

# Atlanta Freethought News

*Dare to Think for Yourself.*

An AFS Publication

• Volume 18 Number 5

• May 2012

## The May AFS Meeting

The May 13 AFS meeting will include a **Potluck Lunch** at 12:00 and a talk by **Dr. Robert Blaskiewicz** at 1:00 on "Conspiracy Theories, or Why Does the Antichrist Want to Vaccinate You With Nanothermitic Aspartame?"

Dr. Blaskiewicz is an English professor at Georgia Tech where he teaches writing and research classes that take extraordinary claims as their topic. He is a coeditor of the website Skeptical Humanities, edits a pedagogy column for the James Randi Educational Foundation, and writes a monthly column as "The Conspiracy Guy" for the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry. See the websites at:

<http://skepticalhumanities.com/>

<http://www.csicop.org/author/rblaskiewicz>

<http://www.facebook.com/robert.blaskiewicz>

Regarding his talk, he says, "Conspiracy theories are fantastic belief systems that share many characteristics with religion. This talk examines the scope and variety of modern American conspiracy theories."

The meeting will be at 1:00 at **Atlanta Freethought Hall**, 4775 N. Church Lane, Smyrna, GA. Visitors are always welcome at AFS meetings.

## The May Potluck Lunch

Before the regular May 13 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:

A-G: Bring a side dish;

H-P: Bring a main dish;

Q-Z: Bring a desert.

AFS will provide drinks, plates and silverware.

## The May AFS Social

The May AFS Social will be at Panahar Restaurant, 3375 Buford Hwy, Atlanta, on Saturday, May 19, at 1:00PM. This restaurant features Bangladeshi food (different!) and is an old favorite of AFS members.

## AFS Meetings and Activities

May 13: AFS Potluck Lunch, AF Hall, 12:00 noon.

May 13: AFS General Meeting, AF Hall, 1:00 PM

May 19: AFS Social at Panahar Restaurant, 1:00 PM

## The AFS Booth at the Inman Park Festival...

(Read more about it on page 3!)



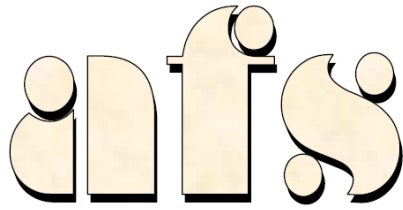
Photo by Ed Buckner

Hundreds of people came by the AFS booth. We had books, newsletters, bumper stickers and buttons on display or for sale. Seated at the booth are Amy, Diane and Roberto.

At right, Rick Pace shows off his T-shirt. On the front, it reads "THEY CAN'T ALL BE RIGHT..." So, what's on the back? See page 4!



Photo by Ed Buckner



# Atlanta Freethought Society

## Programs and Speakers

All programs are on the second Sunday of each month at 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.

May 13: Dr. Robert Blaskiewicz, a professor at Georgia Tech, will speak on "Conspiracy Theories, or Why Does the Antichrist Want to Vaccinate You With Nanothermic Aspartame?"

June 10: Gina Colaianni, a blogger and Secretary of the Philosophy Student Association, will talk on Philosophy.

July 8: TBD

Aug 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](mailto: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

### Treasurer

Diane Buckner – 770-432-3049

### Board of Directors

Mark Banks – 770-354-1546

Bob Konopelski – 404-352-1230

Dwight Lyman – 404-634-1005

Rick Pace – 770-912-6974

Laura Ross – 404-634-1005

Lew Southern – 770-509-8272

## Atlanta Freethought News

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Membership in AFS is \$50/year  
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Sustaining Membership is \$100.  
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[afs@atlantafreethought.org](mailto:afs@atlantafreethought.org).

**AFS Webmaster:** Michael Buckner  
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**AFS Facebook Site:** Laura Ross

# AFS at Inman Park Festival a Great Success – and Even Greater Fun

By Ed Buckner

All photos are by Ed Buckner.

Thanks to the singular efforts of **Rick Pace** and support from many other AFS members, the Atlanta Freethought Society was well represented at the Inman Park Festival on 28-29 April. We gained as an organization, and those of us who could make it had a blast.

