

1 Atlanta Freethought Society, Incorporated  
2 **BYLAWS**

3 The members of the Atlanta Freethought Society, Incorporated, adopted these bylaws  
4 by majority vote on 8 January 1995; amendments adopted in February 1995, January  
5 1996, December 1996, January 1998, September 1998, December 1999, December  
6 2003, December 2006, December 2007, December 2008, and December 2013 have  
7 been incorporated.

8 1. **PURPOSE.** The Atlanta Freethought Society (AFS) is a nonprofit democratic  
9 organization, with all decisions made directly by majority votes of the members except  
10 when decisions are delegated to elected representatives as outlined here. We define  
11 **freethought as forming opinions about life in general and religion in particular on**  
12 **the basis of reason and the evidence of our senses, independently of tradition,**  
13 **authority, or established belief.** Most (but not all) of our members consider themselves  
14 atheists, but not all of us mean the same thing by “atheist” and we welcome members  
15 who count themselves in categories such as agnostic, deist, and a variety of other  
16 categories considered unorthodox (or worse) by society at large. Most (but not all) of  
17 our members also consider themselves to be secular humanists, again with somewhat  
18 differing definitions, but we do not, as a group, specifically promote the philosophy of  
19 humanism. We are eager to support (and to have as members and as leaders)  
20 freethinkers and nontheists of all racial and ethnic groups, of both sexes, of whatever  
21 sexual preferences or orientation, of any nationality, of all ages, and without regard to  
22 other irrelevant characteristics such as financial or educational status, physical  
23 handicaps or other disabilities. Our primary purposes are:

- 24 • to advance freethought by educating all about the advantages of freethought,  
25 both with positive discussions and descriptions of freethought in print and in public  
26 speeches and debates and with firm assertions of the rights of freethinkers, confronting  
27 directly any who slander or attack freethinkers

28 • to provide an organization that will promote the intellectual growth of  
29 freethinkers, both through open exchanges of ideas among members and by hearing  
30 and respectfully arguing with thought-provoking speakers

31 • to work vigorously to promote religious liberty for all, especially by insisting on  
32 and defending the complete separation of church and state, including with appropriate  
33 legal rallies, protests, and demonstrations (but not in support of either specific  
34 candidates for office or political parties)

35 • to provide an organization where freethinkers and nontheists can develop  
36 friendships, talk freely, socialize, and enjoy each other's company

37 • to collaborate with other groups to the extent that such organizations share our  
38 goals and are willing to work with us toward achieving them

39 2. **OFFICERS.** AFS will have five officers, each elected annually to a one-year term  
40 (January 1st through December 31st) by the process specified in section 4. All officers  
41 must be, at the time of their election and while they serve, members of AFS. The four  
42 officers will be:

43 • President—duties will include presiding at general meetings of AFS, at meetings  
44 of the board of directors, and at other AFS events. The president will be or will  
45 designate the chief public spokesperson for AFS. The president will appoint the editor  
46 of the AFS monthly newsletter with the board's approval. The president may make  
47 decisions on behalf of AFS but must seek approval from the board. For an significant  
48 decision, the board shall have 72 hours to respond via email to vote on such a decision.  
49 Anyone not responding shall be considered to have abstained from the decision. If  
50 there is not a clear majority, the president shall break a tie. The president shall fill  
51 vacancies on the board by appointment with the board's approval. The president  
52 shares responsibility for all AFS matters with each of the other officers and with the  
53 board of directors.

54 • Vice President for External Communication—responsible for insuring good AFS  
55 communication with the community at large, including via radio, television, and the  
56 print media. The Vice President for External Communication will preside at general  
57 meetings of the AFS when the President and Vice President for Internal Communication  
58 are not present at the meeting.

59 • Vice President for Internal Communication—responsible for insuring good  
60 communication within AFS, keeping the members aware of AFS affairs, chairing a  
61 hospitality committee to greet members and guests, and reporting to members on AFS  
62 events and any decisions made by the board. In the absence of the president, the Vice  
63 President for Internal Communication will serve as temporary president. If, in the  
64 opinion of a majority of the board of directors, the absence of the president is  
65 permanent or likely to be of sufficient duration to require doing so, the board may call a  
66 new election for president.

