

The October AFS Meeting

No meeting at AF Hall on Oct. 11, 1:00 p.m.
Meeting at AFS booth at Atlanta Pride instead!



Because one of the goals of Atlanta Freethought Society is community outreach, there will not be the usual meeting at Atlanta Freethought Hall on Sunday, October 12th, though we will have a short meeting at 1:00 pm at our booth to nominate board members.

Instead, members of AFS are encouraged to volunteer at the Atlanta Freethought Society booth at Atlanta Pride on October 11 & 12. This will be at the Pride Marketplace section and the hours will be from 10:00 to 7:00, so come by anytime and help as long as you can!

With such a large and vibrant LGBTQ community in Metro Atlanta, Atlanta Pride is a cause we can get behind. We are sponsoring a booth and doing outreach to celebrants to let them know all free-thinkers are welcome among our membership.

The main purpose of Atlanta Pride is to promote unity, visibility and self-esteem among lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender and queer persons and to promote a positive image in the Atlanta area and throughout the Southeastern United States through community activities and services. It also promotes cultural and educational programs and activities which enhance mental and physical health, provide social support, and foster an awareness of the past and present contributions of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender persons, through community activities and services, including an annual Pride event.

This is the third year that Atlanta Freethought Society has sponsored a booth at Atlanta Pride, and we are proud to carry on this tradition.

Grounds Committee

We need help keeping the lawn mowed and weeded. Any help you can offer will be much appreciated.

Let Mark Banks know if you can.
Thanks to those who've helped!

Calendar

10/11 & 12 AFS Booth at Atlanta Pride, Piedmont Park - Meeting on 10/12 at 1:00 at booth to nominate Board Members!

11/9 AFS General Meeting 1:00 p.m.

12/14 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>

October is Board Nominations Time!

The AFS Bylaws say this regarding nominations:

“Nominations from any AFS member will be made at the annual business meeting each October, either in person at the meeting, by email, or by mail before the October meeting. Email must be sent no later than 48 hours before the October meeting.”

We will be having our October meeting at 1:00 on Sunday, October 12 at Atlanta Pride, at Piedmont Park Pride Marketplace. The only business to address at the meeting is the nominations, so it will be short. If you can't make the meeting and still want to send in nominations, email them by Friday, October 10 to afs@atlantafreethought.org. Any email after 10/10 will not count. See page 2 for current board members.

Emails to that address currently come to Steve Yothment. He will be responsible for accepting nominations and give them to the Nomination Committee, which is assigned by the AFS president Rick Pace per the bylaws.

If you would rather mail them in, make sure they will be delivered by October 10 to **Atlanta Freethought Society, 4775 N Church Lane SE, Atlanta GA 30080-7224.**

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.



Oct 12: No speaker; the meeting will be at the AFS booth at Atlanta Pride in Piedmont Park.

Nov 9: Tom Nehrer, author of several books including *The Illusion of Truth: The Real Jesus Behind the Grand Myth*.

Dec 14: Ed Buckner, former president of American Atheists, will speak on "Morality, Slavery, and Religiosity: the Absentee Landlords of Codrington (a Vast Sugar Plantation in Barbados)."

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

Editor: Laura Ross
Assistant Editor: Steve Yothment

How to Contact the Editor

Send correspondence to AFS at:
4775 N. Church Lane SE,
Smyrna, GA 30080-7224,
phone Laura at 404-634-1005, or send
e-mail to Laura@LauraRossDesign.com

Atlanta Freethought Society President

Rick Pace – 770-912-6974

VP for Internal Communication

Steve Yothment – 678-364-8703

VP for External Communication

Paul Broman – 678-237-2645

Secretary

Laura Ross – 404-634-1005

Treasurer

Diane Buckner – 770-432-3049

Board of Directors

Mark Banks – 770-354-1546

Mike Bucki – 404-550-0596

Michael Buckner – 404-633-2486

Bob Glassley – 678-488-9621

Bob Konopelski – 404-352-1230

Judy Thompson – 404-296-2020

Atlanta Freethought News

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Membership in AFS is \$50/year per person,
\$20 for low income.

Membership includes AFNews by email or mail.
(Tell us which one you want.)

