

Atlanta Freethought News

Dare to Think for Yourself.

An AFS Publication • Volume 15 Number 9 • September 2009

The September AFS Meeting

The September 13 AFS meeting will include a Potluck Lunch at 1:00 and a talk by Leonard Adams at 2:00. Leonard will talk on his experiences as a Christian pastor and the steps for him in deconverting to an atheist. Leonard gave a similar talk on July 4 at Lake Hypatia. (He was scheduled to speak at the August AFS meeting, but family matters detained him.)

The meeting will be at **Atlanta Freethought Hall**, 4775 N. Church Lane SE, Smyrna, GA.

To get there, take I-285 (the perimeter road around Atlanta) to Exit 16 (Atlanta Road). Turn toward Atlanta. Go 0.5 miles to N. Church Lane, which is currently blocked due to construction! Follow the detour instructions below.

Detour to AF Hall

North Church Lane will be closed to thru traffic between Atlanta Road and Collins Springs Drive from June 1st to October 28th for bridge replacement over the CSX railroad.

To get to AF Hall from I-285, you can still take Atlanta Road towards Atlanta, but continue past N. Church Lane to Plant Atkinson Road. Turn right and go to N. Church Lane and turn right again. AF Hall will be on the right.

The September Potluck Lunch

Before the September meeting, we will have a **Potluck Lunch**, starting at 1:00. Join AFS members and guests for some good food and great socializing. Please bring food according to the first letter of your last name as follows:

A-G: Bring a dessert;

H-P: Bring a side dish;

Q-Z: Bring a main dish.

AFS will provide drinks, plates and silverware.

The AFS Social

The next **AFS Social** will be at Las Margaritas Restaurant, 1842 Cheshire Bridge Road, Atlanta, on Friday, Sept 18, at 7:00 PM. To get there, take I-85 to the Cheshire Bridge Road exit (Exit 88) in north Atlanta. Turn east at the light and go 1.5 miles. The restaurant will be on the right.

AFS Meetings and Activities

Sept 13: AFS Board Meeting, AF Hall, 11:00 AM.

Sept 13: AFS Potluck Lunch, AF Hall, 1:00 PM.

Sept 13: AFS General Meeting, AF Hall, 2:00 PM.

Sept 18: AFS Social, Las Margaritas Restaurant, 7:00 PM.

Other Meetings of Interest

The **Humanists of Georgia** will meet at AF Hall on Sunday, September 20, at 1:00 PM. See more about their program at <http://humanistsofga.freewebsites.com/>.

The **Fayette Freethinkers** meet in Peachtree City, GA on Wednesdays at 7:00 PM at the Orthodontist's Office on Peachtree Pkwy near Crosstown Road. The group also meets for lunch on the first and third Saturday of the month. Request details via freediscussion@hotmail.com.

GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths) will meet at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Gwinnett (12 Bethesda Church Road, in Lawrenceville) on Wednesday, September 9, at 7:00 PM. (See <http://gust.domek.org/>.)

SOS, the Secular Organizations for Sobriety, is not having regular meetings, but if you would like to learn about the group, email Donna Gore at donnaigore@yahoo.com.

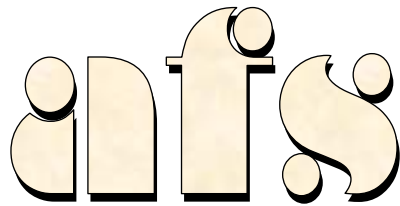
The **Fellowship of Reason** meets on the first Sunday of every month at 1:00 PM at the Northwest Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 1025 Mount Vernon Hwy, in Atlanta. For details, see <http://www.fellowshipofreason.com>.

There will be a "**meetup**" for Atlanta atheists on Sunday, September 13, at 6:00 PM at Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur, GA.

There's another **meetup** for Atlanta atheists scheduled for Sunday, September 27, at 4:00 PM at Five Seasons Brewery, 5600 Roswell Rd, in Atlanta.

"The United States have adventured upon a great and noble experiment, which is believed to have been hazarded in the absence of all previous precedent – that of total separation of Church and State. No religious establishment by law exists among us. The conscience is left free from all restraint and each is permitted to worship his Maker after his own judgement. The offices of the Government are open alike to all... The Mahommedan, if he will to come among us would have the privilege guaranteed to him by the constitution to worship according to the Koran; and the East Indian might erect a shrine to Brahma if it so pleased him... Such is the great experiment which we have tried, and such are the happy fruits which have resulted from it; our system of free government would be imperfect without it."