67 • Treasurer—chief financial officer for AFS. Responsible for maintaining financial  
68 records, informing the members on finances and fiscal matters, and preparing an  
69 annual budget for the board's approval. The treasurer shall make a quarterly report to  
70 the board of directors on income and expenses by category and an annual report of the  
71 same to the general membership in the AFS newsletter. The board may, at its  
72 discretion, appoint an individual or committee other than the treasurer to produce  
73 reports, projections, and/or forecasts based upon information provided by the  
74 treasurer. Authorized to write checks for AFS, including to reimburse officers for  
75 expenses on behalf of AFS.

76 • Secretary—responsible for recording and maintaining Board Meeting minutes  
77 and maintaining a membership and visitor database.

78 All officers are authorized to spend minor amounts of AFS funds on AFS business  
79 without advance authorization; routine expenditures may be made if authorized in an  
80 annual budget. (If no budget for a year has yet been approved, routine expenditures  
81 may be made on the authority of the appropriate officer unless and until a majority of

82 the board or of the membership votes to cease approving them.) Unforeseen  
83 expenditures of other than minor amounts must be approved by the board and  
84 reported to the membership. "Minor amount" shall be defined by the board each year.  
85 All expenditures, however minor, will be accounted for by the treasurer.  
86 Reimbursements to other officers will only be made if, in the opinion of the treasurer,  
87 such expenses have in fact occurred for AFS business. If the treasurer denies  
88 reimbursement, that decision may be appealed to the board of directors; their decision  
89 may be appealed to the general membership.

90 **3. BOARD OF DIRECTORS.** While the five officers are empowered to make day-to-  
91 day decisions for AFS, an elected board of directors will be empowered to make  
92 intermediate decisions, including adopting an annual budget. All board members must  
93 be, at the time of their election and while they serve, members of AFS. The board is also  
94 empowered to make decisions on any matters not contemplated in these bylaws,  
95 including filling vacancies in offices or on the board, though any such decisions must be  
96 reported to the membership (and may be reversed by majority vote of the members).  
97 The board will serve as an editorial board (or may vote to have the president appoint an  
98 editorial board, subject to approval by the board of directors) for AFS. The editorial  
99 board will set policy regarding AFS publications and will be empowered to reverse  
100 editorial decisions by the editor of the AFS newsletter. The board of directors will  
101 consist of the five officers, the editor of the monthly publication (if not already a  
102 member as an officer or elected director), and six other directors, with three of the six  
103 directors elected each year to two-year terms. (The first election of directors in 1995  
104 included some directors elected to two-year terms and some directors elected to one-  
105 year terms. In every succeeding year some directors will be elected while others will be  
106 continuing their terms.) The board of directors shall meet at least once in each calendar  
107 quarter, at places and times to be announced by the president after consulting with  
108 directors as to convenient times and places. Board meetings may be attended by any

109 interested AFS member, and any member can bring any matter before the board, either  
110 in writing or by scheduling with the president time to be heard by the board. Decisions,  
111 including agreement on the major contents of the monthly newsletter as prepared by its  
112 editor, will be by majority vote of those present, each director having one vote. A  
113 quorum for the board to make decisions for AFS will be a majority of the directors,  
114 including at least three officers. Board members who miss three (3) consecutive board  
115 meetings may be removed from the Board.

116 **4. ELECTIONS AND NOMINATIONS.** The president will appoint an election  
117 committee of 3 to 5 members that will oversee the election of officers and board  
118 members and any other measures that require ballot voting, such as bylaws changes.  
119 Candidates for election cannot serve on the election committee. Nominations from any  
120 AFS member will be made at the annual business meeting each October, either in  
121 person at the meeting, by email, or by mail before the October meeting. Email must be  
122 sent no later than 48 hours before the October meeting. All paid members as of  
123 November 1 will be eligible to vote in the December election. At the request of a  
124 candidate the committee will mail campaign literature to all eligible voters, with the  
125 cost to be borne by the candidate. The committee will mail election information and  
126 ballots to all eligible voters at least three weeks before the December meeting. Elections  
127 of officers and directors will be in December of each year by majority vote of eligible  
128 members submitting ballots in person or by mail. The election committee will receive  
129 the ballots and be responsible for an honest and accurate count of the votes cast. There  
130 shall be no cumulative voting. In case of a tie vote, there shall be a run-off vote by  
131 members present. Special elections may be called by the Board of Directors.