Sustaining Membership is \$100.

Life Membership is \$1000.

Subscriptions only are \$30 for 12 issues.

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See AFS events and member views at:
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Send E-mail to
afs@atlantafreethought.org.

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



**STATE/CHURCH WATCHDOG WARNS:
'Pulpit Freedom Sunday' crosses legal, ethical line**

<http://ffrf.org/news/news-releases/item/21468-pulpit-freedom-sunday-crosses-legal-ethical-line>

The Freedom From Religion Foundation, which was at the center of a high-profile lawsuit against the Internal Revenue Service over illegal church electioneering, warned that “Pulpit Freedom Sunday” on Oct. 5 deliberately seeks to incite church pastors into flouting the law.

All 501(c)(3) nonprofits, including churches, are prohibited from engaging in partisan politicking in exchange for the privilege of tax exemption. FFRF’s federal lawsuit charged that political violations by churches were being selectively ignored. FFRF, a state/church watchdog with more than 21,000 nonreligious members, took the IRS to court in November 2012. After being given assurances this summer that the IRS has authorized procedures and “signature authority” to resume initiating church tax investigations and examinations, FFRF agreed to drop its suit.

FFRF criticized the Alliance Defending Freedom, which is behind Pulpit Freedom Sunday, for inciting illegal acts and for treating church pastors like pawns.

ADF reported revenue of more than \$50 million last year (<http://www.alliancedefendingfreedom.org/about/financials>).

ADF’s FAQ on Pulpit Freedom Sunday says ADF is “actively seeking to represent churches or pastors who are under investigation by the IRS . . . by preaching Scriptural Truth in a way that expresses for — or opposition to — political candidates.” (<http://www.alliancedefendingfreedom.org/content/docs/issues/church/Pulpit-Freedom-Sunday-FAQ.pdf>)

While claiming its strategy is to file “tactical lawsuits” against the IRS, ADF hasn’t filed any such suits since declaring “Pulpit Freedom Sunday” in 2008.

“Churches and their pastors are not above the law. Ministers who claim to be moral leaders should realize it’s not only illegal for tax-exempt groups to endorse political candidates, it’s unethical. It’s an abuse of the public trust,” said Annie Laurie Gaylor, FFRF co-founder.

“Rogue pastors who endorse from tax-exempt pulpits are playing dirty

pool. Such an abuse creates an unfair election advantage. Donations to politicians are not tax-deductible, but donations to churches are. Imagine if tax-exempt churches — which don’t have to file financial returns with the government like all other 501(c)(3) groups must — were allowed to openly engage in partisan politics? Church congregations could become political machines, and political donations could be ‘money laundered’ through tax-deductible church contributions,” Gaylor warned.

FFRF Co-President Dan Barker added, “Pastors are free to endorse from the pulpit, but then their churches need to give up their tax exemption.”

U.S. District Judge Lynn Adelman’s order granting the joint motion for dismissal by FFRF and the IRS left open FFRF’s ability to renew its lawsuit if the IRS reverts to previous inaction (<http://ffrf.org/news/news-releases/item/21076-ffrf-anti-church-electioneering-victory-is-final>).

See FFRF’s action alert by Senior Staff Attorney Rebecca Markert for more details, including how to report a violation (<http://ffrf.org/news/action/item/21460-pulpit-freedom-sunday-action-alert>).

The Freedom From Religion Foundation, based in Madison, Wis., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational charity, is the nation’s largest association of freethinkers (atheists, agnostics), and has been working since 1978 to keep religion and government separate.

Humanist group condemns religious monument at public school

<http://americanhumanist.org/news/details/2014-09-humanist-group-condemns-religious-monument-at-public>

The American Humanist Association's Appignani Humanist Legal Center sent a letter to officials at the Madison County School District in Danielsville, Georgia, on behalf of a concerned citizen about a monument on school district property.

According to the letter, the monument's prominent inclusion of biblical scripture, combined with the high school's logo, send the message that the



school district endorses religion, specifically Christianity, in violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. The monument, a large permanent sculpture entitled "Red Raider," is located in the Madison High School football stadium and was unveiled this school year. The sculpture includes religious language and Christian biblical references, such as quotations from Romans 8:31 and Philippians 4:13. The monument also features the Madison High School logo, and the high school football team customarily touches the sculpture before home games.