Rick, **Diane**, and I were there throughout, but it was Rick who led the efforts in almost every way: he suggested this, signed us up, brought the tent and chairs we used, engaged passersby cheerfully and effectively – and he brought along **Amy Vasinko**, who contributed at every point, from setup to closing for the day, on Saturday. The T-shirts Rick designed and offered for sale were easily our best attention-getter and marketing tool, with *many* people stopping to read the front and back of his shirt.

**Steve Yothment** helped with setup and brought books and materials from Smyrna. **Roberto Moraes**, who seemed to be recognized by nearly every progressive in Atlanta at our booth, helped generate stimulating conversation for several hours. **Lew Southern** came both days, engaging many who walked up and spinning tales for the other AFS members. **Paul Broman** worked the booth for several hours and told us tales of Scientology from Florida (a possible future AFS program?). **Bob** and **Cindy Konopelski** dropped by, despite Cindy's being a full nine months along. (**Robert John Konopelski, Jr.**, was in fact born less than a week later, at 10:02 a.m. on 3 May – mother and baby are both doing well.) **Judy Thompson** ordered and donated some fresh bumper stickers, buttons, etc. (though many sold, there are still some available, so be sure to check out our merchandise table at the next AFS meeting). **Charles Shapiro** delivered the stuff Judy bought for us to the booth and was easily the most impressive single performer in the Inman Park Festival parade. We knew Charles was amazing, but seeing him ride his unicycle through the crowded parade route *and* juggle several pins while he



Yes, that's AFS member Charles Shapiro! Go Charles!

maneuvered was incredible.

The whole festival was grand, with as thorough a mix of people—in terms of dress, ethnicity, age, apparent interests, comic, musical, or athletic focus—as I can remember seeing anywhere. Conversation with those who came up to us was almost all pleasant, engaging, and easygoing—and it included some prospects, at least one new member/donor, **Walter Proctor**, and some old friends and former members (**Marie Andrade**, for example). And we sold enough stuff to pay the booth fee and then some.

Congressman and civil rights hero **John Lewis** was in the parade on Saturday, and on Sunday he came through again—and he visited the AFS booth, shaking hands with everyone there. He said of my “Keep Church and State Separate” sticker (thanks, American United) that he “really liked” my sticker.

Other than successfully advancing freethought and promoting AFS, the best thing about the festival was the parade. I’m not all that much of a fan of the standard American idea of a parade—displays of narrow-minded and rigid ideas of beauty and patriotism, plus lots of pompous officials of all sorts. This was as different as you can imagine: beauty queens of all ages and both sexes; satirical convertibles that “celebrated” the Secret Service (lots of “professional women” plus guys walking beside the convertible in suits and with thick wads of cash peeking out from their lapel pockets); the Inman Park Precision Attaché Case drill team (suits and ties and brief cases, plus colorful umbrellas, all bandied about in “precision” moves); a three-tiered unicycle rider; the group from The East Atlanta Society for the Feeble of Mind and Body in Victorian era costumes; **Charles Shapiro**; and much, much more. The more included hundreds of children, playing instruments, cheering, throwing out candy to the crowds, and soaking up attention.

The next time AFS participates in an event (**Rick Pace** will probably have sign-up sheets), don’t miss it if you can help it.



Congressman John Lewis and Ed Buckner



Paul Broman



Lew Southern



A happy customer shows off his new T-shirt.



Yep!

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# Should Atheists Slam Religion or Show Respect?

**As the atheist movement expands, we need to consider whether non-belief will gain more traction if prominent atheists are more respectful of religious people — by Valerie Tarico**

**A** Midwestern atheist told me of sitting in her lunchroom at work and listening as conversation opened up around her about religious differences. Her co-workers included several kinds of Protestants, a Catholic, even a Jew. Sensing they were in risky territory, they worked to find common ground. “At least there aren’t any atheists around here,” one woman said in a warm inclusive tone.

What’s a girl to do in a situation like that? Disclosure feels risky because it is.

