

The December AFS Meeting

Our Own Dr. Dennis Martin To Discuss Non-Atheistic Tenets of Freethought

The AFS program on December 8th (Sunday) will feature one of our own, AFS Secretary **Dr. Dennis Martin**, a college teacher and philosopher popular among AFSers for his previous talks discussing freethought and atheism. Regarding his talk, Martin said, "I think some of us—and probably others as well—assume that freethought is just a polite code word for 'atheism.' There is plenty of overlap, but the two ideas are not identical and the differences matter.

"Atheism is simply a likely consequence of more fundamental ideas embraced by freethinkers and secular humanists alike. In this program, we will discuss some of those fundamental ideas, how they arose in history, and how you can show their importance to your non-freethinking friends."

In the announcement for the meeting, AFS President Rick Pace said, "We're always pleased to present excellent programs such as we know this one will be—and we're even prouder that one of our own leaders will once again be the presenter."

With a Ph.D. in philosophy from Emory University, and a degree in mathematics from Georgia Tech, Dr. Martin has taught college courses for over 36 years in Atlanta. These include the history of ideas, history of philosophy, critical thinking, formal logic, history of ethics, business ethics, contemporary moral issues, philosophy of religion, philosophy of atheism, epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of human nature, and decision-making.

Dr. Martin directed Saint Leo University's Atlanta program from 1985 until 2000. He has taught at both public and private colleges, including Emory University, Georgia State University, Georgia Tech, Saint Leo University, Central Michigan University, University of Maryland, and Georgia Military College. He has also delivered papers at Mercer University, Valdosta State University, and Georgetown

University.

Dr. Martin has a deep respect for a diversity of viewpoints and for the history of ideas.

Each AFS meeting starts with a social hour where members and visitors gather informally to discuss ideas and socialize, and we usually go out for lunch after the meeting.

Sunday's meeting will include an election for open offices (all officer positions and several board member slots) for 2014.

Calendar

12/8 AFS General Meeting 1:00 p.m.

(Don't forget - 2014 Membership dues!)

1/12 AFS General Meeting 1:00 p.m.

2/9 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>

Grounds Committee

AFS is looking for people who would like to be on the Grounds Committee for 2014. It's a great way to get fresh air while making Freethought Hall a better place to be. Please see a board member for more information.

DON'T FORGET!



Your Atlanta Freethought Society membership comes due in December. Please remit your dues either by mail (the form is on page 7) or on Paypal (<http://www.paypal.com>).



You must be a paid member in order to vote for AFS officers and board members.

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.



Dec 8: Non-Atheistic Tenets of Freethought: Newcomers and visitors to Atlanta Freethought Society might think that 'freethought' is synonymous with 'atheism'. However, atheism is simply a likely consequence of more fundamental ideas embraced by freethinkers and secular humanists alike. In this talk, **Dr. Dennis Martin** will discuss some of those fundamental ideas, how they arose in history, and how you can show their importance to your non-freethinking friends.

Jan 12: Charles R. (Chuck) Miller, Regional Director of American Atheists for Alabama, will speak.

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. 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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\$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: Michael Buckner
Website Help: Paul Broman
AFS Facebook Site: Laura Ross & Rick Pace

From the November Social Event



Our November social event, the Chili Cookoff/ Open Mic Night, turned out to be a wash, with only eight attending. However, all was not lost and it turned into a very enjoyable and impromptu chili, chatter, and chess tournament.

Here member **Dwight Lyman**'s photo was taken by **Ed Buckner**, who won the game.

We who attended ended up enjoying ourselves

so much that we were wondering if more people from AFS would enjoy such an evening as well. Would everyone like to have a board game night social/potluck event later in the winter? Would you like to come to that?



Dale McGowen spoke on *Atheism for Dummies* at AF Hall in November



Photos on this page by Ed Buckner



Atheist Billboards Declare Prayer, Bibles Not Helping Disaster Victims

American Atheists launched six billboards on Monday in central New Jersey attacking the non-helpful responses by some religions to recent natural disasters. These responses have included praying for the victims and sending bibles and rosaries instead of requested relief supplies that can save lives.