"Numerous cases make clear that public schools are prohibited from taking a position, or even appearing to take a position, on religious belief," said Monica Miller, an attorney with the Appignani Humanist Legal Center. "Erecting a monument on school property that includes Christian scripture sends the unequivocal message to school children that the school is endorsing religion."

"Promoting one religious perspective over all others is discriminatory toward students of religious minorities and toward humanist and atheist students," said Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association.

The letter demands that the school remove the monument or at least strip the monument of all religious references. The letter also asks that the school keep the monument covered until such a removal can take place.

A copy of the letter can be viewed here (http://americanhumanist.org/system/storage/2/db/6/5278/Madison_Monument_Letter_9-25-14_final-1.pdf).

Founded in 1941 and headquartered in Washington, D.C., the American Humanist Association (AHA) works to protect the rights of humanists, atheists, and other non-religious Americans. The AHA advances the ethical and life-affirming philosophy of humanism, which—without beliefs in any gods or other supernatural forces—encourages individuals to live informed and meaningful lives that aspire to the greater good of humanity.

Special thanks to the Louis J. Appignani Foundation for their support of the Appignani Humanist Legal Center.

Atheist student sits out Pledge of Allegiance, threatened with punishment

<http://americanhumanist.org/news/details/2014-09-atheist-student-sits-out-the-pledge-of-allegiance-th>

The American Humanist Association's Appignani Humanist Legal Center sent a letter to officials at the Beaufort County School District in Beaufort, SC, on behalf of an anonymous student who has been denied his constitutional rights to refrain from participating in the school's daily Pledge of Allegiance exercise.

The student, a ninth grader at Right Choices Alternative School, identifies as an atheist and opposes the phrase "under God" in the Pledge. When he has attempted to remain seated at his desk in a quiet and undisruptive manner during the Pledge recitation, his teacher has instructed him to stand, has told him that school policy requires him to stand and has also threatened him with punishment. In addition, the teacher has argued with the student about his atheism, has questioned the student's patriotism and has insisted that his actions are offensive to members of the U.S. armed services. The student contacted the American Humanist Association's Appignani Humanist Legal Center through the organization's DontSaythePledge.com campaign website.

"Threatening a student with punishment simply for exercising his or her right to sit out the Pledge demonstrates a shocking disregard for the rights of free speech and religious freedom," said David Niose, legal director of the Appignani Humanist Legal Center.

"No one should have her or his patriotism questioned for objecting to the phrase 'under God' in the Pledge of Allegiance," said Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association. "Doing so marginalizes humanist and atheist kids as second-class citizens merely for exercising their constitutional rights."

The letter demands that students and teachers at the school be informed students may refrain from participating in the Pledge exercise. The letter also demands that teachers be instructed that they must not persuade students from sitting out the Pledge and that they should not even question students who choose to do so. Finally, the letter demands that no disciplinary or other retaliatory measures of any kind be directed toward any student who remains seated during the Pledge.

A copy of the letter can be viewed here (http://americanhumanist.org/system/storage/2/1/d/5279/Letter_to_Beaufort_SC_School_District_-_FINAL_9-25_v2.pdf).

Free expression celebrated and defended for Blasphemy Rights Day

http://www.centerforinquiry.net/news/cause_effect_16/



September 30, 2014, was the fifth **International Blasphemy Rights Day**, launched by

CFI to raise the alarm about the global crackdown on free expression, particularly criticism of religion, and to show solidarity with those suffering from persecution for their dissent. It is one day on the calendar that highlights a cause that is at the heart of what we at CFI do 365 days a year.

Heavily citing the work of CFI, **Brian Pellet at Religion News Service**

marks the day with an expression of solidarity with imprisoned Saudi dissident **Raif Badawi** (<http://brianpellot.religion-news.com/2014/09/30/blasphemy-rights-day-religious-freedom-united-nations-saudi-raif-badawi-waleed-al-kahir/>)—

soon to face 1,000 lashes and ten years in prison for blasphemy (http://www.centerforinquiry.net/blogs/entry/saudi_court_denies_raif_badawis_appeal/)—and stern words for the Saudi government, lamenting that the Kingdom’s “normalized position on the world stage and Raif Badawi’s plight represent the tragedy that can and does ensue when international economic and political considerations overshadow fundamental human rights.”