In 2008, Atheist Nexus<sup>1</sup> had “coming out” stories from over 8000 visitors who described themselves as atheist, humanist, freethinker, agnostic, skeptic, and so forth. Some of the tales are painful to read. One woman said, “I’ve had people literally, physically BACK away from me upon hearing I am atheist. My children were told to run away from our evil home.”

The consequences of anti-atheist stigma are public as well as private. Most self-described atheists are acutely aware of survey results showing that U.S. atheists are less electable than reviled minorities including Muslims and gays. Seven states still have laws on the books that ban non-believers from holding public office. A Florida minister whose deconversion recently made national news said that job interviews were cancelled when possible employers found out.

In the minds of many believers atheism is linked with immorality, and despite mounds of evidence to the contrary, religious leaders reinforce this stereotype.

Anti-atheist stereotypes work to bond believers together in part because many Americans think that they have never met an atheist. A stigmatized minority can be the nameless faceless “other” that people love to hate as long as members remain nameless and faceless. But as the gay rights movement has shown, things get more complicated—and attitudes

start changing—when we realize we are talking about our friends, beloved family members, and co-workers. Coming out has been such a powerful change agent for gays, that atheists are explicitly taking a page from the gay rights movement and launching visibility campaigns.

That is easier than it sounds. Among atheist and humanist leaders, passionate disagreements have erupted about what kind of visibility will actually help advance acceptance and rights for those who eschew supernaturalism.

As a social cause, rather than just a life stance, atheism was catapulted forward by 9-11 and the ascendancy of the Religious Right. Cognitive scientist Sam Harris says that he began writing *The End of Faith* the morning after seeing the trade towers bombed with jet fuel and airline passengers. Biologist Richard Dawkins, who had previously hosted a gracious series of televised interviews exploring faith and non-faith, shifted tone and became a patriarch of anti-theistic activism. Journalist Christopher Hitchens wrote his scathing indictment, *God is not Great*. Doubters started coming out of the closet.

It takes energy and guts to buck taboos and norms as strong as those surrounding religion, and so the first out the door were anti-theists who felt so strongly that they were willing to throw themselves into the fray, do or die. The “New Atheists” attracted a preponderance of young males who largely fit godless stereotypes: some defiant, some nerdy, many hyper-intellectual. All were, for one reason or another, either impervious to rules protecting faith from criticism or willing to pay a price for breaking those rules.

Some of these firebrands can be counted among today’s leaders, and many have kept an edge that is honed by the seemingly relentless assaults on science and civil rights perpetrated

by Christian and Muslim fundamentalists. They remain fiercely defiant, unapologetic about their scorn for religion, willing to use shock tactics if that’s what it takes to break what they see as a terminal religious stranglehold on society. Several years back, a group called the Rational Response Squad promoted a “blasphemy challenge” urging people to videotape themselves denying the Holy Spirit because one Bible writer calls such blasphemy an unforgiveable sin. In 2010, a Seattle cartoonist launched “Everybody Draw Mohammed Day” after learning about death threats against Trey Parker and Matt Stone for depicting Mohammed in *Southpark*. This winter American Atheists provoked quite an outcry with a billboard that quoted a Bible verse: “Slaves Submit to Your Masters – Colossians 3:22.”

The organizers of these irreverent events see them as advancing values that they cherish deeply: freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of conscience and freedom from cruelty grounded in dogma or superstition. And yet, criticism of such in-your-face attacks on religion has often come from people who share their goals. As the atheist visibility movement has expanded, quieter, more diplomatic leaders have emerged. Many of them insist that aggressive confrontation does more harm than good—that atheists need to be changing stereotypes, not reinforcing them, and that there is such a thing as bad publicity.

Blogger Greta Christina has said that atheists should “let firebrands be firebrands and diplomats be diplomats.” She argues that both confrontational and collaborative tactics made the gay rights movement stronger and will do the same for non-theism. But what kind of confrontation? Ugly partisanship can backfire. For example, Fred Phelps and Sean Harris give homophobia such a vile face that they trigger disgust, pushing people in the

<sup>1</sup>See the abundant footnotes for this article at [http://www.alternet.org/story/155278/should\\_atheists\\_slam\\_religion\\_or\\_show\\_respect/](http://www.alternet.org/story/155278/should_atheists_slam_religion_or_show_respect/)

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opposite direction. Some atheist activism may do the same.

