

August 2017 l 0 Number 23 - Volume **AFS Publication** D D

The August AFS Meeting Mark Banks, President, Atlanta Astronomy Club

On Sunday, our own Mark Banks will play a 38-minute documentary video about the new James Webb Space Telescope which will replace the aging Hubble, as well as talk about the total solar eclipse that will happen on August 21st through much of the USA. This will be followed

by questions and answers.



Mark is a longtime president of the Atlanta Astronomy Club as well as Treasurer of the Freedom From Religion Foundation of Georgia. He is also a longtime AFS board member and has been a member of AFS for over

Mark Banks

25 years. He has spent many years in the aero space industry working with advanced avionics systems.

After the meeting, we will adjourn to a local restaurant. All are welcome!

Calendar

- 8/13 AFS Board Meeting 11:00 a.m.
- 8/13 AFS General Meeting 1:00 p.m. 9/10 Potluck 12:00 p.m.
- 9/10 AFS General Meeting 1:00 p.m.
- 9/16 East Cobber Parade and Festival, Johnson Ferry Baptist Church (see article at left)
- 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



Each year, as summer leaves, there is an East Cobber Parade and Festival. As always, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State will participate in the parade. The event is scheduled for Saturday, September 16. The one-mile parade will still begin at 10:00 a.m. in the Mount Bethel Elementary School parking lot, travel south on Johnson Ferry Road, and turn left onto Olde Towne Parkway.

As always we need marchers, so all of you who are available to show support for our liberty promoting cause are welcome to contact leffrey Selman at selmanjm1@aol.com. Americans United issued T-shirts (while they last) will be given out to those who march with us. We hope to have at least 15 marchers this year (more if possible). Bring water!

The Parade will be followed up by the Festival. This will be the first time that our AU Chapter will have a table at the Festival. The event will be staged at the Johnson Ferry Baptist Church grounds from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. We very much look forward to presenting our cause for belief in equality at this venue. While our AU chapter has the tabling covered, we welcome all who wish to come by and support our stand for the True Liberty by promoting separation of church and state.

The free Festival will feature arts and crafts, local businesses, food concessions, carnival games, and an entertainment stage. The parade and festival aims to build a sense of community and reinforce East Cobb's status as one of the best places to live in the Atlanta area by giving special tribute to those who contribute to the quality of life in East Cobb.

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.

Aug 13: Mark Banks on the Solar Eclipse Sept 10: Jeffrey Selman, Americans United for Separation of Church and State Oct 8: 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@yahoogroups.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@yahoogroups.com. The AFS Facebook page is at facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought. For calender 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 nonreligion. 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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Membership in AFS is \$50/year per person, \$20 for low income.

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

> Sustaining Membership is \$100. Life Membership is \$1000. Subscriptions only are \$30 for 12 issues.

Please make checks and money orders payable to Atlanta Freethought Society

(or Paypal to afs@atlantafreethought.org).

Visit our Meetup page at meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society.

See AFS events and member views at: facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought.

Send E-mail to afs@atlantafreethought.org.

AFS Wordpress specialist: Dwight Lyman AFS Facebook page: Laura Ross

Atlanta Freethought News

Questioning How to Teach National Holidays That Have a Religious Bent

by Jeffrey Selman



Recently the Georgia State Board of Education mandated the teaching of national holidays to public school kindergartners, including Christmas, with the exclusion of other non-federal nationally celebrated religious holidays.

While it hasn't been kept a secret, it has been somewhat kept under the radar. However, some of the Georgia citizenry has paid attention to it as is indicated by an article in Atlanta Jewish Times by **Rabbi Steve Lebow** of Temple Khol Emeth in Cobb County. While the mandate was issued, the actual "how to teach" these holidays was left open for each teaching jurisdiction to decide. Therein lies the rub. Rabbi Lebow, along with other faith leaders, has organized several citizens in Cobb County to investigate and challenge this new state mandate.

Below is a list of state officials who can be contacted about this cloaked transgression of the separation of church and state.

