

Atlanta Freethought News

Dare to Think for Yourself.

An AFS Publication • Volume 17 Number 4 • April 2011

The April AFS Meeting

The April 10 AFS meeting will start with a Potluck Lunch at 12:00 followed by the general meeting at 1:00 in which **Ben Burchall** will speak on "Thoughts of a Black Atheist."

Ben is a former minister and is now the Executive Director of **Black Nonbelievers of Atlanta**. Before moving to Atlanta he was the leader of the Long Beach Freethought Society in Long Beach, CA.

Black Nonbelievers of Atlanta is a growing group which meets at several locations in the Atlanta area. (See their website at <http://blacknonbelievers.org/>.) They also sponsor a local **Recovering from Religion** chapter to assist those in need of support while questioning their faith or dealing with the challenges of leaving religion.

AFS meets at **Atlanta Freethought Hall**, 4775 N. Church Lane SE, in Smyrna, GA. To get there, take I-285 (the perimeter road around Atlanta) to Exit 16 (Atlanta Road). Turn toward Atlanta. Go ½ mile and then turn right onto N. Church Lane. Atlanta Freethought Hall is on the left.

The April Potluck Lunch

Before the regular April meeting, we will have a **Potluck Lunch**, starting at 12:00. 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 main dish;

H-P: Bring a desert;

Q-Z: Bring a side dish.

AFS will provide drinks, plates and silverware.

An AFS Yard Sale

The Atlanta Freethought Society will have a **Yard Sale** on the 3rd Saturday in April (April 16) at the AF Hall Pavilion. It will start at 10:00 AM and will be over by about 2:00 PM.

We are looking for lots of things to sell, so please bring all your unneeded items. We can store them in the building if you bring them to the April AFS meeting.

Please contact Steve Yothment if you can attend and help out at the yard sale. Thanks!

Other Meetings of Interest

The **Fellowship of Reason** meets on the first Sunday of every month at 10:30 AM at AF Hall. They also have meetings for book discussion, philosophy, a classic film course, and other events. See <http://www.fellowshipofreason.com>.

The **Humanists of Georgia** will meet on Sunday, April 17, at 1:00 at AF Hall. **Bob August** will talk on "The Pioneers of Jazz," with music samples and discussion. See the HGA website at <http://www.georgiahumanists.org/>.

The **Fayette Freethought Society** hosts a lunch at El Reposo Restaurant in Peachtree City, GA, on every first and third Saturday at noon. They also meet on other days for Book Club, philosophy and science discussions and civic activities. <http://www.meetup.com/Fayette-Freethought-Society/>

On Thursday, April 21, the Fayette Freethought Society will host a dinner/speaker at 7:00 PM at El Reposo Restaurant in Peachtree City. Cultural Anthropologist **James Lassiter** will talk on "The Top 10 Myths about Evolution" and "Secular Truth & Morality." <http://jameslassiter.blogspot.com/>

The **Atlanta Skeptics** will have their **Skeptics in the Pub**

meetup at 7:00 PM on Saturday, April 16, at Manuel's Tavern, 602 N. Highland Ave, Atlanta. Brian Thompson, the Amateur Scientist, will perform a live podcast. For details, see <http://www.atlantaskeptics.com>.

The **Atlanta Science Tavern** meetup will be at 7:00 PM on Saturday, April 23, at Manuel's Tavern, 602 N. Highland Ave NE in Atlanta. Scott Lilienfeld, Professor of Psychology at Emory University, will speak on "Science and Pseudoscience in Psychotherapy." See more and RSVP at <http://www.meetup.com/AtlantaScienceTavern/>.

GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths) will meet on Monday, April 11, at 7:00 PM at UUCG, 12 Bethesda Church Road, in Lawrenceville. <http://gust.domek.org/>.

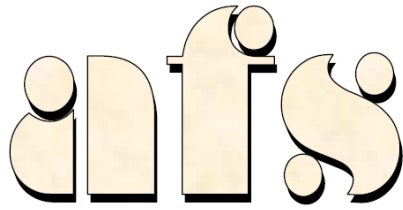
There will be a **meetup** for Atlanta atheists on Sunday, April 10, at 6:00 PM at Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur. (<http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/>)

Another **meetup** for Atlanta atheists is scheduled for Sunday, April 24, at 4:00 PM at Five Seasons Brewery, 5600 Roswell Rd, in Atlanta. (<http://www.meetup.com/>)

Progress on the Debt Drive

by Diane Buckner, Treasurer

The first quarter of our Pay Down the Debt Drive ended March 31, and the first payments to lenders have been made. Donors contributed \$5,028, making the total after matching \$10,056. We're in our second quarter, so please look at your own finances and see if you can find some extra money to help us get the full match.



