

The March AFS Meeting

Loren Collins, attorney and author of *Bullspotting*

Loren Collins, an Atlanta attorney, is the author of *Bullspotting: Finding Facts in the Age of Misinformation* (Prometheus Books, 2012),



Loren Collins

and creator of the website *Barackryphal*, which debunks claims of “birthers” who deny the U.S. citizenship of former President Barack Obama. Loren has spoken on skepticism and critical think-

ing at *Dragoncon* and *Sunday Assembly*, as well as for the podcast *Skepticality*, and he has been published in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* on the topic of misinformation. He founded the *Science! Superpac* to promote scientific literacy among U.S. lawmakers. He ran for GA State Representative as a Republican in 2015, and later served as legislative advisor during the 2016 General Assembly for the Democrat who won the seat. A classical liberal who describes himself as fiscally conservative yet socially libertarian, Loren is an advocate for bilateral cooperation between Democrats and Republicans. He was a write-in candidate for the U.S. House in 2006, and for U.S. President in 2016 under the slogan “Stark Raving Sane”.

Loren will talk about how to identify common features of misinformation campaigns and conspiracy theories, including the genesis of false facts, manipulated evidence, rhetorical techniques, and the logical fallacies which characterize misleading or outright false claims.

The March Potluck

Before the March 12th meeting we will have a Potluck Lunch, starting at noon. Join AFS members and guests for some good food and great socializing. Please bring food according to the first letter of your last name:

- A-G: Bring a dessert**
- H-P: Bring a side dish**
- Q-Z: Bring a main dish**

AFS will provide drinks, plates and silverware.

Calendar

- 3/12 Daylight Savings Time-Spring Forward!
- 3/12 Potluck before meeting 12:00 pm
- 3/12 AFS General Meeting 1:00 pm
- 3/12 Game afternoon after meeting
- 4/9 AFS Board Meeting 11:00 am
- 4/9 AFS General Meeting 1:00 pm
- 4/9 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



The Nashville Nones Convention (NaNoCon) is a one-day secular extravaganza for those who, when asked what religion they prefer, select “none.” The nick-name “Nones” applies whether you’re just questioning your beliefs or you’re happily religion-free—either way, NaNoCon “is an event aimed for you.” NaNoCon will occur Saturday, March 18th, 10 am to 10 pm, at Unity of Nashville, 5125 Franklin Pike, Nashville TN.

The first NaNoCon last March was a success with over 400 participants, and it is now an annual event. The NaNoCon on March 18, 2017, will feature **Matt Dillahunty** as keynote speaker. The one-day schedule is packed with engaging panels and workshops, followed by the NaNoConcert and an evening afterparty in downtown Nashville...described as friendly, affordable, and fun! Tickets are going fast. Register at nashvillenones.com/register.



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.

Mar 12: Loren Collins

Apr 9: TBD

May 14: TBD

Jun 11: Lecia Brooks from the SPLC



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.

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.

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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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bruce Horacek right but ...

Dear Editor,

Bruce Horacek (Letters, *Marietta Daily Journal*, 25 February, 2017) was right about some important matters, but he's mistaken about at least one major idea, too.

There is no question that mere words on parchment do not guarantee freedom and that deep-seated American values are crucial to supporting freedom of conscience. Other nations have religious liberty, but few can match our ideals and our governing documents. The framers, including Madison, Adams, Jefferson, Franklin, Hamilton, Washington, Paine, and other giants had varied religious beliefs but were united in wanting government and religion separated for the sake of both—and they said so, plainly.

Many bogus quotes have been concocted which purport to show, for example, Madison declaring that government depends on the Bible or Christianity—but those quotes cannot be found in Madison's writings and contradict many other of his documented statements. Jefferson's famous letter to the Danbury Baptists, written in 1802 while Jefferson was President and reviewed by his Attorney General before it was sent, explicitly declared what the First Amendment did: "building a wall of separation between Church & State."

The framers were emphatic in their understanding that liberty and our rights do not come from government or from religion; that such inalienable individual rights are natural and inherent. Most of the framers were intellectual heirs to the Enlightenment ideas of Hume, Locke, D'Alembert, Holbach, Voltaire, and others; most also were, unlike some French Enlightenment leaders, unwilling to have governments support or oppose religion. And of course there are no significant religious principles incorporated into the US Constitution.