While at least \$300 million has been pledged by nations around the world to help survivors of Super Typhoon Haiyan, the Catholic Bishop Conference of the Philippines, a billion-dollar non-government organization, has responded to the disaster by sending 1,000 bibles and 12,000 rosaries to survivors, according to CBS News. Additionally, the Pope tweeted for Catholics to pray for the typhoon victims. His message was retweeted 30,000 times.

“Imagine if the Pope had asked for people to send money to victims or to send needed supplies. How much more useful would that have been to the people of the Philippines?

This is insulting,” said American Atheists

President David Silverman. “Over 5,500 people have died, so Pope Francis leads people in prayer, and they send bibles and rosaries. This is repugnant; natural disasters should not be viewed as opportunities for proselytization.” Silverman continued, “Religion is not charity. It’s business masquerading as charity, and it needs to be recognized as such.”

The billboards encourage people to visit <http://atheists.org/relief> where they are directed to three secular organizations that have campaigns to assist victims of the typhoon and the recent Midwest tornados. “These organizations provide actual services to people who need them,” said Dave Muscato, Public Relations Director, “and they are our best way to help those affected.



Prayer is cheap, quick, and easy, but it accomplishes nothing. Real people are really suffering; they need real help.”

The billboards are located in New Jersey along I-80, I-95, and I-78, and are expected to reach half a million commuters daily. For exact locations of the designs, see <http://atheists.org/file/nj-relief-billboards.pdf>.

American Atheists had an opportunity to advertise a message the week of Thanksgiving on six billboards in New Jersey at no cost to the organization or its donors. We chose to focus these billboards on the issue of disaster relief and some religious groups exploiting tragedy instead of helping victims.

We are not an aid organization and, unlike some churches, we don’t pretend to be one. However, we can use our megaphone to raise awareness about the uselessness of prayer and other religious items for “disaster relief.” Instead, we direct our web site visitors to other secular organizations that offer real support to the real victims of tragedy.

<http://news.atheists.org/2013/11/25/disaster-relief/>

Overturing ‘parsonage exemption’ clergy privilege

The Freedom From Religion Foundation and its co-presidents Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker have won a significant ruling with far-reaching ramifications declaring unconstitutional the 1954 “parish exemption” uniquely benefiting “ministers of the gospel.”

“May we say hallelujah! This decision agrees with us that Congress may not reward ministers for fighting a ‘godless and anti-religious’ movement by letting them pay less income tax. The rest of us should not pay more because clergy pay less,” Gaylor and Barker commented.

U.S. District Judge Barbara B. Crabb for the Western District of Wisconsin issued a strong, 43-page decision Friday (<http://ffrf.org/images/FFRF%20v%20Geithner%20-%20Parsonage%20Exemption.pdf>) declaring unconstitutional 26 U.S. C. § 107(2), passed by Congress in 1954. Quoting the Supreme Court, Crabb noted, “Every tax exemption constitutes subsidy.” The law allowed “ministers of the gospel” paid through a housing allowance to exclude that allowance from taxable income. Ministers may, for instance, use the untaxed income to purchase a home, and, in a practice known as “double dipping,” may then deduct interest paid on the mortgage and

property taxes.

“The Court’s decision does not evince hostility to religion — nor should it even seem controversial,” commented Richard L. Bolton, FFRF’s attorney in the case. “The Court has simply recognized the reality that a tax free housing allowance available only to ministers is a significant benefit from the government unconstitutionally provided on the basis of religion.”

Crabb wrote: “Some might view a rule against preferential treatment as exhibiting hostility toward religion, but equality should never be mistaken for hostility. It is important to remember that the establishment clause protects the religious and nonreligious alike.”

The benefit to clergy is huge — saving an estimated \$2.3 billion in taxes in the years 2002-2007 alone, according to a statement by Congressman Jim Ramstad in 2002. Clergy are permitted to use the housing allowance not just for rent or mortgage, but for home improvements including swimming pools, maintenance and repairs. They may exempt from taxable income up to the fair market rental value of their home, particularly benefiting well-heeled pastors. The benefit extends to churches, which can pay clergy less, as tax-free salaries go further.

The 1954 bill’s sponsor, Rep. Peter Mack, argued ministers should be rewarded for “carrying on such a courageous fight against this [godless and anti-religious world movement].”