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 usually start at 1:00 PM, but feel free to arrive at 12:00 for socializing. Visitors are always welcome.

Apr 10: Benjamin Burchall, Executive Director of Black Nonbelievers of Atlanta and former leader of the Long Beach Freethought Society, will speak on "Thoughts of a Black Atheist." (He recently moved to Atlanta.)

May 8: Ed Buckner, former president of American Atheists, speaker and debater in many places across the U.S. and in the United Kingdom, will speak on "To the Shores of Tripoli..."

Jun 12: TBD

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

Editor

Steve Yothment

How to Contact the Editor

Send correspondence to AFS at:
4775 N. Church Lane SE
Smyrna, GA 30080-7224
or phone Steve at 678-364-8703
or send e-mail to SteveYoth@aol.com.

Atlanta Freethought Society

President

Steve Yothment – 678-364-8703

VP for Internal Communication

Judy Thompson – 404-296-2020

VP for External Communication

Michael Buckner – 404-633-2486

Secretary

Dennis Martin – 404-817-0413

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Diane Buckner – 770-432-3049

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Mark Banks – 770-354-1546

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Tony King – 706-886-9224

Laura Ross – 404-634-1005

Lew Southern – 770-509-8272

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Add \$15 to receive AFNews by mail,

\$20 to Canada/Mexico, \$25 elsewhere.

Sustaining Members (individual) \$100.

Sustaining Members (households) \$125.

Life Membership is \$1000.

Subscriptions only are \$10 for 12 issues.

Please make checks and money orders payable to Atlanta Freethought Society.

Visit our website at

<http://www.AtlantaFreethought.org/>.

See AFS events and member views at:
[facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought](https://www.facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought).

Send E-mail to

afs@atlantafreethought.org.

AFS Webmasters: Freya Harris
and Michael Buckner

Atheist Billboards Promise Controversy, Promote National Convention

From the March 23 issue of *American Atheist News* (<http://www.atheists.org/>)

If you drive through Des Moines, Iowa, you're likely to encounter something more controversial than just who to vote for in the Iowa caucuses, or news about the upcoming "Pastors' Policy Briefing" bringing together right-wing religious leaders and wanna-be presidential hopefuls.

Five big yellow billboards declaring: "You Know There Is No God—We Know You're Right!" are being erected in key locations here to promote the the April 21-24, 2011 National Convention of American Atheists.

A similar billboard at the entrance to New York's iconic Lincoln Tunnel last December caused a national uproar with its depiction of the Christian nativity scene and the words: "You KNOW it's a Myth!"

American Atheists President Dave Silverman is enthusiastic about the new Des Moines billboard campaign.

"The purpose is to advertise our upcoming national convention in Des Moines to those who know god is im-

aginary," said Silverman. "Whether they are already active atheists or sitting in church pews, atheists are everywhere in Des Moines. We challenge the 'church-pew atheists' to stop living a lie for the sake of tradition, come out of the religion closet and live as out and proud atheists."

Silverman, added: "We are also sending a message to the theists in Des Moines: Atheists are a permanent and prominent fixture in America, even in the Bible Belt. We are the third-largest segment of Iowa's population, and we ask nothing more than equality achieved through the absolute separation of church and state."

Blair Scott, Communications Director for American Atheists, said that the upcoming Convention will take place at the Embassy Suites on the River Hotel, 101 E. Locust St, and promises an impressive line-up of speakers and events.

"We're bringing some of the world's leading atheists and secularists to Des

Moines for this convention," said Scott. He added that the weekend's religious-political meeting in Des Moines is particularly significant.

"One of our speakers, Jeff Sharlet, wrote 'The Family,' a powerful book warning Americans about religious zealots inside the political system," Scott said. "This weekend we can see that right here in Des Moines as pastors gather to tell their puppet politicians how to vote (on proposed laws)."