The framers understood that to keep consciences (of Christians like Mr. Horacek and of atheists like me) free, governments must be kept out of the religion business.

Regards,

ED BUCKNER Smyrna GA

Horacek's LTE, for reference:

I would like to take exception to the letter written by Ed Buckner ("Our government has been secular since its inception," MDJ Letters, 2/19/2017).

First, the article cited a few quotes of the founders, but ignored the myriad of citations by many others, including James Madison (author of the Constitution) and John Jay (first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court). These men recognized that the principles on which our nation was founded are Judeo-Christian and that our republic could not be maintained unless it was perpetuated by a people with this type of foundation.

Second, it is only countries that have this heritage that allow a very broad expression of views. We only need to look at the following to illustrate this point:

- *India: Claims to have freedom of religion but the Hindu ruling party persecutes and marginalizes Christians and Muslims.*
- *Communist/atheistic countries: No freedom of expression.*
- *Muslim majority countries: Other beliefs are persecuted on a regular basis.*

Third, when Jefferson wrote his private letter regarding separation of church and state to the Danbury Baptists, it was to protect the church from the state, not the other way around.

I applaud the freedom that Ed and Mike have to express their views, but it's only because of "Inalienable Rights" conferred on us by our Creator.

BRUCE HORACEK Acworth

Marietta Daily Journal Helps Pat Buchanan Lose Credibility

Dear Editor,

Pat Buchanan ("Trump must break judicial power," *Marietta Daily Journal*, 14 February 2017) gave us a column riddled with illogical claims, but his credibility was perhaps hurt most by a line he may have intended as a throwaway but which the *MDJ* highlighted: "Secular justices de-Christianized our country."

This is demonstrably and easily disprovable, as many examples would show. Here are two:

1. John Adams wrote in an essay published in England at the time of the ratification of the US Constitution, *A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America*, that "it will never be pretended that any persons employed in that service

[writing the Constitution] had interviews with the gods, or were in any degree under the inspiration of Heaven." The founders intentionally established a secular government, and that was well before any "secular justices" had anything to say about it.

2. In 1796, near the end of George Washington's second term, a treaty was agreed to with a Muslim nation. That treaty, unanimously ratified by the US Senate and proclaimed by the President (by then John Adams), assured the Islamic leader and his people that "the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion." The American population, then and now, included Christians, Muslims, Jews, deists, and atheists.

All your readers should join me, the founders, and justices in wanting government to stay out of the religion business.

Regards,

Ed B.

ED BUCKNER Smyrna GA

Women Who Have Advocated For And Impacted Religious Freedom

Erica Monical in Wall of Separation

www.au.org

Women's History Month started this week, and we are recognizing the important role that women have played in fighting for the separation of church and state and religious freedom.

Though women have been essential throughout America's history in separating church and state, their impact is often overlooked.

Women are often discriminated against on the basis of religion and thus an essential part of the population to consider when considering the fight for church state separation.

While the Religious Right [throws around](#) support for the rights of women only when they are attacking Islam, they stay silent or even support legislation [that denies women health care on the grounds of religion](#).

For [Women's History Month](#), these women deserve recognition for their roles in impacting true religious freedom:

Anne Hutchinson: In 1634, [Anne Hutchinson](#) took part in a religious conflict in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. She hosted meetings where she criticized the way that the church was operating in the colony. She was later tried and charged with contempt and sedition and was banished from the colony.

Anne Hutchinson is one of the first women in American History to have defied the smothering combination of church and state in pursuit of genuine freedom of conscience.

She's important to America's religious freedom history because in a time where speaking out against the church could result in banishment or even death, she boldly spoke up for her beliefs.

Sojourner Truth: Truth inspired passion in many people with her powerful speeches. She was born a slave, but after becoming free she dedicated her life to using spoken word to further both abolitionist and women's right causes.

Her most famous speech "Ain't I a Woman" advocated for equality. It was later published and used in the American Civil War and further inspired people to fight for equality.

Sojourner Truth is a great example of someone who used religion to make powerful statements but who emphasized that religion shouldn't be used to discriminate.

Lucretia Mott: Another important figure to remember is Lucretia Mott, who fought for women's right to vote and an end to slavery. She was a Quaker religious leader whose powerful skills as an orator caught the attention of many.

