

The April AFS Meeting Jasmine Clark & Matthew Bowen from March for Science



The Atlanta Freethought Society welcomes **Dr. Jasmine Clark** (Director, March for Science) and **Matthew Bowen** (Assistant Director, March for Science) from **March For Science Atlanta**.

They will be speaking on the march, why it is needed and what needs to be done. This the local affiliate of the national March for Science which is organizing rallies in Washington DC and around the nation for April 22, Earth Day.

March for Science is a non-partisan group (filing for 501(c)(3) status) advocating for evidence based solutions to problems.

March for Science Atlanta will be held on April 22nd at 12 pm at Candler Park. It will conclude at the park at 4 pm, and speeches will end around 5:00.

Dr. Jasmine Clark is a Lecturer at Emory University School of Nursing. She received her B.S.

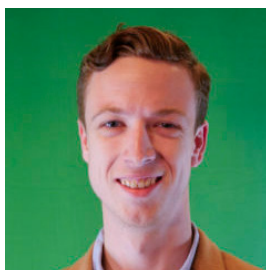


Dr. Jasmine Clark

in Microbiology from University of Tennessee in Knoxville and her PhD in Microbiology and Molecular Genetics at Emory University. She was driven to be a part of this movement because of a passion for science and science education as well as her insistence of

the necessity for peer-reviewed empirical data to remain unaltered and uncensored.

Matthew Bowen is a chemistry graduate from Mercer University. He is currently employed as an environmental consultant in Atlanta with a



Matthew Bowen

Calendar

- 4/9 AFS Board Meeting 11:00 am
- 4/9 AFS General Meeting 1:00 pm
- 4/9 Game afternoon after meeting
- 4/22 March for Science at Candler Park Noon
- 5/14 Potluck Lunch Noon
- 5/14 AFS General Meeting 1:00 pm
- 5/14 Game afternoon after meeting

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

Be sure to like AFS's Facebook page:
www.facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought

focus in sustainability. He serves as the Environmental and Infrastructure Eastern U.S. Coordinator of Sustainability for his consulting firm, and is a certified member of the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure.

The March for Science champions robustly funded and publicly communicated science as a pillar of human freedom and prosperity. Participants unite as a diverse, nonpartisan group to call for science that upholds the common good and for political leaders and policy makers to enact evidence-based policies in the public interest.

The March for Science is a celebration of science. It's not only about scientists and politicians; it is about the very real role that science plays in everyone's lives and the need to respect and encourage research that gives humans insight into the world. Nevertheless, the march has generated a great deal of conversation around whether or not scientists should involve themselves in politics. In the face of an alarming trend toward discrediting scientific consensus and restricting scientific discovery, one might ask instead: "Can scientists afford not to speak out in its defense?"

People who value science have remained silent

Continued on Page 3

For the latest in upcoming AFS events, join our Meetup group!
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.



Apr 9: Dr. Jasmine Clark and Matthew Bowen

May 14: Herb Silverman

Jun 11: Lecia Brooks from the SPLC

July 9: 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 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 facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought. For calendar information on AFS activities, please join the Meetup group. The AFS website is 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.

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. Any who are like-minded are welcome to join us.

Because we are designated by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) educational organization, contributions to AFS are tax deductible.

Views, opinions, positions or strategies expressed by authors are theirs alone and do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, positions or strategies of the Atlanta Freethought Society or any member thereof. The editors of *Atlanta Freethought News* reserve the right to edit or alter in any manner it sees fit any articles deemed to be obscene, offensive, defamatory, threatening, in violation of trademark, copyright or other laws, or is otherwise unacceptable; and also to correct grammar and to conserve space.

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Atlanta Freethought News

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March on Science continued from Page 1

for far too long in the face of policies that ignore scientific evidence and endanger both human life and the future of the world. New policies threaten to further restrict scientists' ability to research and communicate their findings. Humanity faces a possible future where people not only ignore scientific evidence, but seek to eliminate it entirely. Staying silent is a luxury that that can no longer be afforded. Everyone must stand together and support science.

The application of science to policy is not a partisan issue. Anti-science agendas and policies have been advanced by politicians on both sides of the aisle, and they harm everyone — without exception. Science should neither serve special interests nor be rejected based on personal convictions. At its core, science is a tool for seeking answers. It can and should influence policy and guide long-term decision-making.