—John Tyler, 10th President of the United States, in a letter dated July 10, 1843



Atlanta Freethought Society

Programs and Speakers

All programs are on the second Sunday of each month at the AF Hall, 4775 N. Church Lane SE, Smyrna, GA, unless otherwise noted. Programs start at 1:00 PM, but feel free to arrive at 12:00 for socializing. Visitors are always welcome.

Sept 13: Leonard Adams, a former Christian minister, will speak on his experiences as a church leader and why he left the Christian ministry.

Oct 11: TBD

Nov 7: Massimo Pigliucci will speak. Note: this is a Saturday meeting.

Nov 22: (tentative) Sam Singleton, the Atheist Evangelist, will perform at AF Hall in an entertaining show.

AFS Email Lists

The **AFS eNews** Announcement list provides subscribers with reminders and updates on AFS activities and news. The **AFS Forum** is a place for discussions of freethought, atheism, agnosticism, church-state separation, and religion. Visit the AFS website at <http://www.atlantafreethought.org> for more info or to subscribe.

The Atlanta Freethought Society is a member-run organization dedicated to advancing freethought and protecting the rights and reputation of free-thinkers, agnostics, atheists and humanists.

We welcome anyone who is interested in learning about living a good life free from religion through attending AFS speeches, debates, and discussions. We employ protests, letters to the editor, broadcast appearances, and any other reasonable and civil means available to achieve our mission.

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 lack of belief.

We seek to educate ourselves on many topics but especially on religion and non-religion. We do this through a series of thought-provoking speakers and programs, and by maintaining a web forum and an 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

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Steve Yothment

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Atlanta Freethought News

Vol. 15, Number 9, September 2009

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individuals, \$35 for households, and
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Atheists Win on Homeland Security Proselytizing Case

Will State Squander More Tax Money on Appeal?

A circuit court judge ruled on August 26 that the Kentucky Office of Homeland Security violated the separation of church and state when it erected a plaque asking "Almighty God" to protect citizens "from acts of war and terrorism," and included the religious theme in programs and training materials.

Kentucky lawmakers established the office following the faith-based terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The state law mandated that the new department "publicize the findings of the General Assembly stressing the dependence on Almighty God as being vital to the security of the Commonwealth." Another statute called upon the Director of the new office to promote the religious message, and prominently display the plaque "at the entrance to the state's Emergency Operations Center..." The text of the statute declared:

(1) No government by itself can guarantee perfect security from acts of war or terrorism.

(2) The security and well-being of the public depend not just on government, but rest in large measure upon individual citizens of the Commonwealth and their level of understanding, preparation and vigilance.

(3) The safety and security of the Commonwealth cannot be achieved apart from reliance on Almighty God as set forth in the public speeches and proclamations of American Presidents, including Abraham Lincoln's historic March 30, 1863 Proclamation urging Americans to pray and fast during one of the most dangerous hours of American history, and the text of President John F. Kennedy's November 22, 1963, national security speech which concluded: "For as was written long ago: 'Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.'"

American Atheists and plaintiffs challenged the legislature's action, declaring that the statues violated provisions of both the federal and state

constitutions. Attorneys for the Commonwealth mustered several arguments in their effort to defend the plaque and the mission of a state office to proselytize. The Commonwealth also moved to have a summary judgment dismissing the case, but lost both filings. In his 17-page ruling, Judge Wingate rejected claims that the lawmakers use of religion had a secular intent.

"...while the court will generally defer to a legislature's stated purpose, the secular purpose required has to be genuine, not a sham, and not merely secondary to a religious objective."

He added: "It is clear that the purpose underlying the display of the plaque and the contents of Office of Homeland Security training materials is not to celebrate the historical reasons for our great nation's survival in the face of terror and war. Its purpose is to declare publicly that the official position of the Commonwealth of Kentucky is that an Almighty God exists and that the function of that God is to protect us from our enemies. Consequently, a reading of the statute's plain language makes that clear. Effectively, the General Assembly has created an official government position on God. The recitation of the beliefs of past Presidents does not mask the clear purpose of the statutes."

