

The January AFS Meeting Vandy Beth Glenn on “Gender Identity and Secularism”

Our speaker for the January 11th AFS meeting will be **Vandy Beth Glenn**. Vandy Beth is a public speaker, editor, and writer. She blogs about being a skeptic, a transgender activist, a runner, and a fan of genre fiction in **Fibonacci Spiral** (<http://vandybethglenn.com/blog/>) and she writes a blog for the **Skeptic Ink Network** called **Transubstantiation** (<http://www.skepticink.com/ts/>). She’s a UGA graduate with a degree in journalism and was a Navy officer.



Vandy Beth Glenn

Her boss at the Georgia General Assembly fired her and ejected her from the Georgia State Capital in October 2007 when he found out that she was beginning her transition from male to female.

Lambda Legal supported her in a legal case entitled *Glenn v. Brumby* to the federal court for the Northern District of Georgia and the Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. She won that case and returned to work December 2011. In April 2012, the EEOC ruled that Title VII shows that that discrimination against transgender people is sex discrimination, citing *Glenn v. Brumby*. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glenn_v._Brumby)

She has received awards from *Southern Voice*, the Human Rights Campaign, St. Mark’s United Methodist Church, the Lieutenant Governor of Connecticut, and *GA Voice*, among others. She has been interviewed by ABC News, NPR, the AP, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *GA Voice*, and *Washington Blade* and many more and she’s spoken about her experiences in Atlanta, Washington, and Fort Lauderdale. She was also a Grand Marshal at 2012 Atlanta Pride.

In September 2009, Vandy Beth was the first transgender person to address a Congressional committee, speaking to the Committee on Education and Labor of the U.S. House of Representatives, urging passage of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA).

The program will be preceded by conversation with other freethinkers and light snacks starting at noon. The program will start at about 1:00 p.m. Hope to see you there!



The Atheist Alliance of America 2015 national conference will take place October 15-18 in Atlanta, Georgia. They will be at the Crowne Plaza Hotel by the airport and rooms will be just \$89/night. Registration will open in early 2015, but you can reserve your hotel room now at https://resweb.passkey.com/Resweb.do?mode=welcome_ei_new&eventID=12725325. As always, they will have activities for the whole family. In addition to the standard child care and fun activities for kids of conference attendees, Camp Quest South Carolina will host their annual family weekend camp at the hotel as well. More details on the conference and Camp Quest options will be posted as they become available. Please check back soon or join their mailing list at <http://atheistallianceamerica.us3.list-manage.com/subscribe/post?u=924cf8b76b03b3bcc58a668e2&id=32daf0cf2a> to receive updates.

Calendar

- 1/11 AFS Board Meeting 11:00 a.m.
- 1/11 AFS General Meeting 1:00 p.m.
- 2/8 AFS General Meeting 1:00 p.m.
- 3/8 AFS General Meeting 1:00 p.m.
- 4/12 AFS General Meeting 1:00 p.m.

All events are at AF Hall unless noted and are subject to change.

Be sure to like AFS’s Facebook page for updates: <https://www.facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought>

Programs and Speakers

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

The views and opinions expressed by speakers at AFS do not necessarily reflect those of AFS members or its policy.



Jan 11: Vandy Beth Glenn - "Gender Identity and Secularism."

Feb 8: TBA

Mar 8: TBA

AFS Email List

The AFS Announcements email list provides subscribers with reminders and updates on AFS activities. Send an email to AFS-Announce-subscribe@yahoo.com to subscribe. The AFS Forum email list is a place for discussions of freethought, atheism, agnosticism, church-state separation and religion. To subscribe to this list, send an email to AFSForum-subscribe@yahoo.com. The AFS Facebook page is at <http://www.facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought>. For information on other AFS email groups, visit the AFS website at <http://www.atlantafreethought.org>.

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

We welcome anyone who is interested in learning about 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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Atlanta Freethought News

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Send E-mail to
afs@atlantafreethought.org.