Even reasonable confrontation tactics can backfire –especially in the hands of a hostile journalist. Cathy Lynn Grossman of USA Today attended the April Reason Rally in D.C., a gathering she described as “hell-bent on damning religion and mocking beliefs.” There she found plenty which, when taken out of context, could be used to reinforce stereotypes. Her article headlined with a quote from Richard Dawkins, encouraging non-believers to “show contempt” for baseless dogmas. It was accompanied by a picture of Jen McCreight cheerfully carrying a sign that read: *Obama isn't trying to destroy religion, I am.* Other speakers were depicted as ornery, offensive and more than a little scary.

Ad campaigns by nontheist organizations reflects a struggle to find messages that connect with either teetering believers or closeted skeptics while avoiding backlash. In 2009 a London publicity campaign went viral internationally with bus ads proclaiming, “There’s probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life.” A variety of billboard campaigns have followed, some more provocative than others: “Extraordinary Claims Require Extraordinary Evidence,” “You Know It’s a Myth. Solstice is the Reason for the Season.” “In the Beginning Man Created God.” “We are all Atheists about Most Gods; Some of Us Just Go One God Further.” “Don’t Believe in God? Join the Club.” All have drawn protests or vandalism from indignant theists.

It may be almost impossible to avoid causing offense while challenging the religious status quo. Non-theist organizations have traditionally ignored communities of color, but African Americans for Humanism recently launched an outreach campaign with the tag line, “Doubts About Religion? You’re one of many.” Billboards and posters show faces of familiar Black leaders – as well as ordinary group members. Coalition of Reason organizer Alix Jules of Dallas

says that even this understated approach is plenty controversial for two reasons: Almost 90% of African Americans express certainty about the existence of God, and honoring religion is seen as a matter of loyalty.

In Halifax, Nova Scotia, Humanists of Canada wanted to run a bus campaign that said, simply, *You can be good without God.* But the public bus agency refused the ads because they “could be too controversial and upsetting to people.” One reader commented, “I think we should make atheist ads as innocent and non-confrontational as possible. Not because we should avoid controversy, but because if we will get the controversy no matter what we put up, and the kinder and gentler our message the more obvious the hypocrisy of our critics. I’m hard put to think of one more innocent than this one, though.”

Humanist blogger and speaker James Croft, a doctoral student in educational philosophy at Harvard, insists that it can be done.

In their effort to find a balance between “strong and civil,” the Freedom From Religion Foundation has moved toward more personal messages, ones that offer a glimpse into a godless individual (or family) rather than some form of universal claim. Since 2007, they have purchased billboard space for messages including “Imagine No Religion,” “Beware of Dogma,” and “Thank Darwin: Evolve Beyond Belief.” But their latest campaign, “Out of the Closet,” puts real names and faces together with simple statements of values or disbelief: “Atheists work to make this life heavenly,” says Dr. Stephen Uhl of Tucson on one sign. “Compassion is my religion,” says Olivia Chen, a Columbus student whose appears on another. A recent campaign in Clarkville, Tennessee, merely shows a young woman identified as Grace beside the words, “This is what an atheist looks like.”

Atheist visibility is more than ad campaigns. In 2009 psychologist Dale McGowan, author of *Parenting Beyond Belief*, launched the Foundation Beyond Belief, a tool that lets the non-

religious visibly contribute to non-profits working on education, health, human rights and the environment. Last year, the foundation added a donation category called “Challenge the Gap” that builds bridges by contributing to the work of religious groups with shared values. Hemant Mehta of “The Friendly Atheist” hosts news and commentary of interest to young nonbelievers – absent the edge that characterizes an earlier generation of blogs. He brings more humor than anger when he talks with secular student groups about outreach. Small local groups are doing their part. Seattle Atheists dress as pirates and carry a Flying Spaghetti Monster in summer parades. But they also participate in food drives and blood drives. They hand out water during an annual marathon. The aim is not only to make themselves more visible but to show that they too are compassionate members of the community of humankind.