Among the speakers scheduled for the atheist event: Christopher Hitchens, author of numerous books including *God Is Not Great* and *Hitch-22*; physicist Laurence Krauss, who wrote *The Physics of Star Trek* and other works; comedian Paul Provenza; biologist P.Z. Myers; and blogger-commentator Greta Christina.

(**American Atheists** defends civil rights for nonbelievers, works for the total separation of Church and State, and addresses issues of First Amendment public policy.)

Catholic Church Urges HUD On LGBT Americans: "Let Them Go Homeless."

From a March 28 article by Scott Woledge at <http://www.dailykos.com/>

The Obama administration delivered a significant advance in the promise America would be a more equal and just place for LGBT citizens when it tasked the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) with addressing the problem of LGBT-discriminatory housing practices.

On Jan. 24, 2011 HUD announced the proposed new regulations, 76 Federal Register 15, with HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan saying: "We have a responsibility to make certain that public programs are open to all Americans. With this proposed rule, we will make clear that a person's eligibility for federal housing programs is, and should be, based on their need and not on their sexual orientation or gender identity.1"

"Not so fast!" says the Catholic Church.

Once again, they are desperately

afraid that they won't be able to participate in public programs and practice their private discrimination. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Press Release reads:

"The USCCB Urges HUD Not to include Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Among Protected Categories. We write on behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in opposition to a proposed regulation that would add 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity' to the list of protected categories for which discrimination in HUD programs is prohibited."

The full statement (PDF) is here². They have two points to make:

1. The Proposed Regulation Lacks Any Statutory Basis and Undermines the Policy of a Statute in Full Force, the Defense of Marriage Act.

Ah yes, the U.S. Government has never passed any LGBT-affirmative

legislation before, and ever it shall remain. Rea Carey of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force has this to say³ on the long-standing discriminatory practices in the public and private sectors:

"LGBT people remain particularly vulnerable in seeking or retaining housing due to widespread bias, discrimination and a lack of housing protections," said Carey. "Explicitly including LGBT people and our families in housing policies in order to better protect them and ensure fairness marks a proper governmental response and step toward rectifying a long-standing inequity."

The second point the USCCB has to make is:

2. The Proposed Regulation May Infringe Upon the Rights of Faith-Based Organizations Not to Facilitate Shared Housing Arrangements That Violate the Organization's Religious

Beliefs.

God told us to turn away gays, lesbians and trans-people, and you can't tell us otherwise.

In fact, this was a very welcome step in our Government assuming responsibility that taxpayer-supported programs would be made available to all taxpayers. And the issue of housing discrimination is a very serious problem that needs addressing.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force released a study⁴ just months ago on the state of discrimination in the trans-gender community. It's bad. Among their issues with housing:

* 19% reported having been refused a home or apartment and 11% reported being evicted because of their gender identity/expression.

* One-fifth (19%) reported experiencing homelessness at some point in their lives because they were transgender or gender non-conforming; the majority of those trying to access a homeless shelter were harassed by shelter staff or residents (55%), 29% were turned away altogether, and respondents reported various forms of direct housing discrimination – 19% reported having been refused a home or apartment and 11% reported being evicted because of their gender identity/expression.

* Almost 2% of respondents were currently homeless, which is almost twice the rate of the general population (1%)

* Respondents reported less than half the national rate of home ownership: 32% reported owning their home compared to 67% of the general population.

* Respondents who have experienced homelessness were highly vulnerable to mistreatment in public settings, police abuse and negative health outcomes.

Additionally, other studies have found an epidemic of homeless LGBT youth⁵:

Of the estimated 1.6 million homeless American youth, between 20 and 40 percent identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT).

Much more than these regulations needs to be done to address these problems. But, any movement that provides easier access to shelter and housing is a welcome step and likely to have a ripple effect. The Government can—and has a responsibility—to set the standards, and this HUD decision is a great incremental step in the right direction.

We've seen the Catholic Church pull these bullying tactic many times before. If the Church isn't down with providing services equitably, they're

free to get out of the business, as they did in Massachusetts⁶, and they threatened to in Washington, DC⁷. And here it is again. Asserting their religious freedom to collect tax-payer money and practice discriminatory policies at the same time.

It seems to me if the Church is going to involve itself in the public business of helping the less fortunate, it might contemplate whether it's appropriate to be sorting their charity cases into piles labeled "worthy" and "unworthy."