Debbie Caputo

Administrative Assistant to the State Board Phone: (404) 657-7410 Fax: (404) 657 6978 Email: dcaputo@doe.k12.ga.us

Pamela Smith

Associate Superintendent State Board of Education Phone: (404) 463-4141 Email: pamsmith@doe.k12.ga.us

Stacey Suber-Drake General Council State Board of Education Phone: (404) 463-1725

Mike Royal State Board of Education Chairperson Phone: (404) 463-1725

New Group Started in Metro Atlanta: First Church of New Atheism

by Jeff S. Stinson

www.meetup.com/The-First-Church-of-New-Atheism

Please go to Meetup.com to become a member. Membership is absolutely free.

There will be no tithing or handing around a plate for donations. Attendance is free, but we do ask that you order something from the menu of the restaurant where we are meeting. Also, if you RSVP Yes please make sure you will be able to make it. And please feel free to bring family or friends. Just let me know on the Meetup site that you will be doing so, so we'll have a good idea of how many people will be joining us.

The First Church of New Atheism strives to create a group of like-minded folks to come together to discuss issues, many of them disturbing, that are in the Christian Bible.

There will usually be a very short semi-interactive sermon (5 - 10 minutes), a group discussion on the topic and then there will be time to socialize.

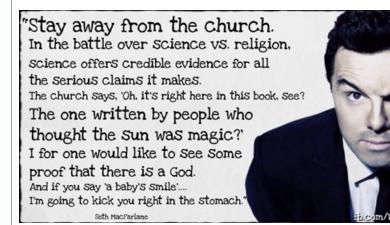
This group is open to all people – regardless of faith or lack of faith. The only request is that those with faith remain respectful and must understand that this is a meeting for those who do not believe in a higher power and believe that religion is harmful and/or the premises of religion are not factual. Our group is different from other atheist groups because we talk about different topics from the Bible and relate what we've learned to our presentday conditions/ways of living. Atheists can make a difference!

Here is a list of our upcoming meetings:

Sunday, August 13th, 6:00 - 7:30 pm. Mellow Mushroom (on Monroe). "The Trials and Tribulations in the book of Revelation." There will be a very short sermon (reading), then discussion, then time to socialize.

Sunday, September 17th, 6:30 – 8:00 pm. Thinking Man Tavern. 537 W. Howard Ave, Decatur, GA 30030. "Talk About Homosexuality, Shellfish, and Clothing With Mixed Fabrics." There will be a very short sermon (reading), then discussion, then time to socialize.

If you have any questions or would like to register outside of Meetup.com, please feel to call Jeff S. Stinson, Administrator at (678) 510-3079. All are welcome!



Atheists Condemn Trump's Anti-Trans Military Policy

www.atheists.org

In response to a series of tweets from President **Donald Trump** declaring that trans military service members would be banned from serving "in any capacity in the U.S. military," American Atheists President **David Silverman** released the following statement:

"The President is attacking trans members of our nation's military, men and women who are already serving openly and bravely, as a way of shoring up his support among anti-equality religious bigots. This is a purely partisan decision that has no basis in fact or reality.

"Despite the President's assertions, the Department of Defense and mili-

tary leaders have affirmed that allowing transgender individuals to serve in the military has no impact on readiness and almost no added financial cost.

"That President Trump would expel thousands of dedicated. brave, and patriotic Americans who want to serve their country as a way to appease religious extremists speaks volumes. Using transgender



service members as a political football is cruel and disgusting.

"Contrary to the President's claim of 'tremendous medical costs,' the **RAND Corporation estimated** that allowing trans service members to receive gender transition-related health coverage would cost 'between \$2.4 million and \$8.4 million annually, representing a 0.04- to 0.13-percent increase in active-component health care expenditures.'

"Gen. Joseph Dunford, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in June that there was no issue with currently serving transgender service members and that their ability to continue to serve would not be impacted by any future changes to military policy. The President's statement that transgender individuals would not be allowed to serve in any capacity is at odds with Gen. Dunford's previous statement."

Atheists Issue Joint Statement Condemning Trump Administration for Lack of Outreach to Secular Community

www.atheists.org

On July 28, 2017, four national organizations representing atheists, agnostics, humanists, and secular Americans released statements condemning the Trump Administration's lack of outreach to the nontheist community.

In March 2017, leaders representing American Atheists, the American Humanist Association, the Center for Inquiry, and the Secular Coalition for America sent a joint letter to the White House welcoming Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States. The letter, made public for the first time today, urges President Trump to continue the Obama Administration's policy of regularly engaging with the nontheistic community. In closing, the four signatory organizations urge President Trump to call upon them as a resource so they can work together to "ensure religious freedom and inclusion for all Americans throughout [his] tenure as President of the United States."