[Mott](#) is an important figure in women's history due to her passion and commitment to women's suffrage and equal treatment. She advocated for universal suffrage in the mid-19th century, when that was not a common or popular view.

At a time when many religious leaders preached women's submission and racial segregation, Mott stood for different values: tolerance and equality.

Vashti McCollum: In 1948, Vashti McCollum was the plaintiff in a U.S.

Supreme Court case that sought to remove coercive forms of religion from public schools.

Her fourth-grade son Jim was enrolled in a public school that allowed outside religious groups to come into the school during the day and offer theological instruction. The program was allegedly voluntary, but families were coerced to choose one of three classes. Originally, McCollum chose Protestant instruction for Jim, but she removed him after reviewing the course materials. As a result, Jim was forced to sit outside in the hallways while the other students were taught religion. McCollum was put in the position where she had to choose between her son's isolation and his being taught religious beliefs that she did not agree with. This is the reason she ended up in Supreme Court.

The [McCollum vs. Board of Education](#) case is a landmark ruling for separation of church and state. The case ended the practice of public schools sponsoring religious instruction during the school day and laid the groundwork for the school prayer decisions of the early 1960s. McCollum's perseverance and commitment to the cause were essential to this landmark case.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg: As current U.S. Supreme Court Justice, [Ruth Bader Ginsburg](#) has consistently voted in favor of the separation of church and state. Even as a lawyer who attended Columbia Law School, Ginsburg has had to fight sexism and anti-Semitism throughout her entire career to become the first Jewish woman on the Supreme Court.

Before her nomination as Supreme Court Justice, Ginsburg worked as a volunteer lawyer for the ACLU fighting for women's rights.

She was quoted by [The New York Times](#) discussing women's rights and she said, "The side that wants to take the choice away from women and give it to the state, they're fighting a losing battle. Time is on the side of change."

Ruth Bader Ginsburg has been a strong feminist ally in the Supreme Court with her persistence to ensure that religion isn't used to discriminate against women.

There are many other women who have had a positive impact on religious freedom and church-state separation, and we salute all of them.

Removal of Transgender Protection Laws Violates State/Church Separation

ffrf.org

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is deeply troubled by the Trump administration's recent removal of antidiscrimination laws protecting transgender students.

On Wednesday, Feb. 22, the Departments of Education and Justice reversed the federal protections set by the **Obama** administration, which allowed transgender students in public schools to use the washrooms corresponding with their gender identity. The **Trump** administration claims Title IX, a federal law banning sex discrimination in schools, no longer extends to gender identity. Attorney General **Jeff Sessions**, an evangelical Christian who has opposed expanding gay, lesbian and transgender rights, advocated for lifting the previous protections. Trump sided with Sessions over Education Secretary **Betsy DeVos**, who, surprisingly, expressed misgivings about the repeal because of the harm it could cause transgender students.



students shows how it is bowing to the agenda of Christian conservative organizations. One of the most vocal supporters of the new guidelines has been The Family Research Council, a Christian Right advocacy group based in Washington, D.C. The organization is among several theocratic groups that have frontlined anti-trans attacks over the years. Others have included Focus on the Family, Family Policy Alliance, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

Sessions, one of the main officials behind the recent revocation of transgender anti-discrimination laws, indirectly suggested that religious people are closer to truth during his confirmation hearing. He was asked during the hearing if a person who is secular had just as good of a claim to understanding the truth as a religious person, to which Sessions dissembled.

Deuteronomy 22:5 calls men who wear women's garments and vice-versa "abominations." The Trump administration and the religious organizations that support rescinding civil rights protections are legislating false, biblical ideas about gender essentialism and applying it to public policy. In a secular nation, laws must not be molded by church doctrine.

The White House stated that the policy regulating which lavatory transgendered students use should be issued at the state level. However, this repeal on national anti-discrimination laws displays an unconstitutional intermeshing of religious ideology with legal policy, which is a federal issue.

All citizens must be equally free from religious oppression. FFRF will continue to advocate for the rights and protections of the transgender community against discrimination rooted in religious bigotry.

The American Civil Liberties Union has called the reversal a violation of discrimination laws. FFRF contends that it is also a violation of the principle of separation between church and state guaranteed in the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

The argument against laws allowing transgender students to use the restroom of their choice is that the protections "allow men into women's bathrooms," thus exposing women to sexual predators. However, according to two investigations conducted by Media Matters, school districts with trans-inclusive policies had no increases in sex crimes after putting those policies in place.

