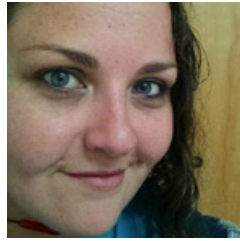


## The December AFS Meeting

**Sarah Harrison Green, Tennessee Regional Director for American Atheists**

Sarah Harrison Green grew up on a Tennessee Baptist Campground in East Tennessee. She was raised in a Southern Baptist family, with her father working for the Southern Baptist Convention and the Tennessee Baptist Convention for most of his life.



**Sarah Harrison Green**

She describes herself as a curious child. She realized that she was an Atheist by the age of 15, but like many, she remained closeted and fearful. It's only been two years since Sarah began opening up to friends and family. Today she is fully

open about her non-belief with her friends, family, and co-workers.

Sarah has been the Tennessee Director of American Atheists since November 2014. She is also a charter member of the Secular Coalition for Tennessee. Sarah is currently working to improve communication and inter-connectivity among all

## Calendar

12/13 AFS Board Meeting 11:00 a.m.

12/13 AFS General Meeting 1:00 p.m.

1/10 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: [www.facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought](http://www.facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought)

secular groups in Tennessee through the Tennessee Freethought Network.

Sarah will be speaking to us about some of the challenges we face attempting to organize in the South, as well as specific obstacles for the secular community.



“All the atoms of our bodies will be blown into space in the disintegration of the Solar System, to live on forever as mass or energy. That’s what we should be teaching our children, not fairy tales about angels and seeing grandma in heaven.”

— Carolyn Porco

**For the latest in upcoming AFS events, join our Meetup group!**  
[meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society](http://meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society)

## Programs and Speakers

All programs are on the second Sunday of each month at AF Hall, 4775 N. Church Lane SE, Atlanta, GA, 30339 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 13: Sarah Harrison Green,** Tennessee Regional Director for American Atheists, "Atheists in Those Hills"

**Jan 10: TBD**

**Feb 14: TBD**

**Mar 13: TBD**

**Apr 10: TBD**

## 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](mailto: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](mailto:AFSForum-subscribe@yahoo.com). The AFS Facebook page is at [facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought](https://facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought). For calendar information on AFS activities, please join the [Meetup group](https://Meetup.com). The AFS website is [www.atlantafreethought.org](http://www.atlantafreethought.org).

To keep up to date on the Atlanta Freethought Society calendar of upcoming events, please join our Meetup group: [meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society](https://meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society).

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*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

Vol. 21, Number 12, December 2015

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# Hateful Rhetoric Fuels Violence

By Annie Laurie Gaylor  
Co-Founder and Co-President  
Freedom From Religion Foundation

[www.patheos.com/blogs](http://www.patheos.com/blogs)

The anti-abortionists and politicians who've repeatedly defamed Planned Parenthood for years, ratcheting up the attack in recent months, have blood on their hands. There's no question their incendiary rhetoric has escalated the threats and attacks against abortion clinics.

The religious, anti-abortion gunman in Colorado Springs, who killed three and wounded nine people Nov. 27 while yelling "No more baby parts," was repeating the vicious slanders that Planned Parenthood sells fetal body parts for profit.

The so-called Center for Medical Progress conducted the phony, thoroughly debunked video "sting" of Planned Parenthood. But it's the hysterical anti-abortion candidates and public officials who've relentlessly inflamed the situation since July. Members of Congress even threatened a government shutdown, pushing out House Speaker John Boehner over the issue of defunding Planned Parenthood.

Theocratic groups well-known to FFRF such as Alliance Defending Freedom are also pushing governors to defund Planned Parenthood state by state (so far with relatively little success).

Particularly repulsive are the remarks of Carly Fiorina, the only woman GOP presidential candidate, who's gone after Planned Parenthood with relish and gusto in statement after venomous statement. Fiorina still is indefensibly defending her absurd remarks that the videos depicted "a fully formed fetus on the table, its heart beating, its legs kicking, while someone says we have to keep it alive to harvest its brain."