The March for Science champions and defends science and scientific integrity, but it is a small step in the process toward encouraging the application of science in policy. Participants understand that the most effective way to protect science is to encourage the public to value and invest in it.

The best way to ensure science will influence policy is to encourage people to appreciate and engage with science. That can only happen through education, communication, and ties of mutual respect between scientists and their communities — the paths of communication must go both ways.

There has too long been a divide between the scientific community and the public. Scientists are encouraged to reach out to their communities, sharing their research and its impact on people's everyday lives. They are also encouraged in turn to listen to communities and consider their research and future plans from the perspective of the people they serve.

Science must be taken out of the labs and journals and shared with the world.



April 2017

Statement from American Atheists on Netflix's 'The Most Hated Woman in America' film

www.atheists.org

American Atheists would like to thank the producers of the film “*The Most Hated Woman in America*” for shining a light on a passionate, devoted, and tireless advocate for the absolute separation of religion from government.

Madalyn Murray O’Hair’s contribution to our nation’s history and the direction of atheist activism too often goes under-realized and unacknowledged. We appreciate that this film brought to light just some of that story and has given millions the opportunity to learn more about a complex person.

It is, however, important to note that this film is a work of fiction based on



Madalyn’s life. It isn’t a documentary and many of the conversations, events, and even people are created for the sake of the story, rather than for accuracy. To be clear, we have seen no credible evidence that there was financial impropriety on the part of the O’Hairs as was implied in the film.

American Atheists is fully transparent with its finances. We complete the required IRS Form 990 each year and have our finances audited annually to ensure that we are in compliance with non-profit best practices. This information is publicly available on our website at www.atheists.org/about/finances.

We pride ourselves in going above and beyond what is required of us for transparency and believe that the same standards should apply to churches that apply to us.

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It's Time For The Religious Right To Embrace The 'Mind-Your-Own-Business' Option

Rob Boston in Wall of Separation

www.au.org

Every few years, someone in the far-right fundamentalist Christian community puts forth the argument that modern American culture has become so nasty and hostile to "traditional" Christians that it's time to withdraw.

They don't plan to go to a forgotten island somewhere. Rather, they would create a kind of community in internal exile. As much as possible, they'd form parallel structures, such as fundamentalist-oriented educational institutions and media channels, and tend to their own gardens.

Rod Dreher's new book *The Benedict Option* is the latest to promote this idea. I haven't read the book, but a recent column about it in *The Washington Post* made the concept sound romantic, exciting and almost noble.

There are a couple of problems with that. First is that the very rationale behind the Benedict Option is a massive fraud. That idea that it's necessary for "serious" Christians in America to turn inwardly because they're under some form of attack from a hostile culture is balderdash.

Anyone who knows history is aware that the early church was persecuted. But we are far removed from the days of Nero. Once Christianity became the favored religion of the Roman Empire, it began enjoying a privileged status. These days in many Western nations, Christian churches get state subsidies and other forms of support, or, in countries like ours that enforce church-state separation, their legal rights are protected by a governing charter. Not that this has stopped the Religious Right's persecution narrative, of course. (And the claims you hear about the United States being "post-Christian"? They're hogwash. There has been some slippage, but 75 percent of Americans still identify as Christian. "Post-Christian" is a term used by fundamentalists who are unhappy that not every Christian believes as they do.)

In some states and communities, fundamentalists who choose to run for-profit businesses are expected to respect the rights of others and stop subjecting people they don't like – members of the LGBTQ community, non-believers and Muslims chiefly – to discrimination or ill-treatment. Expanding pluralism and diversity in America means that members of minority groups are no longer content to ride the back of the public policy bus. They want the same rights and privileges that the majority has enjoyed for years. They are not asking for these rights, they are demanding them.

This means that the right of LGBTQ Americans, non-believers and non-Christians to be treated with dignity is secure (in the case of the LGBTQ community, in some states, anyway) – but so is the right of extremely conservative religious groups to preach against things they don't like, such as marriage equality. Fundamentalists spew this stuff all of the time, and their churches have not been punished for it. To be sure, people have pushed back against the mean-spirited rhetoric that flows from many fundamentalist churches, but that's to be expected. Sharp disagreement and a spirited



counter-argument aren't the same thing as government-sponsored persecution.

The second thing to know about the Benedict Option is that it will never come to pass. Sure, Dreher might sell a few books, but does anyone really expect that the boisterous band of busybodies known as the Religious Right is going to stop trying to run everyone else's life? That's especially unlikely to happen now, when the Religious Right's man, Donald Trump, is sitting in the White House.