As nonbelievers gain recognition as normal and ethical members of society, I think we will find that confrontation diminishes and bridge building grows. It’s not only that both are necessary but that one paves the way for the other. In the words of Ecclesiastes, “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.” The questions are in each case, to whom, how, when, and where.

Greta Christina has estimated that atheist visibility is about thirty-five years behind the gay rights movement. That sounds close. We’ll have caught up when a majority of Americans know they know a nontheist – and that friends, family members, and fellow citizens really can be good without God.

*Valerie Tarico is a psychologist and writer in Seattle, Washington and the founder of Wisdom Commons. She is the author of “Trusting Doubt: A Former Evangelical Looks at Old Beliefs in a New Light” and “Deas and Other Imaginings.” Her articles can be found at [Awaypoint.Wordpress.com](http://Awaypoint.Wordpress.com).*

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# Catholic Hierarchy's 'Fortnight For Freedom' Campaign Is 'Thoroughly Misguided,' Says Americans United

**Bishops Want To Keep Massive Taxpayer Funding While Refusing To Comply With Basic Civil Rights**

The Catholic bishops' new "religious liberty" campaign jeopardizes the rights of all Americans, according to Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

In a statement issued on April 12, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops called on every diocese in the country to engage in a "Fortnight for Freedom" during the two weeks leading up to the Fourth of July. Parishioners will be asked to study, pray and take action about alleged infringements on religious liberty.

First on the list of topics is the Obama administration's effort to ensure that all American women have access to birth control through their health insurance plans.

Another topic is government defunding of church-affiliated agencies

that refuse to comply with public policy mandates. The bishops' statement complains that Catholic agencies have been denied government funding because they refused to provide adoption services to gay couples or reproductive health care to women who are victims of sex trafficking.

The Rev. Barry W. Lynn, Americans United executive director, said, "The bishops' campaign is thoroughly misguided. What they want is massive taxpayer funding of their ministries without complying with the fairness rules that everybody else observes. Maybe their two-week venture should be called a 'Fortnight for Taxpayer Funding.'

"The bishops want to maintain their privileged status," Lynn continued, "even if it means that other

Americans' freedoms are infringed. It is imperative that President Obama and Congress refuse to cave in to this outrageous assault on church-state separation."

Lynn said the bishops' religious liberty isn't in danger but the freedom of other Americans is.

"When taxpayers are forced to support sectarian agencies that refuse to meet the needs of women, gay people and other communities," concluded Lynn, "that's a real violation of religious liberty. Public funds should go only to agencies that serve the public interest. If the bishops want to run sectarian social services, they ought to collect the money from their parishioners, not the taxpayers."

[From an April 12 press release by Americans United for Separation of Church and State.]

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## FFRF's 'Quit the Catholic Church' Ad in May 8 Washington Post

**From a May 8 Press Release by the Freedom From Religion Foundation**

The Freedom From Religion Foundation's full-page ad<sup>1</sup>, "It's Time to Quit the Catholic Church," ran in the Washington Post on May 8, urging liberal and nominal Roman Catholics to "quit" their church over its war against contraception.

The provocative ad asks: "Will it be reproductive freedom, or back to the Dark Ages? Do you choose women and their rights, or Bishops and their wrongs?"

The ad is similar to the full-page ad that appeared in The New York Times in March, which is still creating shockwaves among conservative religionists. The Washington Post, unlike the Times, accepted FFRF's punchy headline, "It's Time to Quit the Catholic Church."

Additionally, FFRF has placed the full-page ad with a splash of color<sup>2</sup> on the back of the Washington Express, handed out for free to Metro riders

and D.C. residents. Express distributors wore the ad on their vests.

"It's a disgrace that U.S. health care reform is being held hostage to your church's irrational opposition to medically prescribed contraception," the ad states. "No political candidate should have to genuflect before the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops."

"Join those of us who put humanity above dogma," FFRF's ad urges.

"As a member of the 'flock' of an avowedly antidemocratic Old Boys Club, isn't it time you vote with your feet? Please, exit en Mass," requests the ad, signed by FFRF Co-Presidents Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker.