The Commonwealth tried to compare the message on the plaque with other cases of government-sponsored religion, including the current national motto stamped on currency, "In God We Trust." Judge Wingate found that practice to be benign, suggesting that it bore "no theological or ritualistic impact." The plaque, however, manifested a clear message that violated the First Amendment: "...its theological impact is clear from the very language of the challenged statutes. The legislative finding that the Commonwealth is unsafe without the protection of 'Almighty God' takes a clear stance on the nature of God, which constitutes an impermissible purpose

not comparable to 'In God We Trust.'"

Attorney Edwin Kagin, National Legal Director for American Atheists, praised the ruling, saying, "The plaintiffs, and all citizens of Kentucky, are more safe as a result of this thoughtful ruling by Judge Wingate. Threats to our security from within are even more frightening than threats from without. Those who seek to attack our freedoms by imposing their religion upon us have been pushed back a bit by this ruling. The Wall of Separation between government and religion continues to hold. I think Thomas Jefferson would have been pleased."

The State of Kentucky announced on September 5 that it would appeal the court ruling.

Despite the 17-page rebuke of the Commonwealth's arguments, the Attorney General's office decided to appeal. Edwin Kagin called the move "regrettable," and told reporters: "I would not be at all uncomfortable taking the facts of this case before the U.S. Supreme Court. I think the statute is so blatantly unconstitutional that any court would find it unconstitutional."

Shelly Johnson of the state's Attorney General office declared: "We believe there is a clear distinction in the law between acknowledgement of religion, which has been permitted for years, and the establishment of religion, which is prohibited by the Constitution. The statute in question merely acknowledges religion and should have been upheld by the court."

Associated Press writer Roger Alford noted the importance of the case. "States in the Bible Belt such as Kentucky, cannot afford to concede this court battle, even when legal grounds are shaky..."

Western Kentucky University political science professor Scott Lasley concurred, noting the partisan electoral aspects of the case. He observed that Attorney General Jack Conway is seeking the Democratic nomination

American Atheists Wins... (continued)

for a U.S. Senate seat in the 2010 race. "The reality of the situation is that for most attorneys general, that (not challenging the court ruling) would be the end of their political careers. It's just the reality of the situation, given the political environment you're operating in."

On September 6, American Atheists criticized the Kentucky Attorney General's office for appealing the case. In particular, Edwin Kagin accused state officials of wasting money. "We're in an economic crisis and the Common-

wealth of Kentucky continues to squander taxpayer revenue to defend a bad and unconstitutional practice," he said.

Mr. Kagin challenged a claim by one state attorney that the plaque was "about God, not religion."

"This case is all about whether the state has the right and duty to promote religion," says Kagin.

Ed Buckner, President of American Atheists, said that the suit is being watched closely across the country. "The outcome could determine if, and how far, states can go in promoting

belief in a deity and sectarian religion," said Buckner. "Saying that 'God is on our side' in the war on terror sends the message that millions of non-religious people—Atheists, Free-thinkers, Humanists and anyone else who does not believe in a god or attend church (roughly half of all Americans)—are slackers when it comes to being patriotic. As a military veteran, I resent that, and so do other non-believers who have worn the uniform and fought for this country."

[From Aug 26, Sept 5 and Sept 6 press released by American Atheists.]

AU of Georgia to March in East Cobb Annual Parade

The Georgia Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State will march in the East Cobb Annual Parade on Saturday, September 12. Jeffrey Selman, the AU-GA President, says that 20 to 25

people can march in the parade, and he's looking for at least that many people. If you would like to participate, email Jeff at selmanjm1@aol.com.

The parade will start at 9:45AM on Johnson Ferry Road near Mt. Bethel.

Be sure to arrive by 9:00 for staging. The parade will end at around 11:00.

There will also be a festival after the parade, and Americans United will have a booth at the festival.

For details, see the following link.

Americans United in the East Cobb Parade: <http://www.meetup.com/americansunited-georgia/calendar/11195243/?a=facebook>

Terminal Sickness a poem by Ronald G. Crowe

Like the clinging heat of dog-day summers,
Old Daddy's Dixie malady hung on,
Insidious to the soul as Kudzu to the land,
its aggressive roots crowding out healthy growth.

His acid tone of thirty years before still echos:
"Would you just look at that mushmouth on TV!"
Even though the black announcer spoke better English than Old Daddy ever would;
no logic could have pierced that stone wall.