The Trump administration's recent attack on the civil rights of transgender

DO NOT PASS GO
DO NOT GO STRAIGHT TO JAIL
GO PLAY GAMES AT ATLANTA FREETHOUGHT HALL

Upcoming Event!
Game Afternoon March 12 after meeting
 Bring board games, card games, snacks, sodas, beer, wine, drinks!

Let us know if you can come: afs@atlantafreethought.org
 or www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society. Or just show up!

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.

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 free-thinking 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, Mar 11 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)

Secular Atheist Study Scriptures (SASS), Gainesville will meet Sun, Mar 12 at 1:00 p.m. at Lake Lanier Club: Business Center, 2350 Avonlea Way, Gainesville to discuss the historicity of Jesus. They will be going over the evidence for his existence as well as the criticisms of that evidence. Also they will be going over the future of this group: what types of meet ups everyone would like to have

and outreach. Anyone not interested in participating in this portion is welcome to leave early. (www.meetup.com/Secular-Atheist-Study-the-Scriptures-SASS-Gainesville)

There will be a **meetup for Atlanta Atheists** Sun., Mar 12 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 Mar 13 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)

Sunday Assembly Atlanta will have a general meeting on Sun Mar 19 at 6 p.m. at First Existentialist Congregation, 470 Candler Park Dr NE, Atlanta.

Assemblies, and the potlucks afterward, are open to the public and free to attend. SAA 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, Mar 18, 3-5 at Fernbank Science Center, 156 Heaton Park Dr, Atlanta. (www.atlantaastronomy.org)

Ethical Humanists of Atlanta is meeting Sun., Mar 26 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., Mar 26 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)

Freedom From Religion Foundation of Georgia sometimes meets on the first Sunday of every month at 2:00 at AF Hall or at a restaurant. Not every month—please check Meetup or Facebook. (www.meetup.com/Freedom-From-Religion-Foundation-of-Georgia)



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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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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!

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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: _____

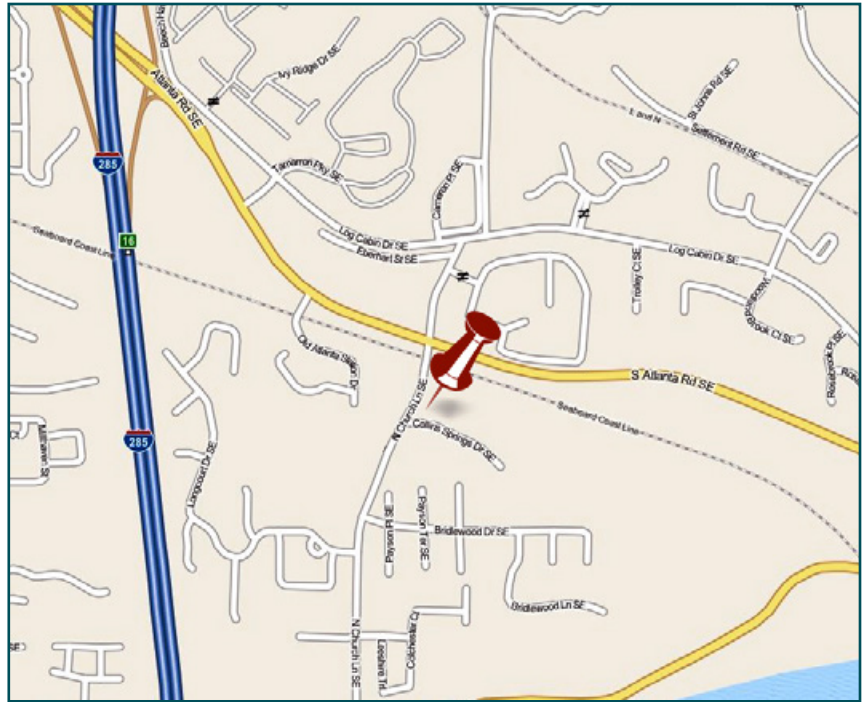
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*Dare To Think
For Yourself!*



**March 12th meeting
1:00 at AF Hall,
4775 N. Church Lane SE
Atlanta, GA 30339**

Loren Collins



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