132 **5. COMMITTEES AND APPOINTED CHAIRS.** A variety of standing committees or  
133 special purpose task forces may be organized, with the appropriate officer either  
134 chairing or appointing the chair of each such group. Included among the standing  
135 committees will be a hospitality committee, led by the vice president for internal

136 communication, and a publications committee, led by a chair appointed by the  
137 president with the board's approval. The formation, leadership, and membership of all  
138 committees and task forces must be approved by the board of directors.

139 **6. BUSINESS AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS.** Most meetings of AFS will  
140 consist of a program or socializing among members, with most long-term business and  
141 significant decision-making reserved for the annual business meeting, with a formal  
142 vote in the annual elections. The membership may, by majority vote at any meeting  
143 where a quorum is present, reverse or change any decision of the officers or the board  
144 of directors. All AFS decisions will be made by majority vote, with debate before any  
145 decision conducted under rules of order established by the board. The president may,  
146 with the approval of the board of directors, appoint a parliamentarian or a sergeant at  
147 arms to insure orderly and democratic proceedings. A quorum (required to make  
148 decisions on behalf of AFS) at any *regular* AFS meeting will be 25 members, unless *all*  
149 members present vote to waive the quorum requirement. If an official decision by AFS  
150 is to be made at a specially called meeting, a quorum will be 30 members of AFS or 30  
151 percent of the members, whichever is greater, and the quorum requirement may not be  
152 waived at any such specially called meeting. (Members submitting their preferences in  
153 writing on issues announced to be dealt with at specially called meetings will be  
154 counted towards a quorum.) Special meetings for specified purposes may be called  
155 either by at least eight directors (including at least two officers) or by at least 30 AFS  
156 members; all AFS members must be given reasonable notice of any such specially called  
157 meeting.

158 **7. DUES, SUBSCRIPTIONS, AND MEMBERSHIP.** Annual dues, payable upon  
159 joining AFS and then in succeeding years, will be set by the board of directors, subject  
160 to approval by the membership. Dues may differ for these categories: individual;  
161 household (two or more members with the same mailing address); and student/youth

162 (for any member under 21 years old or declaring himself/herself to be a full-time  
163 student at the time dues are paid); low income (available to any member declaring  
164 himself/herself to be “low income”) and sustaining member (available to any member  
165 willing to pay the substantially higher rate of dues to be set for the category by the  
166 board). The cost of a subscription to the monthly AFS newsletter for nonmembers will  
167 also be set by the board (for addresses outside the USA the cost will include the  
168 additional mailing costs incurred for international postage). Exchange subscriptions  
169 will be available with any other freethought, atheist, or secular humanist group  
170 approved by the board of directors. Complimentary subscriptions will be provided to  
171 national freethinkers if approved by the board of directors. Membership will be open to  
172 anyone who pays dues and declares that he/she agrees with the basic purposes of AFS  
173 and supports AFS. AFS does not discriminate against anyone based on race, ethnicity,  
174 nationality, age, sexual preference or orientation, physical handicap, financial or  
175 educational status or other characteristics not clearly related to our stated purposes.  
176 Paid subscriptions to the monthly AFS newsletter will be available to any individual or  
177 group.

178 **8. CHANGES IN BYLAWS.** Changes shall be allowed once per quarter as voted on by  
179 the board and announced at the AFS meeting in which any changes were made. This  
180 will be subject to being overturned by a majority of members present.

181 **9. PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY.** At all meeting of the Society, Robert's Rules of  
182 Order (latest edition) shall govern when not in conflict with these Bylaws or the Articles  
183 of Incorporation, unless the members present at the particular meeting vote to suspend  
184 Robert's Rules at that meeting.

185 Thus Endeth the Atlanta Freethought Society Bylaws.