He died never realizing his double-edged sin:
In walling them out, he'd walled himself in;
Could never escape nor be free.
Too bad for the haters, too bad for the hated. So sad for humanity.

"There is something feeble and a little contemptible about a man who cannot face the perils of life without the help of comfortable myths. Almost inevitably some part of him is aware that they are myths and that he believes them only because they are comforting. But he dares not face this thought! Moreover, since he is aware, however dimly, that his opinions are not rational, he becomes furious when they are disputed."

— **Bertrand Russell**, from his book *Human Society in Ethics and Politics* (1954)

Freethought News From Across the Nation

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY DROPS EX-GAY PROGRAM, FACES BUDGET SHORTFALL

Focus on the Family, James Dobson's anti-LGBT empire and the largest organization in the religious right, announced earlier this week that it would be selling off its ex-gay therapy program called "Love Won Out." The organization says it's part of an effort to downsize in the wake of record profit losses of nearly \$6 million. The news comes days after the nation's largest psychological organization released a report condemning ex-gay therapies.

"Right now we're facing a serious budget shortfall that threatens our ability to reach out to parents, families and married couples who count on our help," said Jim Daly, Focus' CEO in a letter to 800,000 members. "Income is down nearly \$6 million from what we expected and planned for this year. I want to assure you that we're committed to good stewardship AND living within our means, just as so many families are today."

In November, Focus laid off nearly 20 percent of its workforce, or 200 employees, due to declining donations from individuals and foundations.

Focus is selling "Love Won Out" to Exodus International, an ex-gay ministry.

[From an Aug 14 article by Andy Birkey at <http://minesotaindependent.com>.]

FFRF IS GROWING

The Freedom From Religion Foundation reported in the September issue of *Freethought Today* that they have increased their permanent staff from 5 to 8 people. FFRF is growing, from 8,000 members two years ago to over 13,000 members this year. One of the factors in their growth is the placement of billboards throughout the country with catchy slogans like "Imagine No Religion" and "Beware of Dogma." Every billboard shows the FFRF URL www.ffrf.org so that viewers can go to the website and learn more about the organization.

FFRF has a college campus outreach

program in association with the Secular Student Alliance. Dan Barker, a co-president of the group, has appeared in numerous debates and gave many speeches in the past year.

FFRF has a weekly hour-long radio show called Freethought Radio that is broadcast in 20 cities and is streamed live on AirAmerica.com and XM Satellite Ch 167.

FFRF is involved with multiple lawsuits on church/state separation issues and provides Student Awards for essays on Freethought issues.

FFRF is particularly proud that they have received a 4-Star charity status for 5 years in a row from Charity Navigator, the largest independent evaluator of charities. The rating is based on the soundness of the fiscal management of the organization.

CFI FILES AMICUS BRIEF IN CROSS CASE

The Center for Inquiry filed an amicus brief with the United States Supreme Court in the case of *Salazar v. Buono*. The high court is scheduled to hear the case on Oct 7. At stake is whether a Christian cross may remain atop Sunrise Rock in the Mojave National Preserve in California.

The cross was first erected by the Veterans of Foreign Wars in 1934 and has since been replaced several times by private citizens. An attempt to erect a Buddhist shrine nearby was not allowed by the government. In an apparent effort to circumvent the Establishment Clause, Congress transferred the cross display and the surrounding property to private hands in 2004. Since then, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit has twice invalidated the land transfer, ruling that the cross must be removed.

"The cross is a sectarian symbol of religious faith. The government has no business displaying it on public land," said Derek C. Araujo, General Counsel and legal director at the Center for Inquiry. "Public land is just that, public. The Christian display does not represent all Americans. The American public includes a multitude of non-Christian religions, as well as

secularists, atheists and agnostics who don't identify with any religion. Congress's actions amount to unconstitutional government favoritism toward one religion."

Araujo is particularly concerned with the government's attempt to change the existing legal test for "standing," or the right to sue. "The Court must reject the government's attempt to impose a new test on standing," he added. "The government's newly-fashioned requirements would turn plaintiffs away at the courthouse steps if they lack a so-called 'spiritual injury,' potentially denying access to court by the non-religious and others whose desires to protect the Constitution are not based on religious tenets. This case will be an important test of church-state separation."