After the Colorado Springs attack, Fiorina denied that the rhetoric had gotten out of control. When Chris Wallace of "Fox News Sunday" called her "one of the toughest critics ... of Planned Parenthood's alleged harvesting of body parts," she had the nerve to complain:

*This is so typical of the left to immediately demonize the messenger, because they don't agree with the message. What I would say to anyone who tries to link this terrible tragedy to anyone who opposes abortion or opposes the sale of body parts is, this is typical left-wing tactics.*

GOP Sen. Ted Cruz similarly managed to paint the anti-abortionists as the victims, spouting about the "vicious rhetoric on the left, [for] blaming those who are pro-life." When a reporter pointed out that the Colorado shooter had said "no more baby parts" after he was arrested, Cruz bizarrely replied: "Well, it's also reported that he was registered as an independent and as a woman and a transgender leftist activist."

While Mike Huckabee, the former governor and former Fox commentator, initially sounded halfway human, telling CNN's "State of the Union" that the shooting is "domestic terrorism," he added:

*It was absolutely unfathomable, and there's no excuse for killing other people whether it's happening inside the Planned Parenthood*

*headquarters, inside their clinics where many millions of babies die or whether it's people attacking Planned Parenthood.*

(In other words, he compared abortion to "murder," therefore adding to the incendiary rhetoric.)

Donald Trump spoke out of both sides of his mouth, telling NBC's "Meet the Press" two days after the shootings:

*I will tell you, there is a tremendous group of people that think it's terrible, the videos that they've seen, with some of these people from Planned Parenthood talking about it like you're selling parts to a car. Now I know some of the tapes were perhaps not pertinent. I know a couple of people that were running for office or are running for office on the Republican side were commenting on tapes that weren't appropriate. But there were many tapes that are appropriate . . . and there are people that are extremely upset about it.*

Dawn Laguens, executive vice president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America, said in a statement on Sunday:

*It is offensive and outrageous that some politicians are now claiming this tragedy has nothing to do with the toxic environment they helped create. Even when the gunman was still inside of our health center, politicians who have long opposed safe and legal abortion were on television pushing their campaign to defund Planned Parenthood and invoking the discredited video smear campaign that reportedly fed this shooter's rage.*

Laguens added, "One of the lessons of this awful tragedy is that words matter, and hateful rhetoric fuels violence. It's not enough to denounce the tragedy without also denouncing the poisonous rhetoric that fueled it."

If the Religious Right ideologues need a bible verse to ponder for this situation, they could consider Hosea 8:7, "They that sow the wind, shall reap the whirlwind."



# An open letter to Sheriff Jolley: taking Harris County, GA back to Jim Crow one sign at time

by Andrew Seidel, Freethought Now/Patheos

<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/>

Dear Sheriff Jolley,

Many people have reported your new sign to the Freedom From Religion Foundation because we work to keep state and church separate. The sign is problematic on several fronts, threatening, and in poor taste. Essentially, it says, “If you don’t believe what I do, get out of my county.” This is an appalling sentiment, and even more so when it’s coming from someone who has sworn to uphold the Constitution—a document that protects freedom of thought above all else.

In an interview last June, you said of Harris County, “I hope we stay that way,” meaning stay the way things “were 40-50 years ago.” We can only surmise that this sign is an attempt to regain some of the division, discrimination, and hate of that bygone era because it resembles the signs that dotted Georgia’s “Sundown Towns” warning non-whites to get out of town before sunset, or else. Signs that typically read “[Racial slur], DON’T LET THE SUN SET ON YOU HERE.” If your goal is to take your county back to those benighted times, congratulations.

The full text of your deliberately belligerent sign reads:

**WARNING: Harris County is politically incorrect. We say: Merry Christmas, God Bless America and In God We Trust. We salute our troops and our flag. If this offends you... LEAVE!**

Let’s break down this hateful, misplaced message.

## WARNING: . . .

It is you, Sheriff Jolley, who needs the real warning. You have now opened the county to any number of lawsuits, and not just to keep state and church separate: Employment discrimination, civil

rights suits, and other suits by minority citizens who have been told by the person they are supposed to call for help that they should get out.

## . . . Harris County is politically incorrect . . .

First of all, this is factually wrong. In the interest of truth, you should edit this line of the sign. It is not politically incorrect to agree with positions that the majority of Americans hold. The more appropriate term is pandering. Fear- or hate-mongering would also be appropriate.

