exempt the home of the widow and orphan.” — Robert Ingersoll, from a lecture titled “Religious Intolerance”

---

---

---

# Postal Service to Display “In God We Trust” in 38,000 Offices! Letters Are Needed Now to Protest and Stop This New Policy!

The US Postal Service has caved in to pressure from religious right groups, and agreed to display the religionized national motto “In God We Trust” in its offices throughout the nation.

This follows President Bush’s signing of a bill passed unanimously in the Senate – and with only five dissenting votes in the House of Representatives – reinforcing the use of “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance, and “In God We Trust” as the national motto. But these slogans were incorporated into our history only during the cold war. The original pledge did not include any salutation to a deity, and our national slogan was “E Pluribus Unum,” “Out of Many, One.”

The Postal Service plans to print posters (at taxpayer expense) depicting an enlarged stamp with the Statue of Liberty and the phrase “In God We Trust” near the top.

“This is an insult to every Atheist, Freethinker, Humanist and other people of no religious belief,” says Ellen Johnson, President of American Atheists. “They are using government offices which provide an important public services to promote religion. Anyone who criticizes religion, who doubts religion, who disagrees with religion is being made to feel unwell-come in what should be a neutral, religion-free public environment. That’s wrong.”

In an Action Alert on November 18, American Atheists encouraged all

Atheists, Freethinkers, Humanists and other church-state separationists to protest this move by the postal service, saying, “We urge you to contact John E. Potter, the Postmaster General, with your letters and phone calls. Be polite and concise. Tell Mr. Potter that government should not be promoting religion, especially with our tax dollars, and that religious slogans of any kind are not appropriate in a public building. Ask him to think of the 30 million ‘customers’ who, according to the American Religion Identification Survey profess no religion.

Send letters to:

John E. Potter, Postmaster General  
United States Postal Service  
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW  
Washington, DC 20260

---

Here are some letters written by AFS members to the Postmaster General: (Write your letter today!)

John E. Potter, Postmaster General  
United States Postal Service  
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW  
Washington, DC 20260

Dear Sir:

I would like to express to you my deepest concern for the latest news that the US Postal Service is planning to display religious mottos in Post Offices across the land. Please know and understand that displaying “In God We Trust” is a violation of the First Amendment, which clearly states that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion...”

I would like to ask you sir a few questions: Is the USPS in the business of handling the nation’s mail expeditiously or is it in the business of promoting religion? Is any local post office a federal building, or is it a church? If “In God We Trust” is to be displayed to please the Christians in particular and monotheists in general, then why should we not please the Muslims by displaying “Allah akbar!”, the Hare Krishnas “Rama Krishna” or even the Wiccans’ “Blessed be the goddess!” signs? Where will it end?

Not only that, but such a display would be a slap in the face to the 30 million non-believers of the nation, which make up 14% of the total US population. I submit that you are opening up a can of worms with this issue. No good will come of it, for it is divisive.

I respectfully urge you to please reconsider this gross violation of the separation of government from religion. It would be more proper to display an “E Pluribus Unum” (Out of Many, One) sign. That is the true motto of the United States, and includes ALL American citizens.

Most Sincerely,  
William A. King

John E. Potter, Postmaster General  
United States Postal Service  
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW  
Washington, DC 20260

November 18, 2002

Dear Postmaster General,

We are writing to express our disappointment with the USPS decision to display IGWT posters in its branches. Such an act sends a clear and asinine message of exclusion to the adherents of many non-monotheistic religions, as well as the tens of millions of nonreligious U.S. citizens.

We are accustomed to such prejudiced messages from private organizations like the Boy Scouts of America or the fundamentalist zealots of the Christian Coalition, but the USPS is a government institution! The first amendment of the Constitution explicitly prohibits the government from this sort of favoritism.

That the posters will be printed with taxpayer money is an even more egregious violation that adds injury to insult.

Please reconsider the printing and displaying of the IGWT posters.