CFI president and CEO, **Ron Lindsay**, chose this occasion to take stock of the current state of free expression and religious dissent around the world (http://www.centerforinquiry.net/blogs/entry/international_blasphemy_rights_day_2014_2/); things are not rosy, but he reminds us of the importance of the cause. “Protecting the fundamental human right to free expression, including the right to express one’s views on religious issues, is an ongoing struggle,” he writes. “Whether this fundamental right will ever gain truly universal recognition remains an open question. What is not in doubt is that if we who support free expression

become apathetic about this struggle, the right to free expression will erode. Fanatics never lack for motivation.”

The **CFI On Campus** blog has been featuring testimonials from student leaders about what free expression means to them personally.

Dana Korneisel treasures the privileges she enjoys, living in a society in which it is the oppressors, not the dissenters, who are recognized as being in the wrong. (http://www.centerforinquiry.net/oncampus/blog/entry/why_is_free_expression_important_to_you_dana_korneisel/)

Broadway Jackson III calls International Blasphemy Day his “favorite holiday” and talks about how genuine freedom of expression for all is still a way off. (http://www.centerforinquiry.net/oncampus/blog/entry/why_is_free_expression_important_to_you_broadway_jackson_iii/#When:17:14+00:00)

Nathan Zwierzynski reveals how an appreciation for societal free expression can also free oneself. (http://www.centerforinquiry.net/oncampus/blog/entry/why_is_free_expression_important_to_you_nathan_zwierzynski/#When:17:26+00:00)

Lance Menard highlights the necessity of varying and contradicting viewpoints. (http://www.centerforinquiry.net/oncampus/blog/entry/why_is_free_expression_important_to_you_lance_menard/)

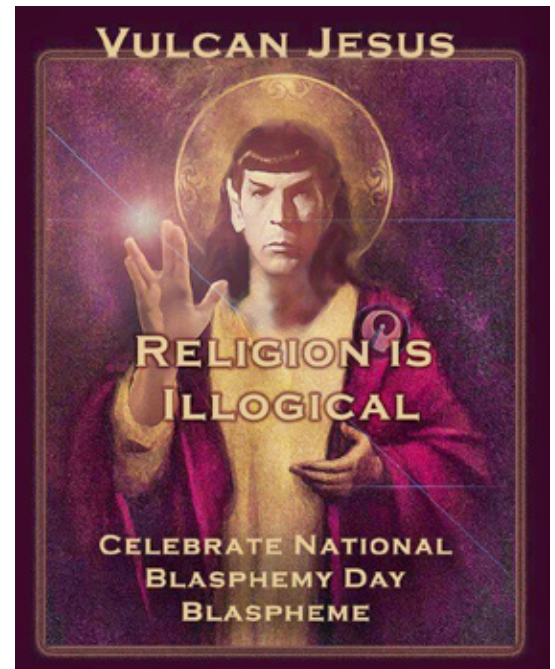
Rebecca Suroz notes the importance of free expression’s universality, even for those whose opinions she finds reprehensible, writing, “I have to support their right to spew their crappily researched and badly thought out positions. Because if I don’t speak for them, what right do I have to speak for myself?” (http://www.centerforinquiry.net/oncampus/blog/entry/why_is_free_expression_important_to_you_rebecca_suroz/)



From “Party Girls of Burning Man”
by Modern Man Jack
<http://www.modernmanjack.com/party-girls-of-burning-man-09062014/>

We think **Robert Green Ingersoll** put it pretty well when he said, “All laws defining and punishing blasphemy ... were passed by impudent bigots, and should be at once repealed by honest men. An infinite God ought to be able to protect himself, without going in partnership with State Legislatures.” We’re sharing an image-meme with that very quote for International Blasphemy Rights Day, and you can too, to show your support for free expression.