AFS Webmaster: Paul Broman
AFS Facebook Site: Laura Ross & Rick Pace

American Atheists demand apology after Troy University Chancellor sends New year's anti-atheist video in mass email

<http://news.atheists.org/2014/12/31/open-letter-american-atheists-demands-apology-after-troy-university-chancellor-sends-new-years-anti-atheist-video-in-mass-email/>

On Tuesday, December 30, Troy University Chancellor Jack Hawkins, Jr. PhD sent a mass email containing a link to the following video to every student and staff member at the public institution.

The original email from Chancellor Hawkins to students and staff of Troy University, dated Tuesday, December 30:

“The following message is sent on behalf of Dr. Jack Hawkins, Jr., Chancellor:

Dear Trojans:

As we approach a New Year I am reminded of the blessings we enjoy within a democracy which is the envy of the world.

For your pleasure — and as a reminder — I am sharing with you a 90 second video which speaks to America's greatness and its vulnerability.

May your New Year be blessed!

*Jack Hawkins
Chancellor”*

<http://youtu.be/YjntXYDPw44>



American Atheists President David Silverman has sent this letter to Chancellor Hawkins demanding an apology:

December 31, 2014

**Jack Hawkins, Jr., Ph.D.
Chancellor**

**Office of the Chancellor
216 Adams Administration Building
Troy, AL 36082
Phone: (334) 670-3200**

Re: Disparaging New Year's Email

Dear Chancellor Hawkins,

American Atheists is contacting you on behalf of a Troy University student, who is concerned about a video you sent to all students and staff in your end-of-year email on December 30. The video asserts that religion, particularly Judeo-Christian beliefs, are necessary to be moral, law-abiding citizens, and implies that those who do not attend church will be anti-democracy and anti-social members of society.

Atheists are not a trivial minority. In Alabama alone, we represent 11% of the population, and statistically even higher numbers in universities and among college-aged residents; as many as 32% of people under age 30 are not religious.

On behalf of the student who contacted us, the Alabama members of American Atheists, the thousands of atheists at Troy University, and the hundreds of millions of atheists worldwide who live productive, law-abiding lives without religion, we demand an apology from you for using the public university email system and your publicly funded position to disparage atheists and minority religious groups as well as perpetuating the discrimination

and anti-patriotic sentiment against atheists in the United States.

As you represent an institution of higher learning, we would like to take this opportunity to educate you about atheists and morality. Atheists are overwhelmingly ethical and upstanding people. It is not true that religion is necessary to keep people from becoming criminals.

According to leading secularism researcher Professor Phil Zuckerman at Pitzer College, “We can plainly see that the least religious countries and states are generally the most moral, peaceful, and humane, while the most religious countries and states are the most crime-ridden, corrupt, and socially troubled. End of discussion.”

In fact, in the United States, in states with the highest percentages of atheists, the murder rate is lower than average. In the most-religious states, the murder rate is higher than average.

Further, on average and generally speaking, atheists have fewer divorces, abortions, and STDs, and lower poverty rates, homicide rates, overall crime rates, and teen pregnancy rates. As a demographic, atheists have higher IQs, incomes, education rates, and literacy rates, and more Nobel Prizes and university professorships.

We need to teach young people to use critical thinking and be more skeptical, not more obedient. Teaching as such leads—demonstrably—to more ethical behavior.

American Atheists will be hosting its annual national convention the first weekend in April at the Peabody Hotel in Memphis. We invite you to attend any or all of the events to experience for yourself what atheism and atheists are like. We believe that personal experience helps fight ignorance so we invite you to be our special guest.

We ask for a public apology to the student, and other atheists whom you have disparaged with the video you included in your email.

Sincerely,

*David Silverman
President, American Atheists*

*American Atheists Center
P.O. Box 158
Cranford, NJ 07016*

For more information, contact American Atheists at (908) 276-7300 or dmuscato@atheists.org

FFRF puts up freethought solstice banner in rural GA

<http://ffrf.org/news/news-releases/item/22078-ffrf-puts-up-freethought-solstice-banner-in-rural-ga>

The Freedom From Religion Foundation set up a banner outside the Bulloch County Courthouse in Statesboro, Ga., in protest of a nativity scene hosted on the courthouse's lawn.