Sincerely,  
Charlie George

“For ages, a deadly conflict has been waged between a few brave men and women of thought and genius upon the one side, and the great ignorant religious mass on the other. This is the war between Science and Faith. The few have appealed to reason, to honor, to law, to freedom, to the known, and to happiness here in this world. The many have appealed to prejudice, to fear, to miracle, to slavery, to the unknown, and to misery hereafter. The few have said, “Think!” The many have said, “Believe!” – Robert Green Ingersoll, *The Gods*, 1872

---

---

# Freethought News

## **GOP, HILL TO PUSH FOR ABORTION CURBS, "FAITH-BASED" PROGRAMS**

With Democrats no longer blocking their way in the Senate, President Bush and Republican congressional leaders plan a more vigorous push on their social policy agenda by trying to limit abortions, provide greater support to religious groups and increase funding for sexual abstinence and fatherhood programs, according to White House officials and key lawmakers.

When the Democrats' 18-month rule of the Senate ends in January, Bush — backed by a new Senate majority and a larger House majority — will be in a stronger position to make broad social changes than he was during his first two years in office. Republicans plan to use this power to help more religious groups administer government social programs; appoint more conservative judges and outlaw late-term abortions; and increase funding for pro-family initiatives and sexual abstinence teachings as part of a new welfare law.

Senate Majority Leader-elect Trent Lott claimed most of the country is hungry for policies that discourage abortions and encourage churches and other groups to help families.

Abortion rights will be a major battleground next year. Lott has promised a vote next Congress to outlaw a procedure that critics call "partial birth" abortion. The House can easily pass the ban on late-term abortions, and it appears Republicans should have the 60 Senate votes they need to follow suit and send it to the president.

Republicans want to amend federal law to allow a person who violently harms or kills a pregnant woman to be charged for a separate offense of killing or harming the unborn child. This builds on the administration's efforts this year to classify a fetus as a human being worthy of health care coverage and embryos as unusable for "human research projects."

Many antiabortion activists believe

there are two key preliminary steps to overturning *Roe v. Wade*: Solidly establish in law, government policy and the minds of voters that a fetus is a human being and, therefore, warrants equal protection; and get more conservative judges appointed, particularly to the Supreme Court.

Republicans also plan to press for legislation to make it a federal crime to transport minors from states with parental notification laws across a state line to obtain an abortion.

Wading deeper into the church-and-state debate, Bush wants to further his program to help religious groups win government contracts to administer social programs such as soup kitchens and rehabilitation programs for drug addicts and alcoholics.

To expand the government's interaction with religious groups, Bush needs to clarify what these groups can do without violating the Constitution's ban on government-established religion.

The incoming Republican-controlled Senate wants to increase tax breaks for people who give money to religious charities, and the House wants to open more government programs to religious groups.

Rick Santorum, the Senate GOP's third-ranking leader, told the White House that, during the debate over welfare reform, he will fight for a provision to allow religious groups to discriminate against certain people -- gays, for instance--when hiring if they don't share their religious beliefs. "I will make that stand," Santorum said.

With Republicans in the majority in the Senate next Congress, Bush will have a much better chance of passing a welfare law that increases funding for abstinence and puts a heavier emphasis on promoting two-parent families and responsible fatherhood.

[From a November 25 *Washington Post* article by staff writer Jim VandeHei.]

---

## **JUDGE: VULCAN HAS NO RELIGIOUS PURPOSE; TOSSES SUIT**

On November 27, a federal judge

said Vulcan has no religious significance and tossed out a lawsuit seeking to block the world's largest cast iron statue's return atop Red Mountain, near Birmingham, AL. U.S. District Judge Sharon Lovelace Blackburn in a written opinion said Vulcan, a representation of the ancient Roman god of the forge, is recognized as a symbol of Birmingham and the steel industry responsible for Birmingham's early growth.

"Its continued maintenance and display has a secular purpose, does not advance or inhibit religion, and does not create an excessive entanglement between the government defendants and religion," Blackburn wrote.

Trussville resident Carl Dykes filed suit against the City of Birmingham, Jefferson County, the state and the U.S. Department of Interior's National Park Service to block the defendants from placing the 56-foot tall Vulcan on public land. In the suit, Dykes said that as a Christian he is offended by the placement of Vulcan, which represents an image of the Roman god Vulcan and the Greek god Hephaestus, in a public park.