The Washington Post ad features a cartoon by the late Don Addis, showing a priest under a "Family Planning" banner counseling a woman: "Plan on a family." It also includes a new line: "Life begins at excommunication."

The House of Representatives, which has been lobbied by the religious right to take action against Obama's contraceptive mandate, is now in session.

The ad blasts the church's "pernicious doctrine that birth control is a sin" and says the "Respect for Rights of Conscience Act" was introduced into Congress to impose church dogma on employees. FFRF warns the liberal Catholic that the church is "launching a ruthless political Inquisition in your name."

Gaylor called "The war against contraception and reproductive liberty the state/church battle of our day."

"We're telling truth to power," Barker added, "which is very liberating, and we urge Catholics who disagree with their Church on these vital matters of health and civil liberties to liberate themselves from an anti-civil liberties institution."

<sup>1</sup>See the full-page ad placed in the Washington Post here: <http://ffrf.org/uploads/legal/WashPostBW.pdf>

<sup>2</sup>See the full-page ad placed in the Washington Express here: <http://ffrf.org/uploads/legal/WashPostColor.pdf>

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## Other Meetings of Interest in the Atlanta Area

The **Humanists of Georgia** will have their summer party at John Barnes' place in Woodbury, GA on the banks of the Flint River on Saturday, May 19, from noon to late evening. Email John ([jobar2@earthlink.net](mailto:jobar2@earthlink.net)) for details on the party. They will also meet on Sunday, May 20 at 12:30PM at AF Hall with **Black Nonbelievers, Inc.** Mandisa Thomas, BN President, will speak on "How the Freethought Community Can Learn from the Hospitality Industry."

**Black Nonbelievers, Inc.** will meet this month at AF Hall with Humanists of Georgia. See <http://blacknonbelievers.org/>.

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 **SOS** (Secular Organizations for Sobriety) meets on Tuesdays at 7:30PM in Roswell. For more information, send an email to [donnaigore@yahoo.com](mailto:donnaigore@yahoo.com).

**GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths)** will meet on Monday, May 14, at 7:00PM at UUCG, 12 Bethesda Church Road, in Lawrenceville, GA. <http://gust.domek.org/>

The **Fayette Freethought Society** hosts a lunch at El Rancho 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/>

The **Peachtree City Humanists** meet often for discussions at Starbucks, lunch, dinner at She's Bistro, and more. See <http://www.meetup.com/Peachtree-City-Humanists-PTCH/>.

The **Atlanta Science Tavern** will meet on Sat., May 19, at 7:00PM at Manuel's Tavern, 602 N. Highland Ave NE, in Atlanta. Dr. Stephen Henderson, a geologist, will speak on "The Atlanta Campaign - Geology and the Civil War." See <http://www.meetup.com/AtlantaScienceTavern/> for details.

There will be a **meetup** for Atlanta atheists on Sunday, May 13, 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, May 20, at 4:00 PM at Five Seasons Brewery, 5600 Roswell Rd, in Atlanta. (<http://www.meetup.com/>)

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## Katherine Stewart, Author of "The Good News Club" at AU Meeting

**Stewart's talk: "Science and God: A Theocratic Assault on Public Education and Science in Particular"**

**K**atherine Stewart, author of the newly-released book *The Good News Club*, will speak at a meeting of Americans United for Separation of Church and State (Georgia Chapter) on Saturday, May 26. The 7:00PM meeting will be at Manuel's Tavern, 602 N. Highland Ave., in Atlanta.

The book is billed as "A chilling exposé of the well-funded, highly coordinated effort by Christian Nationalists to use public schools to advance a fundamentalist agenda."

In 2009, the Good News Club came to the public elementary school where

journalist Katherine Stewart sent her children. The Club, which is sponsored by Child Evangelism Fellowship, bills itself as an after-school program of "Bible study." But Stewart soon discovered that the Club's real mission is to convert children to fundamentalist Christianity and encourage them to proselytize to their "unchurched" peers, all the while promoting the natural but false impression among the children that its activities are endorsed by the school.