Secondly, this has nothing to do with political correctness and everything to

do with politics. The sign and its posting to social media is a transparent publicity grab. It’s no coincidence that you have just announced that you are running for a seventh term in the next few months. During the interview in which you made that announcement, you said, with no apparent irony, “we want to treat our citizens not just like we work for them, but we live with them



An insecure Sheriff Jolley standing next to his belligerent sign. Via Jolley’s instagram.

also.” I guess that doesn’t apply to religious minorities and your nonreligious neighbors.

## We say: Merry Christmas, . . .

So what?

This may come as a surprise, so brace yourself: There is no war on Christmas. It’s a myth, part of the larger “Christians are the persecuted majority in America” myth. However, there is a fight to end Christian privilege. And we in the secular movement are winning. You are just whining.

## . . . God Bless America . . .

Irving Berlin, who wrote the song “God Bless America,” was “not a religious person” according to his daughter. Berlin also wrote “White Christmas,” though he and his wife “hated Christmas.”

To Berlin, “God Bless America” “was a populist credo.” It was popular because “the mob is always right.”

You are stoking the passions of the mob by sacrificing a minority—nonbelievers—to the mob’s hate. It’s ironic that you’re doing so by citing a phrase made popular by a member of that same minority. (Read the full story of the songs here: <http://ffrf.org/outreach/item/18438-irving-berlin-the-agnostic>.)

## ... and In God We Trust.

Do you and your deputies wear seatbelts? Do your cars have air bags? Have you ever worn a bullet-proof vest? Do you have health, life, home, or car insurance? Have you been vaccinated? If so, your god is not very trustworthy is he? If he's no better at protecting you than random chance, what is the point of venerating or praying to him?

The In God We Trust motto, foisted on America during the Civil War (coins) and later the Red Scare of the 1950s (official motto and paper currency), expresses a sentiment that divides America into believers and everyone else. Rather than a unifying motto such as *E. pluri-bus unum*—from many, one—demagogues like you promote a pandering, divisive motto. You are deliberately alienating a voiceless minority, knowing that you can rely on your position of power and as chief law enforcement officer in the county to suppress any complaints from that minority. Shame on you.

You are charged with protecting all citizens. Instead, you have made it clear to 23% of the population that they should not call 911, but should instead "LEAVE!" Harris County.

We salute our troops and our flag.

So do nonreligious Americans. In fact, at FFRF we just installed a two-ton stone monument to the atheists in foxholes who have fought and died for our country, and who you seem to think are unworthy of honor. You're ignoring the 23.4% of atheist, agnostic, or military personnel having no religious preference (2010 MAAF study based on Department of Defense data). About one quarter of FFRF's 23,000 members are active duty or retired military.

If you truly supported the troops, you'd support them all. Not just the troops who happen to believe in the same god that you do.

## If this offends you ... LEAVE!

This can't be read as anything other than a threat by the chief law enforcement office in Harris County. First, it's clear the intent of this sign is to

offend, which means that the intent of the sign is also to tell people to leave. You are essentially saying, "If you're offended, and I've just deliberately offended you, get out!"

Why not just shorten the sign to say what you really mean: religious minorities are not welcome in Harris County. Jewish? Get out. Muslim? Get out. Buddhist? Get out. If you don't believe what I as sheriff declare to be orthodox, get out.