Let's be clear: The goal of most right-wing fundamentalist Christians is not and never will be disengagement; it is to meddle in the lives of others and use the government as an instrument to enforce their narrow, exclusionary dogma.

For 30 years, I've been hearing self-identified pundits talk about the death of the Religious Right. Yet that movement, like a ghoul in a late-night horror movie, keeps springing back to life. Likewise, talk about right-wing fundamentalists running into monastic cells to read their Bibles and contemplate life and how to live it while a rising tide of secularization engulfs the country and leads to rampant persecution sounds like a plotline from a bad fundamentalist dystopian novel.

There's only one option I want to see the followers of the Religious Right adopt: the "Mind-Your-Own-Business" Option. It's not likely to happen, so don't let your guard down.

FFRF protests large NASA grant used for religious purposes

ffrf.org

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is once again strongly protesting a wrongful NASA grant of more than \$1 million in taxpayer money that was largely used for religious purposes.

In May 2015, NASA's astrobiology program awarded \$1.108 million to the Center of Theological Inquiry for "an interdisciplinary inquiry on the societal implications of astrobiology, the study of the origins, evolution, distribution, and future of life in the universe." Center Director **William Storrar** stated at the time, "The aim of this inquiry is to foster theology's dialogue with astrobiology on its societal implications, enriched by the contribution of scholars in the humanities and social sciences."

FFRF sent a letter last year questioning the grant. The principal thrust of the grant was theological — and therefore religious. And though ostensibly ecumenical, the Center is "rooted in Christian theology," according to its website. The grant was patently unconstitutional, FFRF asserted, since government-funded scientific studies of theology create state-church entanglements.

As part of its investigation, FFRF requested records from NASA.

After several denials by the agency and many appeals by FFRF's diligent Staff Attorney **Andrew Seidel**, the freethought organization finally obtained about 550 pages of records. Combing through these pages, Seidel and FFRF's dedicated legal interns made two startling discoveries: First, there was damning evidence confirming that the grant was indeed unconstitutional, violating the separation of state and church. And, second, NASA Technical Officer **Mary Voytek**, the official managing the grant, has had a questionable and likely unethical relationship with Storrar.

With the NASA money, the Center of Theological Inquiry hired 11 theologians — 10 of them Christian — and only one actual scientist. That wouldn't be problematic if they were doing secular work, but they weren't. The work proposed for the grant included:

- formulating a "Christian response" to scientific studies on morality,
- developing a new model of biblical interpretation,
- relating themes from First Corinthians, a book in the Christian bible, to astrobiology,
- reconciling a potential astrobiology discovery with Christian theology,
- looking at how astrobiology would affect the Christian doctrine of redemption,
- examining Christian ethics and Christian doctrines of human obligation,
- looking at societal implications of astrobiology with "theological ethics",
- and writing a monograph on Christian forgiveness.

"We are informing NASA that it cannot constitutionally fund theology," Seidel writes to NASA Astrobiology Institute Director **Penelope Boston** in his

recent letter. "The Supreme Court has explicitly held that refusing to fund scholarships for theology is not religious discrimination under the First Amendment."

Then there is the questionable relationship between Voytek and Storrar. While administering the first grant but prior to approving the supplemental grant to the Center, Voytek participated in a panel at a 2015 Center of Theological Inquiry conference in the United Kingdom. Emails reveal that the Center arranged for Voytek's travel to and from this event. In another email sent during the same period, Voytek talks about a 2014 invitation for a trip to Florida to meet the Center's board members and thanks Storrar for his "thoughtful gifts." The records do not reveal the nature of these "thoughtful gifts."

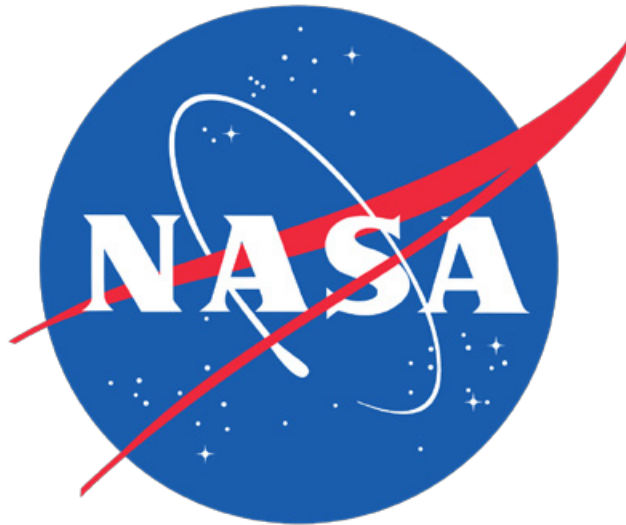
Employees of the executive branch of the United States of America "may not . . . accept a gift from a prohibited source," according to federal law. A prohibited source includes any person who:

- "does business or seeks to do business with the employee's agency,"
- "is seeking official action by the employee's agency," or
- "has interests that may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the employee's official duties."