After nearly five months, the White House has yet to respond to the letter or offer any formal recognition to the one-quarter of Americans who identify as nonreligious. Over the same time period, the Trump Administration has pursued a policy agenda that blatantly privileges religion and is overtly hostile to the separation of church and state. These actions include: issuing an Executive Order calling for the IRS to relax the ban on churches engaging in electoral politics, instituting a religiously-discriminatory travel ban, appointing an Attorney General who explicitly slandered secular Americans during his confirmation hearing, and, as recently as July 26, repeating a frequently used campaign talking point that implies patriotism requires belief in a God.

Because of these policies and continued incendiary rhetoric, the four signatories to the letter are again calling on the White House to meet with them and speak to the concerns of nonreligious Americans, the single largest "religious group" in the United States.

On Page 5 are statements by representatives from each of the nontheist organizations signed on to the letter.

Statements by representatives from each of the nontheist organizations signed on to the letter to the Trump administration for lack of outreach to the secular community:

"This administration has continually appeased and kowtowed to the most extreme elements of the religious right. Their attacks on the foundation of the separation of church and state and their use of religious as a weapon against LGBT people, religious minorities, and women have confirmed our fears that the President would allow religious fundamentalists to drive the agenda in this White House. President Trump needs to realize that the tide has turned on religion in America. Our community is growing while the ranks of the extremists he has aligned himself with continue to shrink. Atheists demand equality, respect, and a seat at the table in American politics and we will fight at every step to secure those goals."

David Silverman President American Atheists

"Despite divisive campaign rhetoric, many humanists were willing to give President Trump a chance to establish an inclusive Administration, but his refusal to meet with the nontheistic community and his administration's open hostility to the separation of religion and government is profoundly disturbing. President Trump holds an office that isn't a platform for promoting a particular faith and he has an obligation to represent all Americans."

Roy Speckhardt Executive Director American Humanist Association

"In an attempt to respect the office of the presidency and work constructively with those with whom we may disagree, the secular community reached out to President Trump to open a dialogue. Rather than greet that gesture as an opportunity, Trump ignored it and has gone on to question the patriotism of nonbelievers. When fealty to the president is the only yardstick by which one's patriotism is measured, as it is in this administration, we happily fail that test. The nonreligious, humanists, and atheists, make up a significant proportion of America's citizenry. That Trump finds us unworthy speaks volumes about him."

Robyn Blumner President and CEO Center for Inquiry

"As patriotic Americans, we find it disheartening that the Trump Administration is willing to cast us as second-class citizens. The signatories of this letter represent a community that now includes one-quarter of all Americans and who deserve to a have a seat at the table. We believe firmly in the expressed intent of the first 16 words of the very First Amendment to the Bill of Right which promises that true religious freedom must include both the freedom of and freedom from religion. I hope President Trump will take us at our word that we wish to be a resource to him and recognize that, as President of the United States, he should meet with those who represent such a large constituency of Americans."

Larry T. Decker Executive Director Secular Coalition for America

FFRF slaps Trump with lawsuit for legalizing church politicking

ffrf.org

The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) today released a new ad, "You're Sued!" challenging **President Trump's** executive order to legalize

church politicking, in violation of the U.S. Constitution.

"President Trump wants to convert churches into the next political super PACs, but he better check the Establishment Clause of the Constitution first," said FFRF Co-President Annie Laurie Gaylor. "FFRF filed our lawsuit and launched this ad campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of church politicking."

The ads will run on Facebook, Google and Instagram targeting secular Americans nationwide this month.



great fanfare during a National Day of Prayer ceremony in the Rose Garden. FFRF filed suit shortly

after in the U.S. District Court, Western District of Wisconsin.

FFRF's suit argues that Trump has used his order to usher in a new era of church politicking, greenlighting endorsements from the pulpit and opening the door for dark money political spending. Meanwhile, the order discriminates against secular organizations such as FFRF, which must follow strict guidelines to maintain their 501(c)(3) tax status.

For more information, read FFRF's press release and legal

Trump signed his "Religious Liberty" executive order in early May with

complaint about the suit.