The CFI brief focuses on two main issues: refuting the government's claim that standing to challenge a government-endorsed religious display requires the plaintiff to show adherence to a contrary religious belief; and arguing that in the particular circumstances of this case, the government's transfer of the land to a private party did not cure the constitutional violation.

CFI's brief asserts: "Neither the purpose nor the effect of the land transfer in this case was to distance the government from the cross display... The government transferred the land to those who erected the cross in the first place precisely because it wanted the cross to remain standing. The Court should hold the land transfer invalid, and prevent use of such formalistic devices from multiplying across the country as a court-sanctioned way to feign compliance with the Establishment Clause."

[From an Aug. 5 CFI press release.]
(Note: FFRF also filed an amicus brief for the same case.)

AMERICANS UNITED DENOUNCES PREACHER'S DEATH PRAYERS AGAINST OBAMA

On September 2, Americans United for Separation of Church and State

denounced the violent rhetoric of an Arizona preacher who is praying for the death of President Barack Obama and called on Religious Right leaders to repudiate such extremism.

The Rev. Steven Anderson of the Faithful Word Baptist Church told his Tempe, Ariz., congregation he prays that Obama “dies and goes to hell.” In an Aug. 16 sermon that recently came to public attention, Anderson said, “If you want to know how I’d like to see Obama die, I’d like him to die of natural causes. I don’t want him to be a martyr, we don’t need another holiday. I’d like to see him die, like Ted Kennedy, of brain cancer.”

Anderson’s sermon took place just before an Obama visit to Arizona, and a member of the congregation showed up outside the Obama event in Phoenix carrying an AR-15 semi-automatic assault rifle.

“This has gone much too far,” said the Rev. Barry W. Lynn, Americans United executive director. “When preachers call for the death of the president or others that they disagree with, it provides a justification for acts of intimidation and violence. It’s grossly irresponsible, and the American people ought to rise up and say

‘enough is enough.’”

Lynn said Religious Right leaders have a special responsibility to repudiate such rhetoric.

“National Religious Right leaders have been feeding their flock a steady diet of shrill and provocative language,” said Lynn. “It should come as no surprise when Anderson and those like him escalate the animosity.”

Lynn noted that “imprecatory prayers” (prayers that ask God to kill or otherwise harm others) have become all too common in recent years.

The Rev. Wiley Drake, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Buena Park, Calif., announced in June of this year that he is praying for Obama’s death. Drake, former second vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention, has also called for imprecatory prayers against AU’s Lynn and other staff members of Lynn’s organization.

The Rev. Gordon Klingenschmitt, head of Pray In Jesus’ Name Ministries and a former Navy chaplain, has also sought prayers for the death of Lynn and others who challenged Klingenschmitt’s Religious Right activities.

Randall Terry, Operation Rescue

founder and head of the Society for Truth and Justice, held a June 1 news conference at the National Press Club to say he is glad that Nebraska physician Dr. George Tiller is dead. Terry said the doctor, whose clinic provided abortions for women with problem pregnancies, was a “mass murderer” who “reaped what he sowed.” Tiller was murdered while serving as an usher at his church.

TV preacher and Christian Coalition founder Pat Robertson as recently as 2003 urged his followers to pray that God would remove three Supreme Court justices so that President George W. Bush could replace them with nominees that support Religious Right positions against reproductive choice, gay rights and church-state separation. In 2001 Robertson joined the late Jerry Falwell in blaming the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the Supreme Court, gays, feminists and civil liberties groups. Said AU’s Lynn, “Religious Right leaders have every right to make the case for their views on public issues, but when they inflame opinion with outrageous statements, they are going too far.

“This must stop,” said Lynn, “before more tragedies occur.”

Georgia Baptist Pastor Killed in Drug Sting

Pastor probably in the wrong place at the wrong time. We wouldn’t wish this on anyone!

Anortheast Georgia Baptist pastor was shot and killed on September 1 by agents from a multi-county drug task force in downtown Toccoa.

Jonathan Paul Ayers, 29, was not a target of the sting operation, said Stephens County Sheriff Randy Shirley.

“His name had never come up,” the sheriff said. “He was not connected.”

But the passenger in Pastor Ayer’s car was a target. Pastor Ayers dropped her off in downtown Toccoa around 2:30 p.m., Shirley said.