The prominent state/church watchdog, the nation's largest association of freethinkers (atheists and agnostics), is placing the banner on behalf of its more than 400 Georgia members and a chapter in the Atlanta area. The banner contains the seasonal adage of FFRF founder Anne Nicol Gaylor:

“At this season of the Winter Solstice, let reason prevail. There are no gods, no devils, no angels, no heaven or hell. There is only our natural world. Religion is but myth and superstition that hardens hearts and enslaves minds.”

The Winter Solstice is the shortest, darkest day of the year, signaling the rebirth of the sun and the natural new year. It's been celebrated for millennia with festivals of light, feasts, gift exchanges and the display of evergreens, which symbolize enduring life.

FFRF originally wrote to Bulloch County about the nativity last February, after learning it had sat alone on the courthouse grounds during the 2013 holiday season. “It is unlawful for Bulloch County to maintain, erect, or host a holiday display that consists mainly of a nativity scene, thus singling out, showing preference for, and endorsing one religion,” wrote Staff Attorney Andrew Seidel.

The county responded Dec. 9, 2014, claiming the lawn was a public forum where anyone could put up a display. Calling the county's bluff, FFRF immediately put in motion plans to put up its own display.

“We nonbelievers are quite willing to celebrate the fun parts of anybody's holidays. Just spare us the schmaltz, the superstition — and the state/church entanglements,” said Annie Laurie Gaylor, who co-directs FFRF.

Statesboro is also home to Georgia Southern University, where FFRF recently prompted the investigation and censure of a professor who promoted creationism and other religious beliefs in class.

FFRF thanks Don Armel and other local FFRF members, pictured here, for coordinating the local display.



Vandals tear down FFRF banner; more religious signs go up

<http://ffrf.org/news/news-releases/item/22101-vandals-tear-down-ffrf-banner-more-religious-signs-go-up>

The Freedom From Religion Foundation's solstice banner on the lawn of the Bulloch County Courthouse in Statesboro, Ga., was torn down by vandals. FFRF's local member coordinating the display was able to resurrect it.

“It seems there is no peace, good will to all in Bulloch County,” said FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. “This is not just a heckler's veto, it's an attack on free speech in a public forum that is supposed to be open to all. This vandalism says the courthouse belongs only to Christians — everyone else is an outsider.”

The banner first went up last Friday in protest of a nativity scene displayed on the courthouse grounds. Meanwhile, more religious signs were added



around the nativity. “Presented by Local Churches Celebrating the Savior's Birthday,” reads one. “Wise Men Still Seek Him,” declares another.

A third sign, posted close to FFRF's banner, quotes Luke 23:34: “Then said Jesus, ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’”

FFRF knows exactly what it is doing: offering winter solstice greetings, promoting reason over superstition, and ensuring

Bulloch County's holiday display represents the county's nonreligious citizens.

I Have A Little List: Top Ten Church-State Stories Of 2014 - Rob Boston

<https://www.au.org/blogs/wall-of-separation/i-have-a-little-list-top-ten-church-state-stories-of-2014>

It's the time of year to review the events of the past 12 months, determine who's hot and who's not, what's in and what's out, etc.

With that thought in mind, here are what we at the "Wall of Separation" believe to be the Top Ten Church-State Stories of 2014:

Supreme Court upholds city council prayers.

In a 5-4 decision (<https://au.org/church-state/june-2014-church-state/featured/greeces-slippery-slope>) issued May 5, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the right of municipal governments to open their deliberation with prayers, even if those supplications are usually Christian. The decision in *Town of Greece v. Galloway* was a disappointment to Americans United, which sponsored the lawsuit. The high court did say that local governments should make reasonable attempts to ensure religious diversity. In response, Americans United launched Operation Inclusion, a plan to help members of minority faiths and secularists win the right to offer inclusive invocations before government meetings. <https://au.org/content/operation-inclusion>

Supreme Court rules for Hobby Lobby in birth control dispute. Again ruling 5-4 (<https://au.org/our-work/legal/lawsuits/burwell-v-hobby-lobby-stores-inc>), the court in June struck down a provision of the Affordable Care Act that requires most secular, for-profit employers to include birth control in their health-care plans. The *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* challenge was brought by the owners of Hobby Lobby, a chain of craft stores. The fundamentalist Christian owners of the chain insist that some forms of birth control cause abortion – even though medical science says otherwise.