August 2017

Other Meetings of Interest in Metro Atlanta

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

Atlanta Astronomy Club is not having meetings during the summer months. Check website for more info. (www.atlantaastronomy.org)

The SOS (Secular Organizations for Sobriety) meets on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. in Roswell. For more information, send an email to donnajgore@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 similar to Alcoholics Anonymous group.

Gainesville Atheists are now having weekly meetups on Sundays at 3 pm, 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 at presstime, nothing has been scheduled since lune. 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 Hu-

manists 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)

Recovery from Religion - Morrow Chapter meets on Sat, Aug 12 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)

Televangelist Faith Heale BENNY HINN Experiences Heart **Related Complications.**

He Went to the Hospital Emergency Room!

Freedom From Religion Foundation of Georgia will meet jointly with AFS at Aug. 13 meeting, I:00 pm, AF Hall. (www.meetup.com/ Freedom-From-Religion-Foundation-of-Georgia)

First Church of New Atheism will meet to discuss "The Trials and Tribulations in the Book of Revelation" Sun, Aug. 13, 6 pm, Mellow Mushroom, 931 Monroe Dr NE, Atlanta. (www. meetup.com/The-First-Church-of-New-Atheism)

There will be a meetup for Atlanta Atheists Sun., Aug. 13 6 pm, Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths) will meet Mon., Aug 14, 7 pm at UUCG, 12 Bethesda Church Rd, Lawrenceville. To find out about future meetings, go to the Meetup page. (www.meetup.com/brights-295)

Atlanta Atheists Third Sunday meetup at Wrecking Bar Brew Pub, 292 Moreland Ave NE, Atlanta, Sun, Aug 20, 2 pm. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

> **Black Nonbelievers** at press time no general meeting scheduled, but some are going to the American Atheists National Convention in North Charleston, SC on Sat, Aug 19. (www.meetup.com/ Black-Nonbelievers/)

Sunday Assembly Atlanta

will have a general assembly (Topic TBA) Sun Aug 20, 6-8:30 pm at First Existentialist Congregation, 470 Candler Park Dr NE, Atlanta. This is also a potluck supper. All are welcome. 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)

Ethical Humanists of Atlanta is meeting Sun, Aug 27 12:30 pm at Jack's Tower, 1209 North Highland Avenue, 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, Aug 27, 4 pm, Five Seasons Brewing, 5600 Roswell Rd, Sandy Springs. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

Atlanta Skeptics has "Drinking Skeptically" 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)

Does he pray to be saved? No.

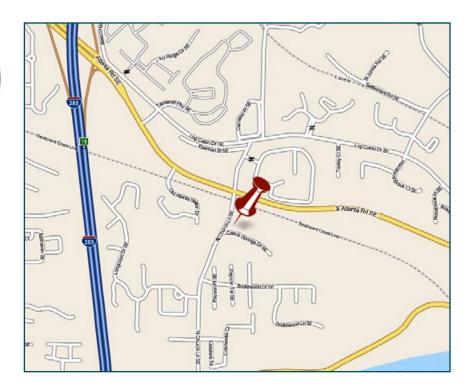
Save time and postage by making a payment via Paypa <i>I</i> to: afs@atlantafreethought.org	Total: \$ Receive newsletter by email (No charge for members) Receive paper newsletter by mail (No charge for members)		Books \$ Any other things you'd like to tell us?	۰ ۰	Individual \$50 \$ Name Low Income \$20 \$ Address: Sustaining \$100 \$	Annual dues are: Membership Dues# of mems Total	 (Or renew your membership with this form of online at www.Attantafreetnought.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. Life memberships: Avoid the hassle of renewing every year. A life member for \$100 per year. 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! 	Become a Member!
artwork at all times. AFS will not be responsible for any damage or loss while artwork is in our posession. Owner agrees to terms: Signature/date	Terms: All artwork displays will be submitted to Atlanta Freethought Society art committee for approval (afs@atlantaf- reethought.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	 Is artwork for sale? Yes / No \$ Upon sale owner agrees to pay AFS a 33.3% fee. 		Address:	Display dates: from to to		w Pers Addi Phor Ema Desc price	4775 N. Church Lane SE Atlanta, GA 30339

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

Mark Banks

Dare To Think

For Yourself!



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