“I agree with plaintiffs that §107(2) does not have a secular purpose or effect,” wrote Crabb, adding that a reasonable observer would view it “as an endorsement of religion.”

Cont. Next Page

SEXISM IS A TASTELESS HOBBY

FFRF calls for Hobby Lobby boycott

The Freedom From Religion Foundation today called on all proponents of women's rights and separation of church and state to boycott (and "girl-cott") Hobby Lobby, a national retail craft-store chain. Hobby Lobby has 561 stores nationwide and revenues of more than \$2.28 billion per year. It also employs 21,000 people.

FFRF, a national state/church watchdog is calling the consumer boycott in response to Hobby Lobby's challenge of ObamaCare's contraceptive mandate. The Supreme Court today accepted a case involving its challenge of the requirement that contraception be fully covered in insurance policies. Hobby Lobby unilaterally opposes some forms of contraception, based on the religious views of its founder David Green.

"The foundation of our business has been, and will continue to be strong values, and honoring the Lord in a manner consistent with biblical principles," a statement on the Hobby Lobby website reads, adding that one outgrowth of that is the store is closed on Sundays to give its employees a day of rest.

The 10th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals agreed that corporations have the same religious rights as individuals.

Other, more reasonable courts such as the Third Circuit, have held that "for-profit, secular corporations cannot engage in religious exercise" and that a business owner's religious rights do not allow that owner to impose his religion on his business's employees. That decision, *Conestoga Wood Specialties Corp. v. Secretary of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*, (3rd Cir., July 26, 2013), will also be reviewed by the Supreme Court.

"Religious dogma cannot trump women's rights in our secular republic," said FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. "Corporations do not have a right of conscience, women do. As Margaret Sanger pointed out long ago, 'No woman can call herself free unless she can decide for herself if and when she wants to become a mother.'"

FFRF noted that the battle for women's contraceptive rights ended more than half a century ago in the United States.

"The attack by the Religious Right against contraception is inexcusable in a civilized country," Gaylor said. "Women make up more than half of the nation and we and our secular supporters must flex our consumer muscle and inaugurate an immediate boycott of Hobby Lobby."

We ask other secular and feminist organizations to join us to speak out against religious control of women's bodies.

Exercise your freedom... and shop somewhere else!

This year FFRF ran newspaper ads on July 4 (<http://ffrf.org/news/news-releases/item/18058-ffrf%E2%80%99s-july-4-ad-counters-hobby-lobby-disinformation>) countering Hobby Lobby's annual disinformation campaign stating that America is a Christian nation. FFRF was censored by only one newspaper during that ad campaign, the *Daily Oklahoman* which shares a hometown "pride" with Hobby Lobby.

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.

- Compiled by Lauryn Seering

<http://ffrf.org/news/news-releases/item/19500-ffrf-calls-for-hobby-lobby-boycott#sthash.irsysFbO.dpuf>



Cont./ Crabb wrote that "the exemption provides a benefit to religious persons and no one else, even though doing so is not necessary to alleviate a special burden on religious exercise."

All taxpayers are burdened by taxes, Crabb noted. "Defendants do not identify any reason why a requirement on ministers to pay taxes on a housing allowance is more burdensome for them than for the many millions of others who must pay taxes on income used for housing expenses."

Crabb invoked the Supreme Court's 1989 case, *Texas Monthly, Inc. v. Bullock*, calling exemptions for religious publishers from having to collect state sales tax "unjustifiable awards of assistance to religious organizations."

"If a statute imposed a tax solely against ministers (or granted an exemption to everyone except ministers) without a secular reason for doing so, that law would violate the Constitution just as §107(2) does." Crabb reasoned.

Crabb's decision dismissed as implausible the government's strange argument — attempting to deny them standing to sue — that atheists Gaylor and Barker could "conceivably" qualify as "ministers of the gospel." Gaylor and Barker, as directors of an educational organization advocating atheism and freethought,

have not been entitled to claim the housing allowance FFRF designates for them, while any "minister of the gospel" may do so for promoting religion.

Crabb rejected the claim that the 1954 bill was necessary to eliminate "discrimination" against ministers not living in parsonages. "A desire to assist disadvantaged churches and ministers is not a secular purpose and it does not produce a secular effect when similarly disadvantaged secular organizations and employees are excluded from the benefit."