Kentucky officials reject tax incentives for controversial 'Ark Park'. After several years of wrangling, officials with the state of Kentucky announced in December that a proposed theme park based on the story of Noah's Ark would not qualify for \$18 million in tax incentives. Americans United had opposed taxpayer aid to the Ark Encounter, a project of the creationist ministry Answers In Genesis. <https://au.org/blogs/wall-of-separation/bluegrass-bonanza-ky-officials-reject-ark-park-s-request-for-18-million-tax>

Spread of marriage equality in the states infuriates the Religious Right. In October the Supreme Court refused to hear a string of cases challenging same-sex marriage. The court's inaction has the effect of legalizing same-sex marriage in several states. Religious Right groups, predictably, went ballistic. Mat Staver of the Liberty Counsel warned of the fall of Western Civilization while

Bryan Fischer of the American Family Association compared the high court's action to the Dred Scott ruling permitting slavery.

Religious "refusals" gain steam as same-sex marriage spreads. In a related development, Religious Right organizations reacted to the spread of marriage equality by pushing the idea that religious people who oppose same-sex marriage have a legal right to refuse service to gay couples. A number of cases filed by photographers, wedding planners, bakers and others who do not want to serve LGBT people are working their way through the courts. In some states, even government officials, such as county clerks, are insisting that they have a religious freedom right to deny service to same-sex couples. <https://au.org/church-state/december-2014-church-state/featured/apocalypse-now>

Oklahoma school district drops "Hobby Lobby" Bible course. Officials in Mustang, Okla., considered adopting a Bible course commissioned by Steve Green, owner of the Hobby Lobby craft store chain. Americans United and other groups were concerned that the course promoted a fundamentalist view of the Bible and urged against its adoption. Although officials in the district seemed interested in pushing forward, they later decided to not offer the curriculum in part over fears of a lawsuit. <https://au.org/media/press-releases/americans-united-welcomes-okla-school-district-s-decision-to-drop-biased-bible>

Religious Right flexes muscle in mid-term elections. Religious Right groups mobilized for the November elections by distributing biased "voter guides" in houses of worship. The guides were manipulated to support Republican candidates. The drive paid off on election day. The Republicans took the U.S. Senate and expanded their majority in the House of Representatives. Several more social conservatives were added to Congress. As a result, analysts expect to see more "culture war" issues in that body in 2015. <https://au.org/church-state/december-2014-church-state/people-events/election-results-point-to-reopening-of-culture>

Satanic Temple wins right to erect holiday display in Florida. Officials in Florida were eager to allow religious displays at the State Capitol Rotunda in December, so they declared the area an "open forum" for free speech. Atheists, observers of "Festivus" and "Pastafarians" erected displays – but officials would not extend that right to the Satanic Temple, a humanistic group. They changed their minds after Americans United threatened to sue. The display was erected Dec. 22-29, though it was badly damaged Dec. 23 by a protestor. <https://au.org/media/press-releases/florida-officials-agree-to-permit-display-by-satanic-temple-at-state-capitol>

Americans United debunks Religious Right claims about religious freedom in the military. Americans United issued a comprehensive report challenging claims by the Family Research Council (FRC) that the religious freedom rights of Christians are under siege in the military. The FRC has issued a list of 61 alleged religious liberty violations. AU examined each one and found that in every case, claims of persecution did not hold up. <https://au.org/media/press-releases/americans-united-issues-report-countering-religious-right-claims-of-religious>

Supreme Court accepts religious liberty cases concerning Muslims. The Supreme Court accepted two cases concerning Muslim religious liberty rights. One case concerns a prisoner in Arkansas who wants to grow a short beard for religious reasons, while the second case was brought by a young woman who was denied a job in a store because she wears a headscarf for religious reasons. While these cases concern Muslims, the broad rules laid down by the high court could affect a variety of religious believers.

Other Meetings of Interest in Metro Atlanta

The SOS (Secular Organizations for Sobriety) meets on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. in Roswell. For more information, send an email to donnaigore@yahoo.com.