Two plain-clothed agents from the task force — comprised of officers from Stephens, Habersham and Rabun

counties — followed Pastor Ayers and attempted to question him.

The pastor tried to avoid them, Shirley said, striking one of the agents after putting his car in reverse. “They yelled, ‘Police. Stop.’”

Witnesses to the incident also said the officers identified themselves, said John Bankhead, a spokesman for the Georgia Bureau of Investigation.

Pastor Ayers then lurched the car towards another agent in a “threatening manner,” Shirley said. A shot was fired by one of the agents on the scene, striking the pastor in the upper chest.

Pastor Ayers drove off, but a block

away Ayers lost control of his vehicle, striking a telephone pole.

Ayers was pastor of Shoal Creek Baptist Church in Lavonia. The woman he had dropped off in Toccoa was arrested and charged with cocaine possession and distribution. Shirley would not reveal her identity.

The agent struck by the pastor’s vehicle was treated and released from a local hospital, the sheriff said.

The GBI is investigating the shooting. The agents involved have been placed on administrative leave.

[From a Sept 3 *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* article by C. Boone & K. Leslie.]

Watch Lewis Black explain religion at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWqtppQjNug&feature=related>

Here’s Lewis Black speaking about televangelists: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4ZoPfk9MmQ&feature=related>

School Administrators Face Charges for Violating Court Order

Pace High School enacted a decree in January banning officials from promoting religion at school events.

Two Florida school administrators face contempt charges and possible prison time for violating a court order to not publicly pray in their high school.

Frank Lay, principal of Pace High School, and Athletic Director Robert Freeman are accused of violating a consent decree banning employees of Santa Rosa County schools from endorsing religion.

They face a non-jury trial September 17 before U.S. District Judge Casey Rodgers. The statute under which they are charged carries a maximum penalty of up to six months in prison, subject to sentencing guidelines.

Attorneys defending Lay and Freeman call it outrageous that the two are being prosecuted for "a simple prayer." But the American Civil Liberties Union, whose lawsuit led to the consent decree, maintains that students have a right to be free from administrators foisting their religious beliefs on them.

Still, an ACLU representative said the organization never suggested that people should go to jail for violating the decree.

The ACLU filed suit last year against the district on behalf of two Pace students who alleged that "school officials regularly promoted religion and led prayers at school events," according to an ACLU statement.

Both parties approved the consent decree put in place January 9, under which district and school officials are "permanently prohibited from promoting, advancing, endorsing, participating in or causing prayers during or in conjunction with school events," the ACLU said.

Lay was a party in the initial lawsuit, and his attorney was among those approving the consent decree, according to the organization. In addition, the court required that all district employees receive a copy.

On January 28, "Lay asked Freeman to offer a prayer of blessing during a school-day luncheon for the dedication of a new fieldhouse at Pace High School," according to court documents. "Freeman complied with the request and offered the prayer at the event. It appears this was a school-sponsored event attended by students, faculty and community members."

Attorneys from Liberty Counsel, a conservative legal group helping defend Lay and Freeman, said in a written statement that attendees included booster club members and other adults who helped the field house project, all "consenting adults."

In a February 4 letter to district Superintendent Tim Wyrosdick in which Lay acknowledged the incident, he said that although past football booster club members "and other adults associated with the school system" were at the luncheon, culinary class students were in charge of food preparation and serving.

Lay wrote that he asked Freeman to bless the food "for the adults. ... I take full responsibility for this action. My actions were overt and not meant to circumvent any court order or constitutional mandate."

In response, Wyrosdick noted in a letter to Lay that in a meeting, the principal had admitted that "you are, and were at the date of this incident, aware of the court injunction and aware that this type of action is not permissible under the injunction."

Wyrosdick recounted telling Lay that the prayer was not appropriate.

"This note is to share with you written instructions to avoid this type of action," the superintendent said. Both letters are in the public court file.

"It is a sad day in America when school officials are criminally prosecuted for a prayer over a meal," said Mathew Staver, founder of Liberty Counsel and dean of the law school at

Liberty University, founded by the late Rev. Jerry Falwell. "It is outrageous and an offense to the First Amendment to punish a school official for a simple prayer."

Liberty Counsel said it is challenging the consent decree, maintaining that it "unconstitutionally infringes on the rights of teachers, administrators and students."

The ACLU, according to the Liberty Counsel statement, has begun "to go against individual employees." The organization said that neither man "willfully violated any orders of the court."