Crabb added: "Under defendants' view, there would be no limit to the amount of support the government could provide to religious groups over secular ones."

<http://ffrf.org/news/news-releases/item/19361-ffrf-gaylor-barker-overturn-%E2%80%98parsonage-exemption%E2%80%99-clergy-privilege#sthash.dQxUQCBy>

Other Meetings of Interest in Metro Atlanta

Atlanta Astronomy Club meetings are usually held on the 3rd Saturday of each month at AF Hall. However this time the December holiday potluck will be on the 15th at 6:00 pm at the same location. <http://www.atlantaastronomy.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. <http://www.fellowshipofreason.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 October. <http://www.meetup.com/Peachtree-City-Humanists-PTCH/>.

GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths) meet often for discussions, etc. <http://gust.domek.org/>.

The Atlanta Skeptics is not having their monthly meeting at Manuel's Tavern this month due to the holidays and will resume their regular meetings in January. However, Atlanta Skeptics will hold their regular first Friday "Drinking Sceptically" meeting at 5 Seasons Brewing, 5600 Roswell Road, Sandy Springs, GA at 7:00 p.m. on Friday, December 6th. <http://www.meetup.com/AtlantaSkeptics/>.

The Atlanta Science Tavern is having a trivia contest on Saturday, Dec. 23, 7:00 pm, \$3.00, Manuel's Tavern.

Newtonmas 2013

- This event is an exclusive production of the Atlanta Science Tavern.
- Gather at 7 pm (or earlier, if the room is open), find a seat, form a team and order your dinner and drinks.
- The trivia competition will begin promptly at 7:30.
- Seating is first-come-first served. RSVPs here do not hold seats.
- We expect a more than capacity crowd.
- Consult this FAQ for detailed information.
- We ask for a \$3 contribution from non-students.

Only a few days late for Newtonmas 2013 — Sir Isaac's birthday is the 25th — the Atlanta Science Tavern Science Trivia Challenge is making a return. Please join us for this fifth installment of our insanely popular team trivia competition. The questions themselves are entertaining, and the musical interludes, selected by Don MacGregor, make the evening even more fun.

Format

The competition will consist of 2 halves consisting of 8 questions each. Unlike conventional team trivia, all of the questions are multiple-part questions of varying degrees of difficulty. This gives every team an opportunity to participate in every question, while allowing those with special expertise to distinguish themselves. The best way to get an idea of what the Science Trivia Challenge is about is to take a look at the slide show from our last go-round in July.

Prizes

Prizes will be awarded in the form of Manuel's gift certificates as follows:

\$50 - 1st place

\$30 - 2nd place

\$20 - 3rd place

Teams

Student teams are very welcome. We encourage people with special expertise to mix it up to help keep the teams balanced. <http://www.meetup.com/AtlantaScienceTavern>

The Black Nonbelievers of Atlanta is having their monthly meeting along with **Recovering From Religion** at Barnes and Noble at Southlake, 1939 Mount

Zion Rd, Morrow GA on Sunday, Dec. 14 at 1:00 p.m. <http://www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers/>

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

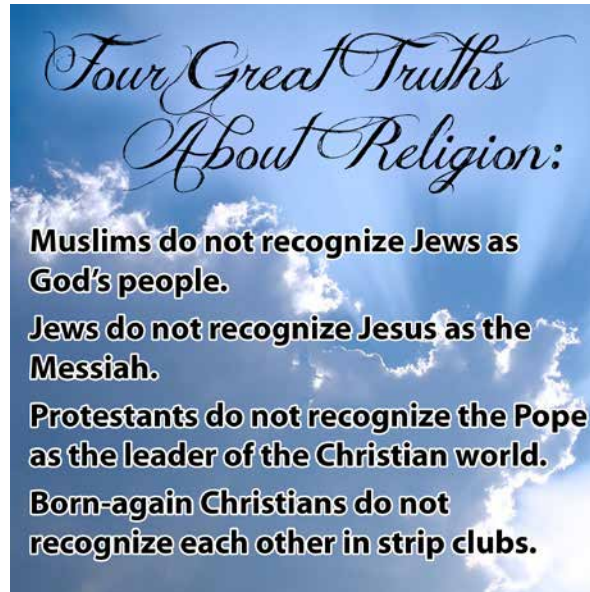
There will be a **meetup for Atlanta atheists** on Saturday, Dec. 8, at 6:00 p.m. at Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur. (<http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/>)