Dykes also contended that government spending for Vulcan's restoration endorses a religion or religious symbol. Blackburn called the suit's allegations frivolous, devoid of merit and no longer open to discussion.

She also dismissed Dykes's claims for punitive damages because such damages cannot be awarded against government defendants.

Mary Lynn Hanily, a spokeswoman for the Vulcan Park Foundation, said there was never any question that Vulcan stood for anything other than historical significance. The statue is in the midst of a multimillion dollar restoration. Portions of Vulcan are currently on display at the Birmingham Museum of Art.

Hanily said the statue is scheduled to be returned to the park in 2003, with the park's reopening in the fall.

[This article is from a November 28 article in the *Birmingham News*.]



# Become a Member!

(Or renew your membership with this form!)



If you've enjoyed what you've read, we enthusiastically invite you to join the Atlanta Freethought Society. Every month you will get our acclaimed monthly newsletter the *Atlanta Freethought News*, voting rights in the organization—and enjoyment of the superb speakers we have coming up, as well as the social and activist events that we sponsor!

**Individual memberships:** One person can become a member for \$25 per year.

**Household memberships:** A household is defined as two members sharing one newsletter, and is available for \$35 per year. Since some of our households have additional members, there will be a \$5 per year charge for each additional voting household member.

**International members:** because of international postage rates and special handling, we have been forced to add a surcharge of \$5 for members in Canada or Mexico, and \$10 for other foreign addresses.

Thank you for all your support and we look forward to your being with us in the coming months!

**Annual dues are:**

Membership	Dues	# of mems	Total
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$25	_____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Household (2 members)	\$35	_____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Additional household mems	\$5 ea	_____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Low income/Student/Under 21	\$10	_____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Subscription only	\$20	_____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Member	\$100	_____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Household	\$125	_____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Postage for Canada/Mexico	\$5	_____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Postage for other foreign addresses	\$10	_____	\$ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Extra donation (thank you!)	\$	_____	\$ _____
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>\$ _____</b>

Please send this form with payment to:  
 Atlanta Freethought Society  
 1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Suite 500  
 Roswell, GA 30075

*Atlanta Freethought Society*  
 1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Suite 500, Roswell, GA 30075  
 Phone: 404-805-2020 e-mail: mirza404@aol.com

"Religious bondage shackles and debilitates the mind and unfits it for every noble enterprise, every expanded prospect." - James Madison, 1774