The Center of Theological Inquiry is or was a prohibited source under each of these definitions. None of these gifts or the travel was disclosed, as required by law.

FFRF requests an inquiry into the nature of the relationship between Mary Voytek and William Storrar and a complete review of the grants awarded to the Center, including a determination as to whether the awards violated the Constitution by providing funds to a religious institution for research with a religious purpose and effect.

"FFRF is saddened that an institution such as NASA whose work we have so admired over the years has wandered woefully astray from science," says FFRF Co-President **Dan Barker**. "This grant raises a whole lot of questions that need to be immediately resolved."



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.

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 like an Alcoholics Anonymous group.

Gainesville Atheists are now having weekly meetings on Sundays at 3:00 p.m. at Lake Lanier Club Business Center, 2350 Avonlea Way, Gainesville to discuss the historicity of Jesus. They are also doing outreach to University of North Georgia - Gainesville. (www.meetup.com/Secular-Atheist-Study-the-Scriptures-SASS-Gainesville)

Post-Christian Church of SHATTER meets every Sunday at 5:00 pm at 1371 Hartvord Ave SW, Atlanta. This is a new group so check out the website to find out what to expect and be sure to RSVP: www.churchofshatter.com/sunday-service (www.meetup.com/Post-Christian-Church-of-SHATTER)

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

The Peachtree City Humanists participate in social and educational activities such as dinners, lunches, coffees, outdoor recreation, discussion groups, and book clubs with topics that include science, psychology, philosophy. (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)

N. Georgia Freethinkers Secularists & Humanists Non-religious freethinking adults, who at times feel somewhat isolated in this little corner of Georgia, meet for drinks, to forge friendships, have dinner parties, chat over coffee, practice debating skills, laugh, hold game nights, etc. (www.meetup.com/North-Gwinnett-Freethinkers-Atheist-Agnostic-Meetup)

The Atlanta Science Tavern has several meetings planned. Please check meetup page for more information. (www.meetup.com/AtlantaScienceTavern)

Recovery from Religion - Morrow Chapter meets on Sat, Apr 8 at 1 p.m. at Barnes & Noble Booksellers Southlake, 1939 Mount Zion Road, Morrow, GA. There is no proselytizing of any kind allowed at these meetings. For more information and resources, please visit www.recoveringfromreligion.org. (www.meetup.com/Recovering-From-Religion-Morrow-Chapter)

There will be a **meetup for Atlanta Atheists** Sun., April 9 at 6:00 p.m. at Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths) meets on the Mon Apr 10 at 7:00 pm at UUCG, 12 Bethesda Church Road, Lawrenceville, unless otherwise indicated. Check Facebook/Meetup pages for more information. (www.meetup.com/brights-295)

Atlanta Atheists will have a third Sunday meetup on Apr 16, 2:00 p.m. at The Bucket Shop Cafe, 3475 Lenox Road NE, Atlanta. If you've gotten your [expletive] taxes done, come celebrate! They are a short walk from the Lenox MARTA station, so take the train if you can. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

Sunday Assembly Atlanta will have a general meeting on Climate Change on Sun Apr 16 at 6 p.m. at First Existentialist Congregation, 470 Candler Park Dr NE, Atlanta. Humanity is, in part, causing climate change. To some, this is a controversial statement. To others, it is a rallying cry. To still others, it's a subject of a life's worth of research. Our speaker is Georgia Tech paleoclimate and climate change professor **Dr. Kim Cobb** who

returns to share with our community the current understanding of climate change, her research into coral health, and the current challenges related to our effect on the global climate.