The Fayette Freethought Society hosts lunches, dinners, book discussions, civic activities and more. (<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. Several upcoming events in January. (<http://www.meetup.com/Peachtree-City-Humanists-PTCH/>)

Fellowship of Reason meets on the first Sunday of every month at 10:30 AM at AF Hall. There are meetings for book discussion, philosophy, a classic film course, and other events. (<http://www.fellowshipofreason.com>.)

Atlanta Atheists has first Sunday meetups each month: the place varies. Check Meetup for info on the January get-together. (<http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/>)

Recovery from Religion - Morrow Chapter meets on Sat. Jan 10 at 1 p.m. at Barnes & Noble Booksellers Southlake, 1939 Mount Zion Road, Morrow, GA.

There is no proselytizing of any kind allowed at these meetings. For more information and resources, please visit www.recoveringfromreligion.org. (<http://www.meetup.com/Recovering-From-Religion-Morrow-Chapter/>)

There will be a **meetup for Atlanta atheists** on Sunday, Jan. 11, at 6:00 p.m. at Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur. (<http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/>)

GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths) has their monthly meeting at UUGC, 12 Bethesda Church Road, Lawrenceville, GA on Monday, Jan. 12 at 7 p.m. (<http://www.meetup.com/brights-295/>)

Atlanta Astronomy Club meets on Sat., Jan. 17 from 3-5 at Fernbank Science Center, 156 Heaton Park Drive, Atlanta. (<http://www.atlantaastronomy.org>)

IIG Atlanta will tentatively have its monthly meetup on Sat. Jan. 17 at 4:30 at Manuel's Tavern, 602 N Highland Avenue Northeast, in the Crows Nest. Check the meetup group or contact Shaune Beattie at shaune.beattie@gmail.com for more information: <http://www.meetup.com/IIG-Atlanta/>.

Atlanta Skeptics is tentatively scheduled to have its Sat. Jan. 17 regular meeting at Manuel's Tavern in the North Avenue room (come in the front door, turn right and head all the way

back). Social and dinner starts at 6 pm. The meeting is still in the planning stages, so be sure to check with the Meetup page. (<http://www.meetup.com/AtlantaSkeptics/>)

Black Nonbelievers: CBS Sunday Morning wants to interview members from BN for an upcoming segment! This will be their first meeting for 2015, and will be a great opportunity to meet and/or catch up with fellow members. Please be aware that you will be filmed; they have had great success with getting people to document their stories for others to see. So please be prepared to share and have a great time!

The meeting will be held at Little Five Points Community Center, 1083 Austin Ave NE, Atlanta, GA. We will be located in the Community Room near the Horizon Theater sign. (<http://www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers/>)

Sunday Assembly Atlanta will meet at First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta, 470 Candler Park, Atlanta, GA 6:00 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 18. The topic is **Mindfulness**.

As always, there will be a potluck supper held at the meeting.

Please ask one of their volunteer helpers if you need assistance in any way. Their venue is wheelchair accessible.

Besides their Sunday meeting, this month, SA also has a range of other events, such as *Mindfulness Meditation*, *Help Often: MedShare*, *Wonder Club: Free Will*, *Jane Austin: Game Theorist*, and *Foreign Policy Association's Great Decisions Lecture Series*.

For more about the global movement, check out: <http://sundayassembly.com/about/> (<http://www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly/>)

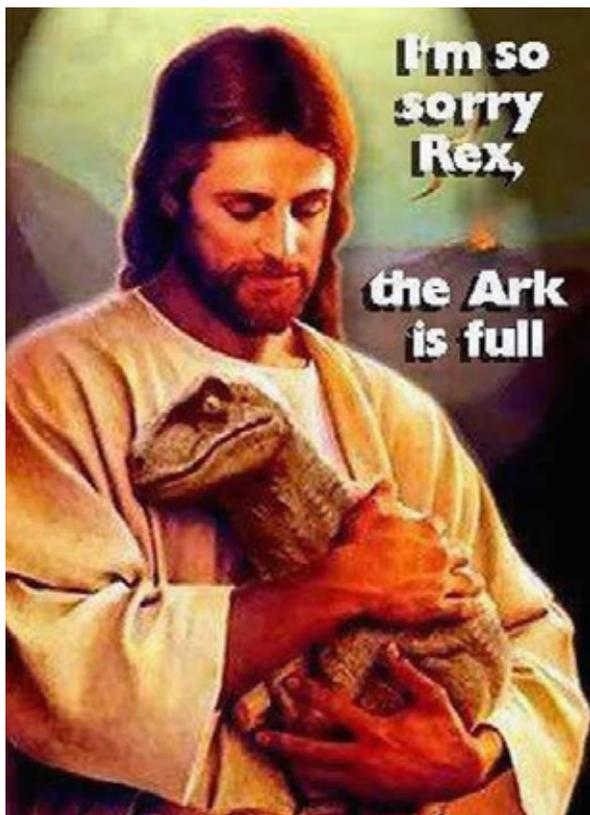
Freedom From Religion Foundation will tentatively