Another **meetup for Atlanta atheists** is scheduled for Sun., Dec. 22 at 4:00 p.m. at Five Seasons Brewery, 5600 Roswell Rd, in Sandy Springs. (<http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/>)

IIG Atlanta will not be having their monthly meeting at Manuel's Tavern (602 N Highland Avenue Northeast, Atlanta, GA 30307) due to the holidays, but will pick up again in January.

Independent Investigations Group Atlanta is affiliated with IIG-West and Center for Inquiry, and promotes critical thinking about the paranormal, supernatural and unexplained. *It offers \$100,000 for anyone who can demonstrate evidence of the occult or paranormal under properly controlled conditions.* Questions?

Visit IIGAtlanta.com or contact Shaune Beattie by gmail: shaune.beattie@gmail.com. (<http://www.meetup.com/IIG-Atlanta/>).



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:

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Atlanta Freethought Society

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"Religious bondage shackles and debilitates the mind and unfits it for every noble enterprise, every expanded prospect."

—James Madison, 1774

We still have these great books for sale:

Why I Am Not A Christian—\$8

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.

An Uppity Old Atheist

Woman's Dictionary—\$8

By the late, great Carol Faulkenberry (illustrated by Amanda Faulkenberry); like Ambrose Bierce's Devil's Dictionary—but better: more biting, funnier. Guaranteed to make you laugh out loud and to challenge at least one idea you hold.

Quotations That Support the

Separation of State and Church

(2nd edition)—\$11

Compiled by Edward M. Buckner and Michael E. Buckner; ammunition against Christian-nation mythologists. Quotes from America's revolutionaries, constitution framers, Presidents, court decisions. Sources carefully documented; extensive index. Comb-bound—lies flat for easy copying.

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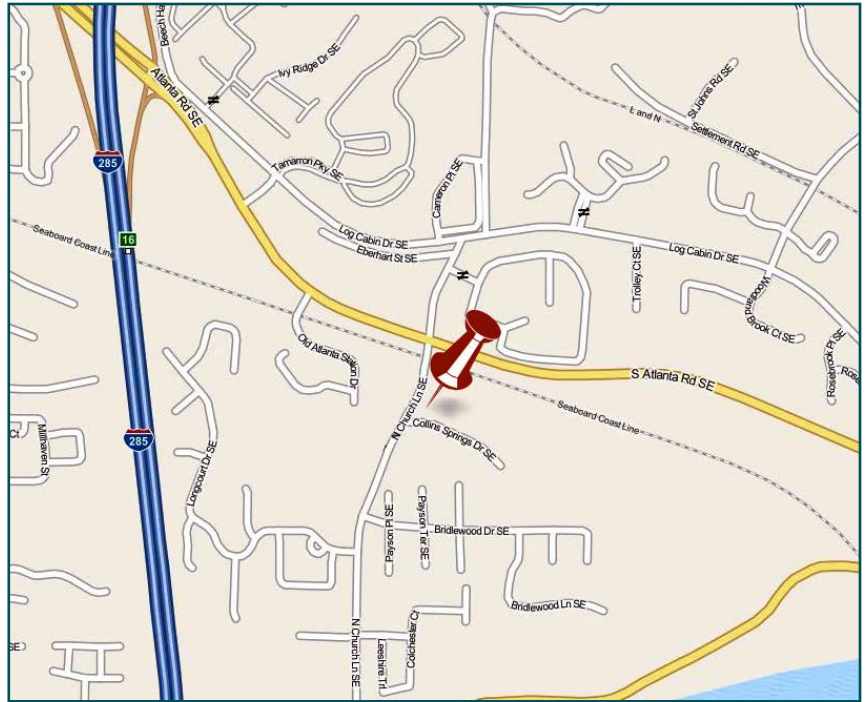
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Dare To Think
For Yourself!



**The December 8
Meeting:
1:00 at AF Hall,
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Atlanta, GA**

**This Month's Speaker:
Dr. Dennis Martin**



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