Assemblies, and the potlucks afterward, are open to the public and free to attend. SAA is an extremely active community with a large number of upcoming events including rock chorus, secular support, mindfulness meditation, wonder club, urban wonder, book club, makers night out, volunteering, queer beyond belief group,

public speaking series, trivia nights, etc. (www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly)

Atlanta Astronomy Club is having a general meeting Sat, Apr 15, 3-5 at Fernbank Science Center, 156 Heaton Park Dr, Atlanta unless otherwise noted. (www.atlantaastronomy.org)

Ethical Humanists of Atlanta is meeting Sun, Apr 23 12:30-2:00 p.m. at Manuel's Tavern, 603 N Highland Ave NE, Atlanta to have a conversation on ethical living. They meet every 4th Sunday. (www.meetup.com/Ethical-Humanists-of-Atlanta)

Another **meetup for Atlanta Atheists** is scheduled for Sun., Apr 23 at 4:00 p.m. at Five Seasons Brewing, 5600 Roswell Rd, Sandy Springs. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

Atlanta Skeptics has "Drinking Sceptically" on the first Friday of each month. 5 Seasons Brewing, 5600 Roswell Rd, Sandy Springs. (www.meetup.com/AtlantaSkeptics)

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

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)



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(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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Life Member \$1000 _____ Email: _____

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Extra donation (Thank you!) \$ _____

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AFS Art Display Program

4775 N. Church Lane SE Atlanta, GA 30339

www.atlantafreethought.org afs@atlantafreethought.org

Person or entity displaying art: _____

Address: _____

Phone(s): _____

Email: _____

Description of artwork (subject, color, dimensions, weight, frame, price, materials, other info — list on separate page if necessary):

Display dates: from _____ to _____

Owner if other than above: _____

Address: _____

Phone(s): _____

Email: _____

Is artwork for sale? Yes / No \$ _____ Upon sale
 owner agrees to pay AFS a 33.3% fee.

Terms: All artwork displays will be submitted to Atlanta Freethought Society art committee for approval (afs@atlantafreethought.org). Installation & removal will be done by artist/owner overseen by AFS art committee. Damage to building will be repaired by artist/owner. The owner assumes all risk for artwork at all times. AFS will not be responsible for any damage or loss while artwork is in our possession.

Owner agrees to terms: _____

Signature/date _____

AFS Art Committee approval: _____

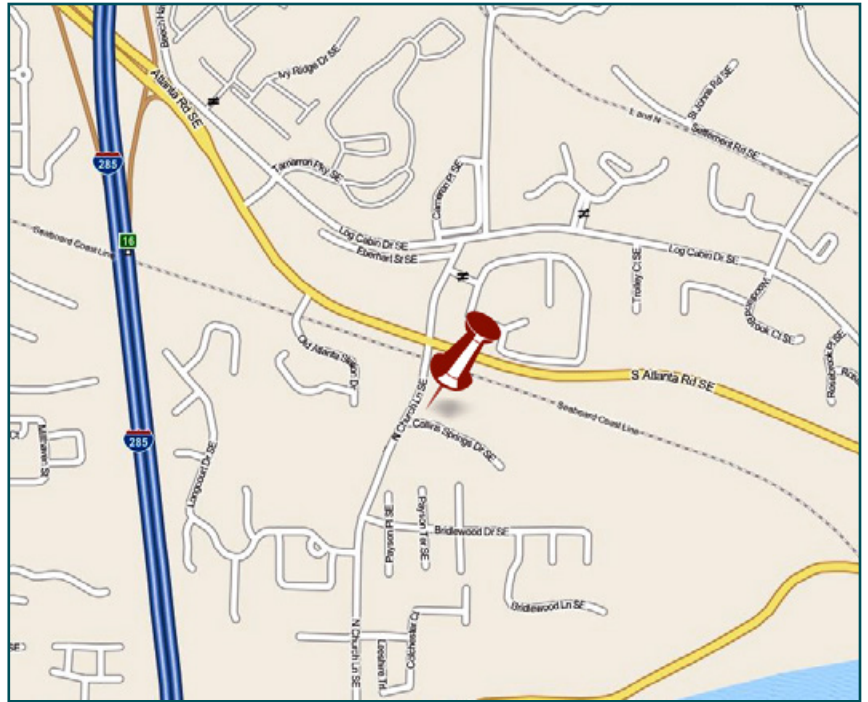
Signature/date _____

*Dare To Think
For Yourself!*



**April 9th meeting
1:00 at AF Hall,
4775 N. Church Lane SE
Atlanta, GA 30339**

**Dr. Jasmine Clark
Matthew Bowen**



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