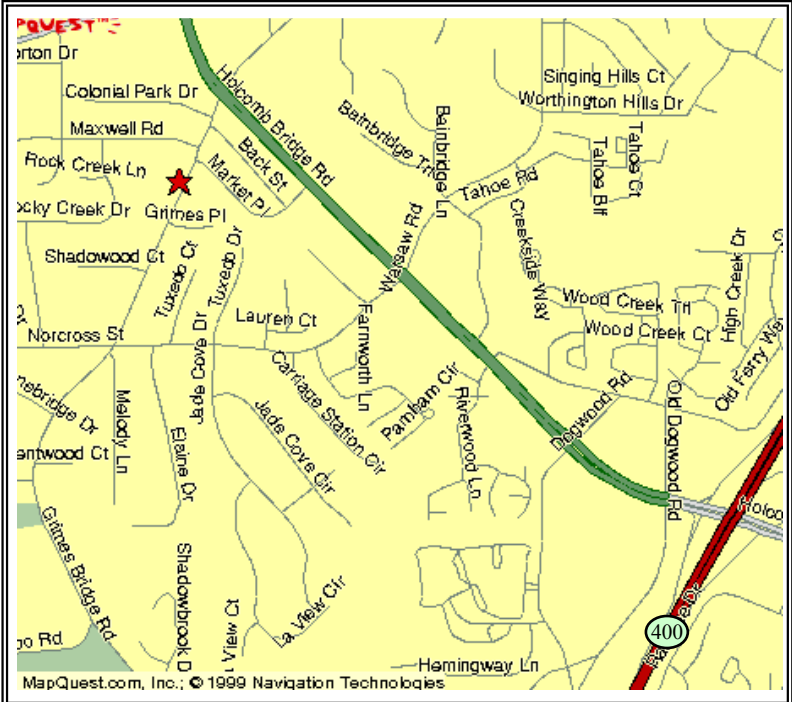
<p><b>Why I Am Not A Christian — \$9</b></p> <p>Lucid, comprehensive, engaging answer to Christian apologists by Keith Parsons. Respectful but devastating to all Christian claims. Wonderful follow-up to Bertrand Russell's great essay with the same title.</p>
<p><b>Tales of the Rational: Skeptical Essays About Nature and Science — \$17</b></p> <p>Massimo Pigliucci's essays examine and criticize both religion and science. He defends straw men, attacks creationism, and explains why scientists and other skeptics should be nontheists.</p>
<p><b>An Uppity Old Atheist Woman's Dictionary — \$10</b></p> <p>By Carol Faulkenberry (illustrated by Amanda Faulkenberry); like Ambrose Bierce's <i>Devil's Dictionary</i>—but better: more biting, funnier. Guaranteed to make you laugh out loud and to challenge at least one idea you hold.</p>
<p><b>Bible Bloopers: Evidence That Demands a Verdict, Too! (A Skeptic Answers Josh McDowell) — \$15</b></p> <p>Mike Ledo's funny, scholarly book—over 270 pp. of effective dissection of biblical mythology, explanations of Bible contradictions, and detailed background on historical, mythological perspectives for modern Christianity.</p>
<p><b>Quotations That Support the Separation of State and Church (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) — \$11</b></p> <p>Compiled by Edward M. Buckner and Michael E. Buckner, ammunition against Christian-nation mythologies. Quotes from America's revolutionaries, constitution framers, Presidents, court decisions. Sources carefully documented, extensive index. Comb-bound—lies flat for easy copying.</p>
<p><b>Please add:</b></p> <p>\$4 TOTAL S&amp;H Charge for up to 2 books,                  \$1.50 EACH S&amp;H Charge for 3 to 9 books,                  No S&amp;H Charge for 10 Books or more.                  (All Merchandise will be shipped USPS Priority Mail)</p>
<p><b>Send check or money order to:</b>                  ATLANTA FREETHOUGHT SOCIETY                  1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Suite 500, Roswell GA 30075</p>



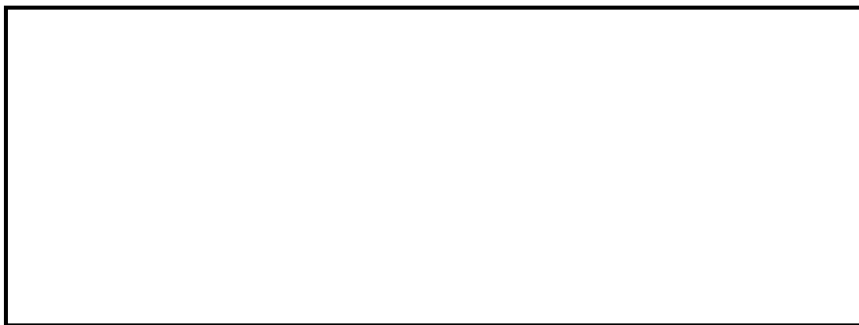
Atlanta  
Freethought  
Society

**The December Meeting:  
Sunday, December 8  
1:00 PM at the AFS Center  
1170 Grimes Bridge Road,  
Roswell, GA**

**This Month's Speaker:  
Sharon Reynolds**



*Atlanta Freethought News* is produced by the Atlanta Freethought Society, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit, member-run, educational organization created to advance freethought and protect freethinkers. Any freethought, atheist, secular humanist, agnostic, or rationalist group is granted permission to reproduce anything from our newsletter not expressly labeled otherwise (acknowledgement of AFS and author appreciated). Articles published represent the official opinion of AFS only when that is clearly stated; all other opinion is that of the individual author.



If your label indicates "11 2002" or earlier, please renew. Thanks.

Atlanta Freethought News  
Atlanta Freethought Society  
1170 Grimes Bridge Road, Suite 500  
Roswell, GA 30075