They might consult the Constitution for some relevant thoughts. They might consult their Bible as well.

Leviticus 25:35-36" "If any of your fellow Israelites become poor and are unable to support themselves among you, help them as you would a foreigner and stranger, so they can continue to live among you. 36 Do not take interest or any profit from them, but fear your God, so that they may continue to live among you."

The public commenting period on this regulation expired on March 25th.

Frankly, I rather resent being scolded on my morality by an organization that just paid out \$250,000,000 to settle 700 cases of abusing and raping children⁸, cases that will never be prosecuted. Bishops? Heal thine own souls please. Think of the children.

¹See <http://www.regs.lsnr.net/2011/03/76-federal-register-15-proposed-hud-rule-equal-access-to-housing-in-hud-programs-regardless-of-sexual-orientation-or-gender-identity-pp-4194-4198-january-24-2011/>

²See [http://www.usccb.org/ogc/HUD-Regulations-on-Sexual-Orientation-and-Gender-Identity\(March_2011\).pdf](http://www.usccb.org/ogc/HUD-Regulations-on-Sexual-Orientation-and-Gender-Identity(March_2011).pdf)

³See <http://lezgetreal.com/2011/01/hud-proposes-new-rules-for-gay-lesbian-transgender-equality-in-housing/>

⁴See http://www.thetaskforce.org/reports_and_research/ntds

⁵See http://www.thetaskforce.org/reports_and_research/homeless_youth

⁶See http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2006/03/11/catholic_charities_stuns_state_ends_adoptions/

⁷See <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/11/AR2009111116943.html>

⁸See http://thenewcivilrights_movement.com/catholic-church-settles-with-700-abuse-rape-victims-for-250-million/news/2011/03/28/18311

Recent Internet Articles:

Non-believers Giving Aid – Support for the Haiti Tragedy and Beyond: <http://givingaid.richarddawkins.net/>

Freedom From Religion Foundation and North Carolina freethought group put up 12 colorful billboards:

<http://richarddawkins.net/articles/609448-triangle-freethought-society-launches-new-out-of-the-closet-billboard-campaign>

Americans United Condemns Supreme Court Ruling Dismissing Challenge To State Aid To Arizona Religious Schools:

<http://www.au.org/media/press-releases/archives/2011/04/au-condemns-supreme-court.html>

N.C. church pastor fired for questioning whether hell exists: http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/2011/03/24/2011-03-24_chad_holtz_methodist_church_pastor_in_north_carolina_fired_for_questioning_wheth.html

“Spreading the Good News About Atheism”: Why We Need Atheist Ad Campaigns: <http://www.alternet.org/belief/150399>

Putting Faith in its Place: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wV_REEdvx0&feature=player_embedded

You Don't Need God – to hope, to care, to love, to live: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D0SqlG8_gVY

Huckabee Says Americans Should Be Indoctrinated at Gunpoint (!?)

By B.E. Wilson, from <http://www.readersupportednews.org/>

Did Mike Huckabee just flush his presidential aspirations down the proverbial toilet? Well, if American mainstream media has an ounce of journalistic gumption remaining the answer most certainly would be “yes.” Huckabee has just been caught on video, at a Christian supremacist conference, stating that Americans should be forcibly indoctrinated at gunpoint.¹ The organization which hosted the “Rediscover God In America” conference, United in Purpose², has edited Huckabee’s comment from footage of his speech, but not before People For The American Way’s Kyle Mantyla³ captured the unedited footage, in which Mike Huckabee states, “I almost wish that there would be, like, a simultaneous telecast, and all Americans would be forced—forced at gunpoint no less—to listen to every David Barton message, and I think our country would be better for it. I wish it’d happen.”

David Barton⁴ is the leading promoter of a brand of falsified American history altered to support the claim

that America was founded as a Christian, rather than a secular, nation. As Chris Rodda, who has authored an entire book⁵ debunking Barton’s brand of pseudo-history, writes⁶:

I was quite surprised... to come across a video clip from this conference on the People for the American Way (PFAW) Right Wing Watch blog with the headline “Huckabee: Americans Should Be Forced, At Gunpoint, To Learn From David Barton.” I had watched Huckabee’s speech. How on earth could I have missed a statement like that? Well, I didn’t. It had been edited out of the webcast that I had watched.