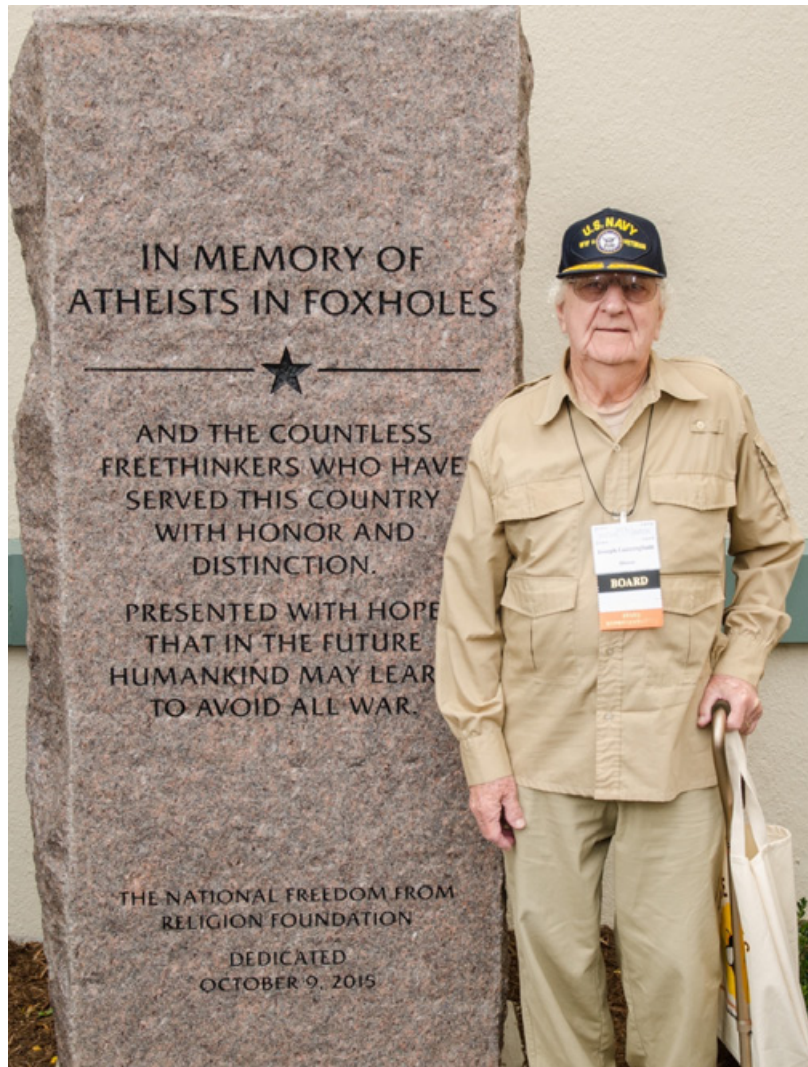
Often at FFRF we are told that if we don't like god we should move to Iran or another country in the Middle East. The lack of self-awareness in such suggestions is also evident in your sign. By declaring what is orthodox in religion—that your citizens must believe as you do if they wish to stay in the county—you are essentially declaring religious law. This is no different than the theocratic, Islamic regimes. The Syrian refugee crisis is largely due to people fleeing—LEAVING! As you might say—areas controlled by severe, authoritarian religious regimes. A sign like this might be expected in those parts, but not in the United States in 2015, and certainly not erected by the government.

I urge you to reconsider your commitment to the Constitution and the First Amendment, which guarantees the freedom of thought. It protects our ability to believe as we wish without the government

telling us to leave. If you value the Constitution and the oath you took to uphold that sacred document, you should remove this sign.

**By Andrew L. Seidel**  
**Staff Attorney**  
**Freedom From Religion Foundation**

*FFRF is a national nonprofit dedicated to keeping state and church separate and educating about nontheism. Join today.*



FFRF board member, lifetime member, and veteran, Joe Cunningham stands beside FFRF's Atheists in Foxholes monument. A secure honorable American standing next to a positive, inclusive message. Photo by Andrew Seidel

# 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 [donnaajgore@yahoo.com](mailto:donnaajgore@yahoo.com).

**We Agnostics Atlanta** meets on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Galano Club, 585 Dutch Valley Rd NE, Atlanta, GA 30324. Clubhouse phone number: (404) 881-9188. This is an Alcoholics Anonymous group.

**Alpharetta Freethinkers Humanists & Atheists Meetup** is a brand-new group meeting on the north side. Be sure to check out their meetup page for upcoming events. ([www.meetup.com/Alpharetta-Freethinkers-Humanists-Atheists-Meetup/](http://www.meetup.com/Alpharetta-Freethinkers-Humanists-Atheists-Meetup/))

**Marietta Skeptic/Humanist Meetup** has various get-togethers and discussion groups. Several upcoming events. (<http://www.meetup.com/Marietta-Atheists-Meetup/>)

**Growing Beyond Belief** is a new meetup in the Alpharetta area. Check out their page. ([www.meetup.com/Growing-Beyond-Belief/](http://www.meetup.com/Growing-Beyond-Belief/))

**The Peachtree City Humanists** meet often for discussions at Starbucks, lunch, dinner at She's Bistro, and more. Several upcoming events each month. ([www.meetup.com/Peachtree-City-Humanists-PTCH/](http://www.meetup.com/Peachtree-City-Humanists-PTCH/))

**The Southern Crescent Freethinkers** sponsor Navigators, Owl & Ibis: A Confluence of Minds, and meet for dinner, etc. Several upcoming events each month. ([www.meetup.com/Southern-Crescent-Freethinkers](http://www.meetup.com/Southern-Crescent-Freethinkers))

**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. ([www.fellowshipofreason.com](http://www.fellowshipofreason.com))

The Georgia chapter of **Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF)** meets on the first Sunday of each month at AF Hall from 2:00-4:00 and you can learn more about their topics at [www.meetup.com/Freedom-From-Religion-Foundation-of-Georgia](http://www.meetup.com/Freedom-From-Religion-Foundation-of-Georgia).