meet on Sunday, Jan. 21 at 2:00 at Atlanta Freethought Hall. Check Meetup for more info. <http://www.meetup.com/Freedom-From-Religion-Foundation-of-Georgia/>

The Atlanta Science Tavern is having a meeting at Manuel's Tavern, 602 N. Highland Ave NE, Atlanta, GA from 7-10 p.m. Sat. Jan. 24 with the topic of **Coral Reef Ecology**. At press time there was no other information about this event.

The cost is \$3.00 per non-student. See the meetup page for more info. Note that Science Tavern also has other listed events. (<http://www.meetup.com/AtlantaScienceTavern>)

Another **meetup for Atlanta Atheists** is scheduled for Sun., Jan. 25 at 4:00 p.m. at Five Seasons Brewery, 5600 Roswell Rd, in Sandy Springs. (<http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists>)



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

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Paper newsletter: We encourage members to receive the newsletter by email. This avoids the printing and mailing expenses. But if you really want the paper version of the newsletter, just let us know and we will send it to you at no additional charge. (You can also pick up a paper newsletter at any AFS meeting.)

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

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—James Madison, 1774

We still have these great books for sale:

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An Uppity Old Atheist

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(2nd edition)—\$11

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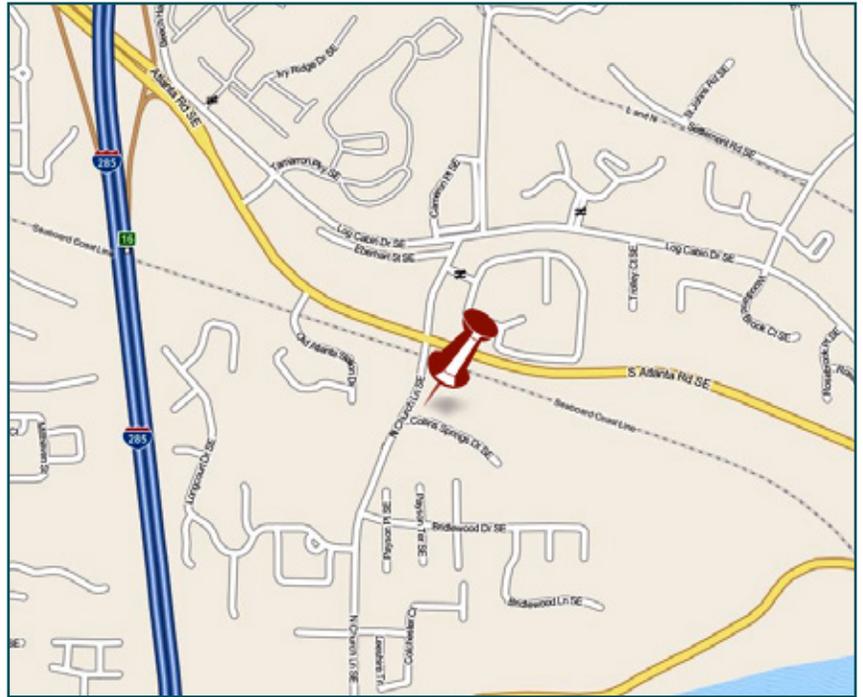
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*Dare To Think
For Yourself!*



**The January 11th
Meeting:
1:00 at AF Hall,
4775 N. Church Lane SE
Atlanta, GA**

**This Month's Speaker:
Vandy Beth Glenn**



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