Kyle Mantyla over at PFAW’s Right Wing Watch had recorded Huckabee’s speech when it was streamed live on Thursday, and posted the ‘forced at gunpoint’ clip on Friday. By Saturday, when I watched the webcast on the United in Purpose website, that part of Huckabee’s speech was edited out.

The webcast that I saw showed Barton leaving the stage as he ended

his presentation, then the screen going black for a moment, and then what appeared to be the beginning of Huckabee’s speech. What was edited out was Barton returning to the stage to introduce Huckabee, and the first two minutes and forty-five seconds of Huckabee’s speech, during which Huckabee made his ‘gunpoint’ comment and praised David Lane, the man behind all of the American “Renewal” and “Restoration” projects that have popped up across the country during the past few elections.

What Chris Rodda has to say about this has special weight given that she’s arguably the most indefatigable author to challenge David Barton’s sprawling falsified American history. Chris is the author of the book *Liars for Jesus: The Religious Right’s Alternative Version of American History*,⁷ which prominently features David Barton, head of Wallbuilders⁸ and arguably king of the “liars for Jesus”. Rodda is Head Researcher for the Military Religious Freedom Foundation⁹.

¹See the video of Huckabee’s comments here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N1O1dvN8lag#t=1m6s>

²The United in Purpose website is <http://www.unitedinpurpose.org/>.

³PFAW article, video: <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/huckabee-americans-should-be-forced-gunpoint-learn-david-barton>

⁴For more on David Barton, see <http://www.talk2action.org/story/2009/7/17/34930/6724>

⁵See the Liars For Jesus website at <http://liarsforjesus.com>

⁶See Chris Rodda’s article here: <http://www.talk2action.org/story/2011/3/30/155256/894>

⁷Learn more about the book at <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1419644386/ref=nosim/liarsforjesus-20>.

⁸See the Wallbuilders website at <http://www.Wallbuilders.com/>.

⁹See the MRFF website at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/>.

Newt Gingrich Concerned About “Atheist Islamists”

By Kendra Marr, from <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0311/52023.html>

Newt Gingrich stood before thousands of evangelical churchgoers on Sunday night, March 27, to deliver a dire warning that the nation’s Christian roots are under attack.

“I have two grandchildren—Maggie is 11, Robert is 9,” Gingrich said at Cornerstone Church in San Antonio, TX. “I am convinced that if we do not decisively win the struggle over the nature of America, by the time they’re my age they will be in a secular athe-

ist country, potentially one dominated by radical Islamists and with no understanding of what it once meant to be an American.”

The former House Speaker held up his own faith (he converted to Catholicism two years ago) as proof of his undying patriotism. He lashed out at the college professors and mainstream media he says are seeking to wipe out the Founding Father’s Christian values. And he targeted the judges who

he charges are effectively rewriting the Constitution.

But Gingrich was mum on his own controversial past, one of martial indiscretions and divorces that have made courting religious conservatives a tall task as he nears a likely presidential run. Over the last year, through religious news outlets, Gingrich has sought to explain and seek forgiveness for those infidelities. Standing on the dais of Cornerstone

Church, a prominent evangelical congregation led by the pastor John Hagee, Gingrich avoided the subject. Just hours earlier, Gingrich had insisted on Fox News that leading the impeachment charge against Bill Clinton while in an affair himself did not amount to hypocrisy.

"I'm really here as a historian," he said in opening his remarks Sunday night. "I'm not preacher. I'm not a theologian."

The evening worship was a boisterous celebration of American patriotism. A 100-person choir sang "God Bless America" and "America the Beautiful" between hymns. The church's orchestra struck up the anthem for each of the five military branches and a loud cheer went up for veterans and active duty members who stood up during their song.

Gingrich said he hadn't intended to fight another political battle, and was looking forward to relaxing in private

life after leaving public office. But in 2002, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the phrase "under God" in the pledge of allegiance was unconstitutional (the ruling was later overturned).

"I had been watching the courts grow steadily more secular and steadily more anti-religious starting with the 1963 school prayer decision," he said. "But for some reason this particular decision struck me as so blindingly stupid, so profoundly un-American."