(<https://www.facebook.com/centerforinquiry/photos/a.94000694772.87113.5945034772/1015249818614773/?type=1>)



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 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/>)

GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths) normally meets at 7:00 on the 2nd Monday of every month at Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Gwinnett, 12 Bethesda Church Road, Lawrenceville, GA. Their next meeting is Mon. Oct. 13th. (<http://www.meetup.com/brights-295/>)

There will be a **meetup for Atlanta atheists** on Sunday, October 12, at 6:00 p.m. at Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur. (<http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/>)

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 August. (<http://www.meetup.com/Peachtree-City-Humanists-PTCH/>)

IIG Atlanta will have its monthly meetup on October 18 at 4:30 at Manuel's Tavern, 602 N Highland Avenue Northeast, in the Crows Nest. The purpose of the meeting is to prepare for the Atlanta Skeptics "Summoning of the Dead Spirit of Houdini." We're a new, ambitious group affiliated with IIG-West and exist to promote critical thinking about the paranormal, supernatural and unexplained. We also offer \$100,000 for anyone who can demonstrate evidence of the occult or paranormal under properly controlled conditions. We look forward to meeting you! Questions? Contact Shaune Beattie: shaune.beattie@gmail.com: <http://www.meetup.com/IIG-Atlanta/>.

Atlanta Skeptics will have its October 18 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. This month will be a special joint event between Atlanta Skeptics and the Independent Investigators Group (IIG). IIG will be conducting us in an a special Halloween séance to contact the spirit of the ultimate Skeptic, Harry Houdini. Come along for a celebration of Halloween and all things spooky. Last year we bobbed for logical fallacies and explored the mysteries of the Ouija board. If you have any special requests or ideas this year, just let us know! (<http://www.meetup.com/AtlantaSkeptics/>)

Black Nonbelievers will have their annual Halloween Costume Party at Dazed Arts Gallery, 668-101 Metropolitan Pkwy, Atlanta. It's time for the one of the best parties of the year! BN will be jammin and having a good time for the Halloween season! \$20 in advance, more at the door. Food and drinks are included, and there will be prizes for the best costumes. This year, we will be featuring a special performance by local comedian Bo Mic-adelic! To pay in advance, go to: https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_s-xclick&hosted_button_id=DJ4PHJC6XWCT2 (<http://www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers/>)

Sunday Assembly Atlanta has not provided information about the October meeting at press time (usually third Sunday at 6:00 pm),

and is in fact looking for a new venue. Side projects are still going on so check on the Meetup group for more information. For more about the global movement, check out: <http://sundayassembly.com/about/> (<http://www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly/>)

Atlanta Science Tavern has not yet provided information about the Manuel's Tavern October meeting at press time (usually last Saturday at 7:00 pm). They have a lot of side projects so check on the Meetup group for more information. (<http://www.meetup.com/AtlantaScienceTavern/>)

Freedom From Religion Foundation has not yet posted an event for October. Last month they met at Atlanta Freethought Hall on the 4th Sunday, so watch Meetup for further information. <http://www.meetup.com/Freedom-From-Religion-Foundation-of-Georgia/>

Another **meetup for Atlanta atheists** is scheduled for Sun., October 26 at 4:00 p.m. at Five Seasons Brewery, 5600 Roswell Rd, in Sandy Springs. (<http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/>)

Recovery from Religion - Morrow Chapter is having their next meeting on Saturday Nov. 8 meeting at Barnes & Noble Booksellers Southlake, 1939 Mount Zion Road, at 1:00 pm.

We will meet to discuss issues directly related to religious indoctrination, struggles faced, and how to better overcome them. For more information and resources, please visit www.recovering-fromreligion.org. (<http://www.meetup.com/Recovering-From-Religion-Morrow-Chapter/>)

The International Freethought Film Festival is in its fourth season. IFFF 2014 will take place in Atlanta, Georgia from November 7th-9th at the Cinefest Film Theater. The categories of films that we screen range from live action, animation, documentary, experimental and narrative features and shorts. The films are captivating, thought provoking,

entertaining and the selections reflect our mission statement—promoting reason, critical thinking and freedom of inquiry through the medium of film. The festival is being put on by **Atlanta Coalition of Reason** and **Black Nonbelievers**.