"We're not going after individuals," said Glenn Katon, director of the Religious Freedom Project for the ACLU of Florida. "We're just trying to make sure that school employees comply with the court order."

The ACLU did not request the criminal contempt charges against Lay and Freeman, he said; the judge initiated them after seeing a reference to the incident in a motion. And the ACLU is not involved in the criminal proceedings, he said.

"We certainly never suggested that anyone go to jail," Katon said.

Lay is not facing jail time for praying, he said, but for violating a court order.

"The moral of this story is, for us, this is about the students' right to be free from teachers and school administrators thrusting upon the students their religious beliefs," Katon said. "They keep talking about the religious rights of the administrators, but the administrators and the principals don't have any right to trumpet their religious beliefs in a school setting."

Neither Lay nor Freeman has been put on leave, according to the school district.

Pace is about 10 miles north of Pensacola, Florida.

[From an August 17 CNN.com article.]

"The prime assumption necessary to a believer is that 'god is good.' (This turns out only to be true if you are a poor speller.)" —Michael Coombs, from his new book *The Barbaric Bible*

Dr. George Barry Whatley

(January 5, 1921 – August 12, 2009)

Doctor George Whatley was a lifetime member of the *Freedom From Religion Foundation*, as well as a long time member and financial supporter of *Alabama Freethought Association* at Lake Hypatia in Talladega, AL.

His exemplary life, overcoming adversities and achieving success—demonstrating the results of tenacity and perseverance—was a role model to all who knew him.

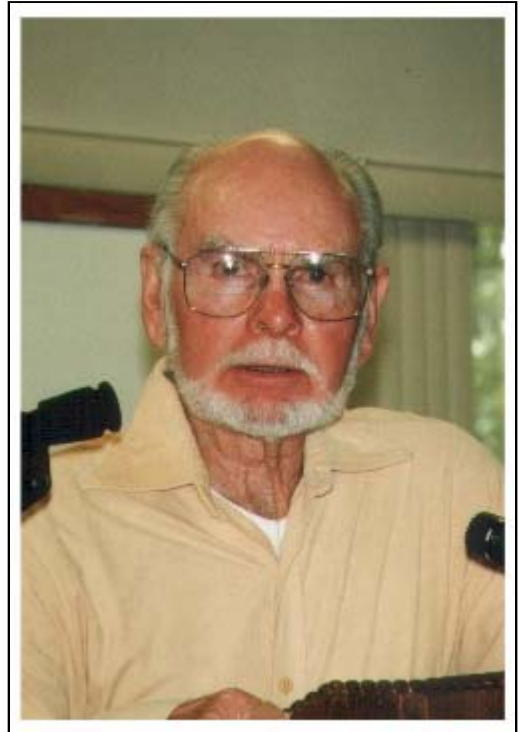
“Doc”, as his friends referred to him, was the oldest of 4 boys. During the depression in the early 30’s, his mother passed away and his father, unable to financially support the family, sent them to an orphanage. Although they were thoroughly brainwashed in Christianity there, somewhere along the way he saw the light and ultimately became a Freethinker /Atheist. After high school, he put himself through college working many odd jobs, where he met and married Willa Mae in 1942. Post graduating, he was drafted into the Armed Forces and served in the Navy during WW 11. This was followed by another 4 years of financial struggle getting through med school at the Medical College of Alabama, where he earned his medical degree in 1951. He and his wife, Willa Mae, RN, worked side by side. They enjoyed a flourishing medical practice until he retired in 1985. Doc was of the old school who believed in practicing medicine, not money, as many physi-

cians do today. He was a true humanitarian and his patients adored him. However, the one obstacle he was unable to overcome was saving his wife, who died of cancer in 1998.

Early on he learned the value of a dollar, and while other physicians spent money on extravagant play toys such as boats, airplanes, etc., Doc put himself on a stringent savings and investment plan, building towards his future. It was because of this that he was able to contribute to worthy causes, such as *Compassion in Dying of Oregon*. Doc was a strong advocate of the right to die with dignity. He also acquired his million+ dollar estate, 95% of which will go to many charitable organizations.

During his retirement years, Doc was most active mentally and physically. He enjoyed feeding his geese, bird watching, chess, reading, playing golf and was on the tennis courts every morning at 7 AM, Monday through Friday. Last year, he wrote and published a book, *Brain-Mind/Soul-Memory-Immortality*.