Gingrich has turned to religion with missionary zeal in recent years, producing two documentaries and a book. He launched a nonprofit organization whose goal is to "preserve America's Judeo-Christian heritage," and filled its board with evangelical leaders. Renewing American Leadership has a political arm that recently raised thousands of dollars to help fund a successful campaign that denied retention of three Iowa Supreme

Court justices who struck down a ban against same-sex marriage in the state.

"Bravery will come from our churches, our synagogues, everyday folks," Gingrich said. "It won't come from the elites. It won't [come from] those currently in power because if it could have come from them, it would have."

As congregants streamed out of the church, a number spoke approvingly of Gingrich's proposal to mandate the teaching of the Declaration of Independence to elementary school children and insist that immigrants learn more American history.

"If we don't have someone who knows his history, we're doomed," said Mike Goodlett, a regular churchgoer.

Bob Conant, who came to Cornerstone for the first time to see Gingrich, called the speech "very uplifting."

"I was really impressed with his sincere faith," he said. "He didn't brag, but you can tell he's a man of God."

Roy Moore Says He Might Run for President

The Montgomery Advertiser reported on March 28 that former Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore says he's considering seeking the Republican presidential nomination.

Moore told The Associated Press that he's being encouraged to run by supporters in Iowa and elsewhere.

Moore is a conservative Christian who came to prominence as a circuit judge when he posted the Ten Commandments on his courtroom wall. Later, he was removed from office as chief justice for refusing a federal judge's order to move a granite Ten Commandments monument from Alabama's judicial building.

Moore says he has made public appearances in Iowa four times in recent months. The Iowa Caucuses in January will be the first test for 2012 presidential candidates.

Moore made an unsuccessful run for the Republican nomination for Alabama governor last year.

The editors of the Anniston Star said on March 31 that Moore is touting his military experience, which President Obama and other GOP candidates lack, as one of the reasons why his possible candidacy would make sense. Moore is a West Point graduate and was a platoon leader in the Vietnam War.

However, the editors noted that "A more plausible explanation for Moore's possibility of a White House run is that he is not truly interested in the presidency. Although Moore has continued to speak to various groups around the country, he no longer gets the national, front-page attention he once did."

"If he plans to stay in the forefront of the Christian conservative move-

ment, he needs a bully pulpit from which to state his case and champion his cause. A run for the presidency would give him that."

"In all likelihood, Moore may see a national campaign for the GOP nomination as a way to take part in a highly publicized forum. There, with constant media coverage, he would be free to address the issues near to his heart. It would also allow him to lay claim to a larger leadership role among Christian conservatives. 'It would give him a platform for his speaking,' retired University of Alabama political scientist William Stewart recently told the Associated Press."

"A campaign for the Republican nomination, though unlikely to succeed, can accomplish other things. That may be what Roy Moore has in mind."

Fulton County Chaplain Retires; County was paying over \$200,000 per year for Chaplain Program:

http://www.myfoxatlanta.com/dpp/news/i-team-fulton-chaplain-retirement-033111?CMP=201104_emailshare

Neal Boortz: Georgia's theocrats will find new cause:

<http://www.ajc.com/opinion/neal-boortz-georgias-theocrats-877641.html>

Baptists, Jefferson Led Campaign for Religious Freedom

By Gary Stilwell, from the March 23 issue of *The Tallahassee Democrat*

A Connecticut Baptist Association deserves a debt of gratitude for the continued freedom of religion in the United States because of its advocacy and a letter to President Thomas Jefferson.

The Danbury Baptists, a religious minority in Connecticut, had complained to Jefferson that their state gave religious liberties as “favors granted, and not as inalienable rights; and these favors we receive at the expense of such degrading acknowledgements as are inconsistent with the rights of freemen.” They also stated “that religion is at all times and places a matter between God and individuals.” Jefferson’s reply to the Danbury Baptist Association contains the famous phrase: “a wall of separation between church and state,” by which Jefferson was elucidating the “establishment clause” of the First Amendment.

Jefferson’s reply to the Danbury Baptists on Jan. 1, 1802: “To ... a committee of the Danbury Baptist association ... Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between Church & State.”

“Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of

the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights,

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...” (The Establishment Clause and Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution)

convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties.”

Jefferson was a man of religious conviction; that religion was a very personal matter, one in which the government had no business getting involved. Europe was bloodstained from centuries of religious warfare and when the state established a church, it was religion that deteriorated from the ideals of its founder. History had taught the hard lesson that in a theocracy it was not divinity, but corrupted men who ruled.