The International Freethought Film Festival is a niche film festival for the bold. Examples of themes in the Freethought niche are those that challenge what some societies and cultures deem unchallengeable, such as religion or government policies. The examination of truth claims that are of interest to skeptics, such as paranormal claims, alternative medicine, UFO's, psychics and astrology, fits this niche. Films that shed light on Human Rights violations, and stories of women and men who take a humanistic approach to affect positive change in society, have a home at IFFF. The clash between scientific findings and religious/superstitious traditions is a common theme among submissions as well.

Visit www.freethoughtfilmfest.org for trailers, synopses and ticket information. The weekend passes are only \$35 each. <http://www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers/events/210525532/>

Atlanta Astronomy Club will not have a meeting in October. In November we will have our annual "How to buy a Telescope" program. It will be on Saturday Nov. 22nd at 3:00 pm at the Fernbank Science Center. The program will go over the different types of telescopes, pros & cons of each type, and cost involved. This should help with the decision making process for telescope purchasers. (<http://www.atlantaastronomy.org>)



Become a Member!

(Or renew your membership with this form or online at www.AtlantaFreethought.org!)

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

Individual memberships: One person can become a member for \$50 per year.

Sustaining memberships: One person can become a sustaining member for \$100 per year.

Life memberships: Avoid the hassle of renewing every year. A life membership lasts a lifetime.

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!

Annual dues are:

Membership Dues# of mems Total

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Subscription only \$30 _____ \$ _____ Any other things you'd like to tell us?
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"Religious bondage shackles and debilitates the mind and unfits it for every noble enterprise, every expanded prospect."

—James Madison, 1774

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Lucid, comprehensive, engaging answer to Christian apologists by Keith Parsons. Respectful but devastating to all Christian claims. A wonderful follow-up to Bertrand Russell's great essay with the same title.

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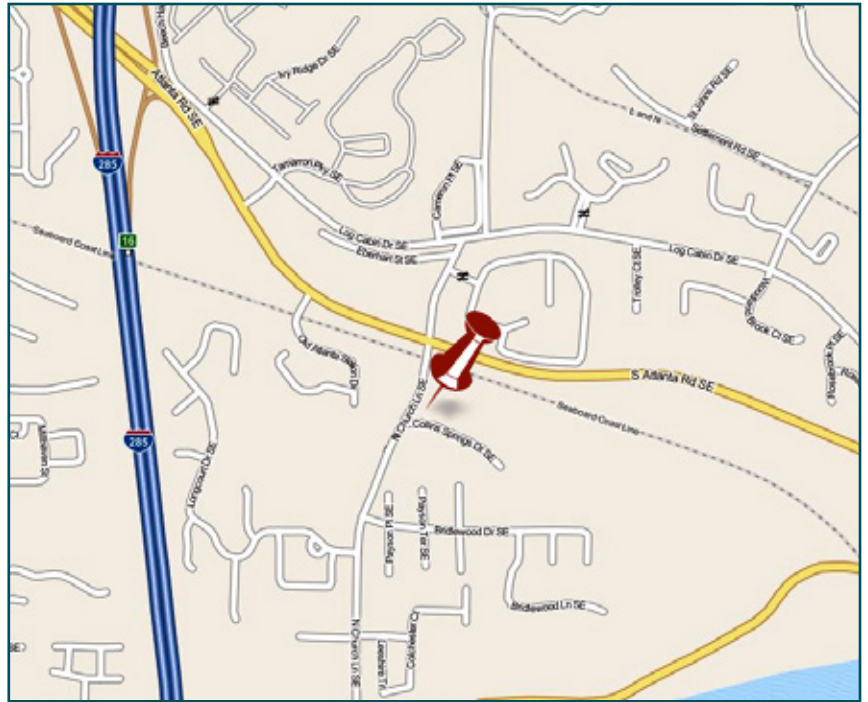
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*Dare To Think
For Yourself!*



**Short meeting Oct. 11th
to nominate Board of
Directors at AFS Booth
Atlanta Pride in
Piedmont Park
instead of AF Hall!
Back to regular
meeting in Nov.**



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