Astonished to discover that the U.S. Supreme Court has deemed this—and

other forms of religious activity in public schools—legal, Stewart set off on an investigative journey to dozens of cities and towns across the nation to document the impact.

At the meeting, Stewart will summarize some of the attempts to inject a conservative form of evangelical Christianity into public schools, explore the widespread attacks on public education as a whole, and make clear the link between climate science deniers, creationists, and this movement to undermine our public schools.

For details, see the links below.

See the video "American Podium: A Religious Assault on Public Education" at: <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5201207>

What is the Good News Club? From the Child Evangelism Fellowship website: [http://www.cefonline.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&id=13&Itemid=100049/](http://www.cefonline.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=13&Itemid=100049/)

More info on the Good News Club: <http://goodnewsclub.info/>

Read about the book here: <http://www.amazon.com/The-Good-News-Club-Christian/dp/1586488430>

See An Interview with Katherine Stewart by The Friendly Atheist at: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/friendlyatheist/2012/01/24/an-interview-with-katherine-stewart-author-of-the-good-news-club/>

There are Child Evangelism Fellowship chapters active (!) in Smyrna, Suwanee, Duluth, Stockbridge and Toccoa, GA: [http://chapters.cefonline.com/index.php?task=search&local\\_chapter\\_state=GA&chapter\\_counties=&searchphrase=exact&search=Search](http://chapters.cefonline.com/index.php?task=search&local_chapter_state=GA&chapter_counties=&searchphrase=exact&search=Search)

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Read an interview with Bart Ehrman regarding his new book *Did Jesus Exist?: The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth*: [http://www.religiondispatches.org/books/atheologies/5890/inventing\\_jesus:\\_an\\_interview\\_with\\_bart\\_ehrman\\_%7c/](http://www.religiondispatches.org/books/atheologies/5890/inventing_jesus:_an_interview_with_bart_ehrman_%7c/)



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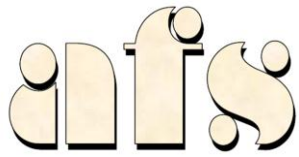
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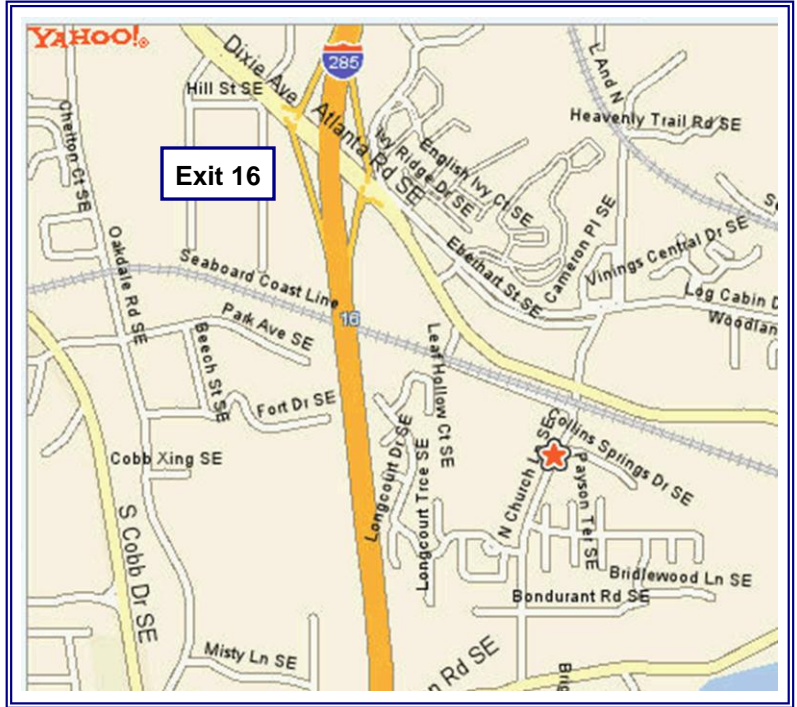
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**The May 13 Meeting:  
1:00 at AF Hall,  
4775 N. Church Lane SE  
Smyrna, GA**

**This Month's Speaker:  
Dr. Robert Blaskiewicz**



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