Of course, lesser men condemned him for being nonreligious, especially for his role in the passage of the 1786 Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom. Nevertheless, Jefferson took greatest pride in his work on the Virginia Statute, said by James Madison to have “extinguished forever the ambitious hope of making laws for the human mind.”

Act for Establishing Religious Freedom, Jan. 16, 1786: The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom disestablished the Church of England, the official state church of the colony since the first English settlers arrived in 1607. Baptists led the campaign, joined by Presbyterians and others

during the American Revolution, which over time would provide full freedom of religion to all Virginians. Congress drew on this law when drafting the Bill of Rights in 1789, which prohibited the government from abridging religious freedoms.

Jefferson’s Bill to Establish Religious Freedom in Virginia declared in part, “We the General Assembly of Virginia do enact that no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burdened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer, on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities.”

The bill became law on Jan. 16, 1786. Jefferson was prouder of having written this bill than of being the third president as shown by his own epitaph: “Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, Author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, And Father of the University of Virginia.” Jefferson is one of America’s greatest heroes. If not for him and his valiant support of religious minorities, we would not be the free people we are today.

Gary A Stilwell, Ph.D. is the author of *Christianity: 5,000 Years of History and Development* and *Where Was God: Evil, Theodicy and Modern Science*. He is the Director of Communications for the Center for Inquiry-Tallahassee.

12 Killed In Afghanistan Amid Protests Over Quran Burning

It’s One Classic Reason for Why Religion Should Be Shunned

Twelve people were killed Friday, April 1, in an attack on a U.N. compound in northern Afghanistan that followed a demonstration against the reported burning last month of a Quran in Florida, authorities said.

The fatalities comprised seven U.N. workers and five demonstrators, officials said. Another 24 people were wounded.

U.N. Peacekeeping Director Alain Le Roy said the seven U.N. fatalities

were international staffers — three civilians and four international security guards. No Afghan U.N. staff members were among the dead, he said.

“I understand there were hundreds, if not thousands, of demonstrators.

Some of them were clearly armed and they stormed into the building.”

He said the security guards tried their best to halt the demonstrators’ advance, but were overwhelmed.

Le Roy said it was not clear that the United Nations was the target. “It happened to be the U.N. because the U.N. is on the ground.”

Five demonstrators were killed in the violence; one person’s throat was cut, he said.

Haji Mohammad, a businessman in Mazar-e-Sharif, said that the incident began after Friday prayers, when many people joined a protest against the burning of the Quran. People calling “Death to America” marched to the U.N. compound and broke in, he said. At that, gunfire broke out and “I saw protesters shot to death.”

A student in Mazar-e-Sharif said he and his friends joined the protesters, who numbered in the hundreds. “When we reached the UNAMA office, we came under gunfire by Afghan security guards. Protesters became angry and stormed the building.”

The student said some of the protesters found several loaded AK-47s and used them to kill security guards

and other people inside the building.

The attack followed a demonstration against the reported burning of a Quran by Florida pastor Terry Jones, who gained international attention last year when he announced that he was planning to burn a Quran, the U.N. source with knowledge of events said.

Jones is the pastor of the 60-member Dove World Outreach Center church near Gainesville. Last year, after an outcry followed his announcement of plans to burn a Quran on the ninth anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, he canceled them. Last month, however, he reportedly did burn Islam’s holy book.

The church says on its website that it planned to put the Quran on trial on March 20, and, “if found guilty of causing murder, rape and terrorism, it will be executed!” Another post on the website, which uses an alternative spelling for the book, says “the Koran was found guilty” during the mock trial and “a copy was burned inside the building.”

On April 1, Jones said in an e-mailed statement that the attack in Afghanistan shows that “the time has come to hold Islam accountable.”

“We must hold these countries and people accountable for what they have done as well as for any excuses they may use to promote their terrorist activities,” he said.

Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai called the attacks “an act against Islam and Afghan values.”

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said the victims were only trying to help the Afghan people.

“In targeting them, the attackers have demonstrated an appalling disregard for what the U.N. and the entire international community are trying to do for the benefit of all Afghans,” he said.

U.S. President Barack Obama also condemned the attack. “We stress the importance of calm and urge all parties to reject violence and resolve differences through dialogue,” he said.