**Recovery from Religion - Morrow Chapter** meets on the second Saturday of each month at 1 p.m. at Barnes & Noble Booksellers Southlake, 1939 Mount Zion Road, Morrow, GA, however the next meeting listed is Dec. 12. There is no proselytizing of any kind allowed at these meetings. For more information and resources, please visit [www.recoveringfromreligion.org](http://www.recoveringfromreligion.org). ([www.meetup.com/Recovering-From-Religion-Morrow-Chapter/](http://www.meetup.com/Recovering-From-Religion-Morrow-Chapter/))

**Atlanta Astronomy Club** will have their holiday potluck on Dec. 12 from 6-10 pm at Math & Science Building, Emory U. Lots more events are available so check out the website ([www.atlantaastronomy.org](http://www.atlantaastronomy.org))

**Secular Atheist Study the Scriptures (SASS) of Gainesville** has an event called "The Biblical Flood: Righteous killing or global genocide?" on Sun. Dec. 13 at 4 pm, at the Lake Lanier Club, 2350 Avonlea Way, Gainesville. ([www.meetup.com/Secular-Atheist-Study-the-Scriptures-SASS-Gainesville/](http://www.meetup.com/Secular-Atheist-Study-the-Scriptures-SASS-Gainesville/))

There will be a **meetup for Atlanta atheists** on Sunday, Dec. 13, at 6:00 p.m. at Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur. ([www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/](http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/))

**GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths)** has their annual holiday party on Monday, Dec. 14, 7:00 p.m. at UUCG, 12 Bethesda Church Road, Lawrenceville. Bring a small wrapped gift worth \$10 and food and drink to share. ([www.meetup.com/brights-295/](http://www.meetup.com/brights-295/))

**Atlanta Atheists Parents Meetup** will have a play date at Medlock Park, 874 Gaylemont Cir, Decatur near the North Decatur/Embry Hills area Dec. 20 from 11-2. If the weather is too cold or rainy it will be at Leapin Lizards, 185 Sams St, Decatur, GA 30030. ([www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheist-Parents-Meetup/](http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheist-Parents-Meetup/))

**Black Nonbelievers** will have their Sunday Dec. 20 meeting at 3 p.m. at the Metropolitan Branch - Atlanta-Fulton Library System, 1332 Metropolitan Parkway, Atlanta. The topic will be announced later. As always, refreshments will be provided. ([www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers/](http://www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers/))

**Sunday Assembly Atlanta** is in the process of creating the November assembly, but at press time, information was not available. They will meet Dec. 20 at 6:00 at First Existentialist Congregation, 470 Candler Park Dr NE, Atlanta. Please check out the meetup page for more information. ([www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly/](http://www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly/))

There will be a third Sunday meetup for **Atlanta Atheists** on Sunday, Nov. 15, at 2:00 p.m. at

Chastain Tavern, 4629 Wieuca Road, Atlanta. ([www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/](http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/))