Then he had a severe stroke on 13 June this year. While he made a miraculous recovery to a large degree with post physical therapy, it left him relegated to a walker or cane and void of energy. When the VA doctor informed him that “this was as good as



it gets,” knowing the *quality* of life would never be restored, Doc chose to end his life with dignity on Wednesday, 12 August. He was a man true to his philosophies. His ashes will be spread over Lake Hypatia at an appropriate date, but according to his wishes there will be no memorial service....and he was adamant about that.

Doc’s legacy..... was to be a great humanitarian, and he most certainly did achieve his goal. He will be missed tremendously by all who loved and respected him.

[By Patsyann Pitts, a very close friend.]

Great Links on the Internet:

See an excellent 4-hour PBS program on the rise of Christianity at: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/watch/>

Penn and Teller speak on the Pope and the Vatican here: http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=af6_1251568394

Follow the bouncing ball and enjoy Cheryl Wheeler singing “Your God” at: <http://tinyurl.com/kmfupr>

Watch a good video on “Open-Mindedness” here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T69TOuqaqXI>

See the July 17 debate between Christopher Hitchens and Frank Turek on “Does God Exist?” at:

http://freethoughtpedia.com/wiki/Christopher_Hitchens_v_Frank_Turek

Christopher Hitchens speaks on Circumcision at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0nQ73aJY_s

Read about Jeff Sharlet and “The Family” here: <http://jeffsharlet.com/>

Read Greta Christina’s “But Is That It?” here: http://gretachristina.typepad.com/greta_christinas_weblog/2009/08/is-that-it.html

Read about the demise of Christianity in America from the Aug 15 Newsweek at: <http://www.newsweek.com/id/212155>

Read Gary Whittenberger’s article “A Governor’s Prayer for Rain” at: <http://www.skeptic.com/eskeptic/09-08-19>

Listen to the August 14 NPR interview with Blair Scott here: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=111885128>

For more Atheist links, see <http://www.4atheists.com/links.cfm>

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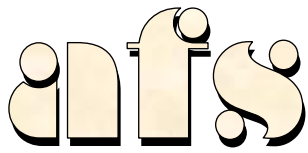
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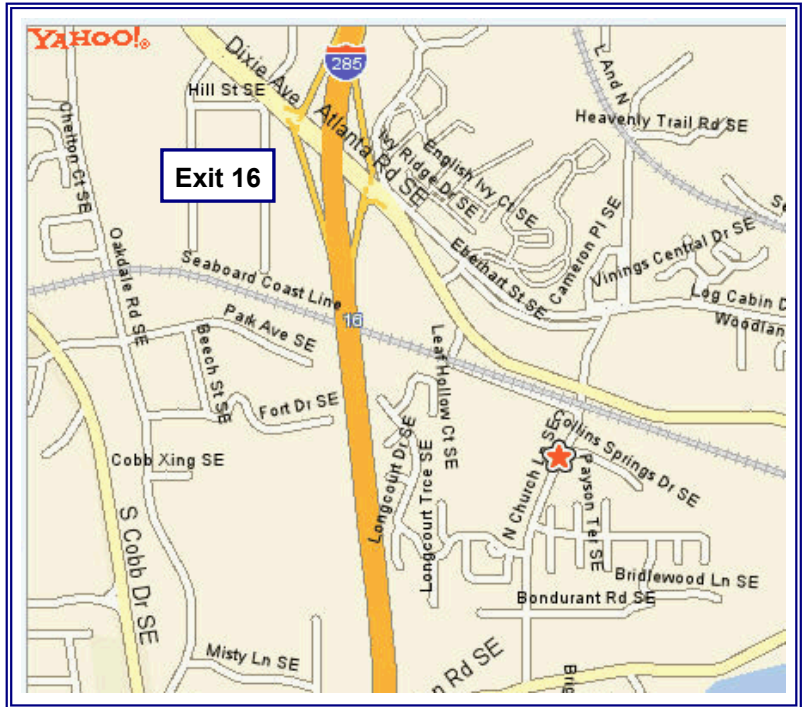
The September 13 Meeting:

1:00 at AF Hall

4775 N. Church Lane SE
Smyrna, GA

This Month's Speaker:

Leonard Adams



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