The Council on American Islamic Relations released a statement condemning the attack. “Nothing can justify or excuse this attack,” said the group, which describes itself as America’s largest Muslim civil liberties and advocacy organization.

[This article is from multiple news articles about the Afghanistan event.]

Secular Student Alliance Doubles Number of Affiliates

By Katie Glaeser, from <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2011/02/10/>

An umbrella group for secular students says it has doubled its size in two years, with 250 affiliates in high school and college campuses around the world.

“We’re witnessing a major shift in our society,” **Secular Student Alliance** communications director Jesse Galef said in a February 9 press release.

Founded in 2000, the Secular Student Alliance represents “atheists, agnostics, humanists, freethinkers, skeptics, naturalists, brights, Pastafarians and many others,” according to the group’s website¹.

Galef attributed the growth to more nonreligious young people feeling comfortable with publicly expressing their ideas. “We used to go out and

find them,” said Galef. “Now, they’re springing up everywhere and finding us, asking to join the movement.”

Randall Bourquin, founder and president of the **UGAtheists**² at the University of Georgia, says it’s important for young people to have a group among whom they can share beliefs—or lack of them. He says the nonreligious youth demographic has long been neglected.

“I thought about doing something like this in high school,” Bourquin said. “It was just so outlandish, I would have been ousted.” It took Bourquin until his sophomore year in college before he felt comfortable enough to share his atheism.

UGAtheists now has weekly gath-

erings and volunteers for Habitat for Humanity builds. They also sometimes partner with religiously affiliated groups on campus.

Bourquin said one focus of this group is to combat negative stereotypes about atheists. According to the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, a quarter of people under age 30 consider themselves atheist, agnostic, or nothing in particular.

“Our movement will continue to grow and empower more students to improve their communities,” SSA executive director August Brunsman said in the group’s February 9 press release. “The question is not whether we can get a group on every campus, but when it will happen.”

¹ See the Secular Student Alliance website at <http://www.secularstudents.org/>.

² See the UGAtheist website at <http://sites.google.com/site/ugatheists/home>.

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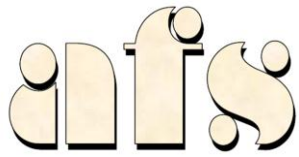
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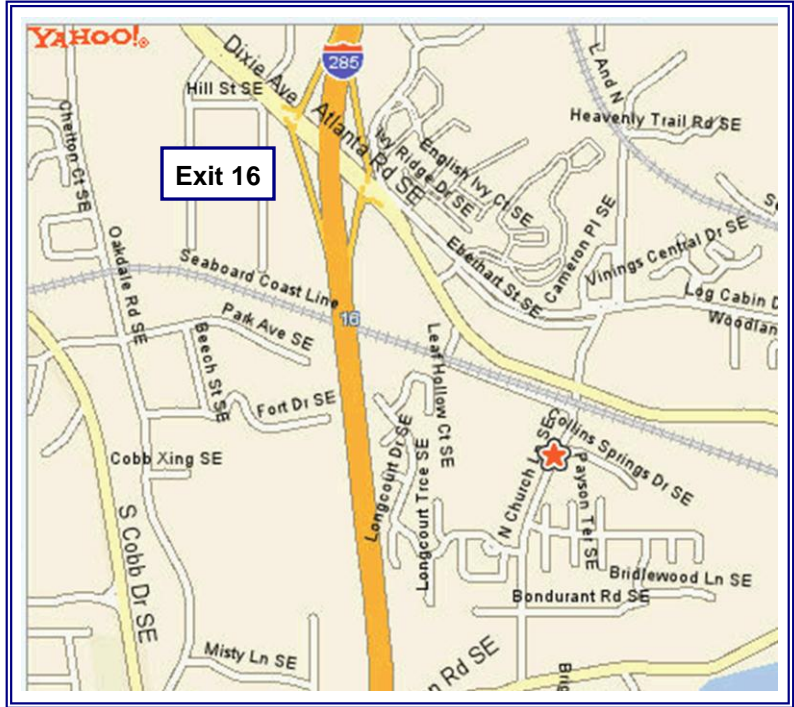
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1:00 at AF Hall,
(Potluck Lunch at 12:00)
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Smyrna, GA**

**This Month's Speaker:
Benjamin Burchall**



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