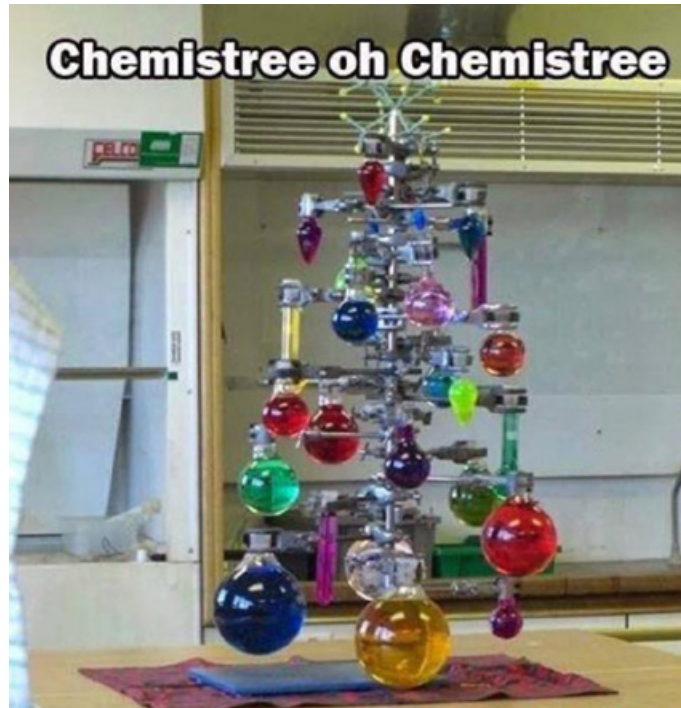
**Atlanta Skeptics** - At press time, there is not an Atlanta Skeptics meetup, so check the page. ([www.meetup.com/AtlantaSkeptics](http://www.meetup.com/AtlantaSkeptics))

**The Atlanta Science Tavern** at press time does not have anything listed this month for the Dec. 27 Manuel's Tavern lecture series, and Manuel's will be closing for renovations in December. Be sure to check the meetup page. ([www.meetup.com/AtlantaScienceTavern](http://www.meetup.com/AtlantaScienceTavern))

**Atlanta Atheists Parents Meetup** will have a play date at East Cobb Park, 3322 Roswell Rd, Marietta, near Marietta and Sandy Springs, Dec. 27 at 11-2. If the weather is too cold or rainy it will be at Catch Air at Town Center Market, 2505 Chastain Meadows Parkway Northwest, Suite #103, Marietta, GA 30066. ([www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheist-Parents-Meetup/](http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheist-Parents-Meetup/))

Another **meetup for Atlanta Atheists** is scheduled for Sun., Dec. 27 at 4:00 p.m. at Five Seasons Brewing, 5600 Roswell Rd, Sandy Springs. ([www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/](http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists/))

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



# Become a Member!

**(Or renew your membership with this form or online at [www.AtlantaFreethought.org](http://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.

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

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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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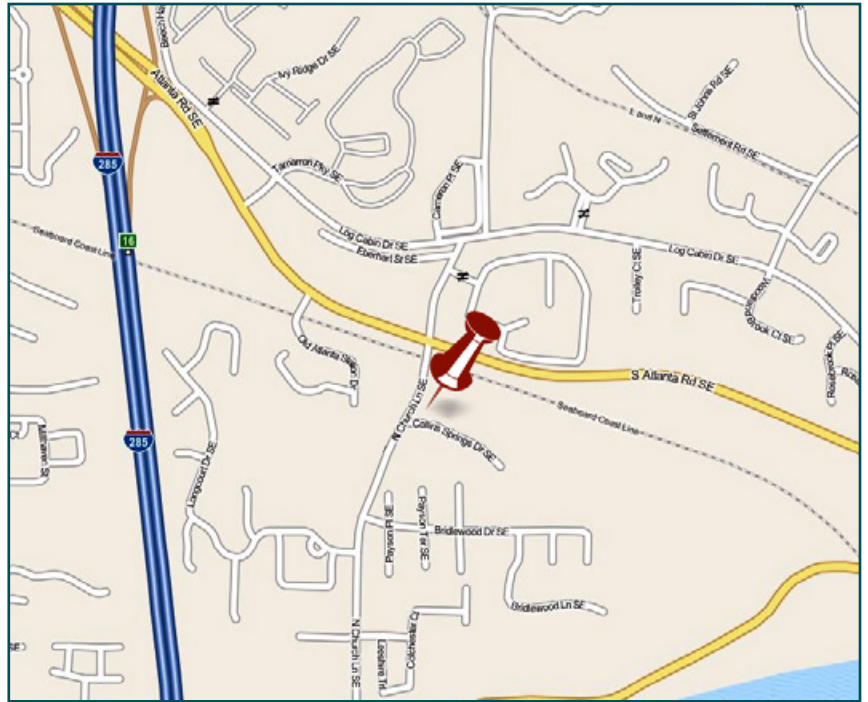
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Dare To Think  
For Yourself!



**December 13 meeting  
1:00 at AF Hall,  
4775 N. Church Lane SE  
Atlanta, GA 30339**

**Sarah Harrison  
Green**



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