

April AFS Meeting

Susie Allen - National Alliance on Mental Illness

The Atlanta Freethought Society is delighted to present as our next speaker **Susie Allen**, who will speak at the April 8th about NAMI, the acronym of the **National Alliance on Mental Illness**. It is a nonprofit, grassroots organization whose mission is to support and advocate for those with mental illness and their families. Membership numbers about 220,000 in the country. Ms. Allen's role is one of outreach, to let the public learn about the various programs available to both people with a mental health diagnosis and the family members who support them.



After graduating from the College of William and Mary, Ms Allen became a copy editor in the Legislative Counsel's Office of the Georgia General Assembly for several years until leaving to become a full-time mother of three sons. Mental illness in her family eventually led her to volunteer for NAMI since 2003. Her participation has included several signature NAMI programs such as CIT (training police officers to become crisis intervention members), Family to Family (a 12 week educational course), and Family Support Group.

NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

Started in 1979, NAMI is an association of hundreds of local affiliates, state organizations and volunteers who work in your community to raise awareness and provide support and education that was not previously available to those in need.

NAMI shapes **national public policy** for people with mental illness and their families and provides volunteer leaders with the tools, resources and skills necessary to save mental health in all states.

Their toll-free **NAMI HelpLine** allows them to respond personally to hundreds of thousands of requests each year, providing free referral, information and support—a much-needed lifeline for many.



The April Potluck

Before the April 8th 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 side dish
H-P: Bring a main dish
Q-Z: Bring a dessert

AFS will provide drinks, plates and silverware.

Calendar

4/8	Potluck Lunch	12:00 p.m.
4/8	AFS General Meeting	1:00 p.m.
4/14	Rally for Science 2018	1:00 p.m.
	The Bakery, 825 Warner St SW Atlanta	
5/13	AFS Board Meeting	11:00 a.m.
5/13	AFS General Meeting	12:00 a.m.

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



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 8: Susie Allen, National Association for Mental Illness

May 13: John Chris Snider - "Muslims in America: Updated"

June 10: Roberta Cook, River Line Historic District

July 8: Mahesh Soori, On Free Will

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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Membership includes voting privileges and
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Life Membership is \$1000.

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Fallacy of the Month

Tautology

By Dennis Martin, PhD (AFS Secretary)

This is the third in a monthly series discussing the kinds of faulty reasoning that you are likely to run across in everyday discussions and debates. Atlanta Freethought Society's mission includes teaching how to avoid faulty reasoning so that your thoughts are free from mistaken reasoning and unsupported authoritative claims.

Response: That's a series of viciously circular definitions. The spiritual is the supernatural, and the supernatural is the spiritual.



Usually tautologies and circular definitions are not so obvious. In texts, sometimes they can be separated by chapters. In religious doctrine, this circularity can involve centuries of doctrinal hairsplitting clarifications.

One more example. A person claims to have had a religious experience. Their description matches the usual characteristics of a religious experience,

Our first fallacy was *Begging the Question* where the conclusion is already stated or assumed in the premise. Arguments which beg the question are necessarily valid arguments, but they are circular arguments and don't really prove anything. Our second fallacy was *Inconsistency* of which a *Contradiction* is a type. Any argument with a contradiction in the premises is also a necessarily valid argument, but contradictions are thought to be impossible, so once again these arguments need to be rejected as fallacious.

A *Tautology* is a necessarily true statement. In a way it is analogous to *Begging the Question* and the opposite of a *Contradiction*. Any argument with a tautology as its conclusion is a necessarily valid argument. "All four-sided figures have four sides" is an example of a tautology. Once again, as with *begging the question*, this is an empty statement. Another way to think about it is that the subject and the predicate of the sentence are basically the same thing.

In the discussion of *Begging the Question*, I mentioned but didn't discuss a question-begging definition. "The fittest survive" doesn't seem to be tautologous at first. But when you chase down the meaning of "fittest", it eventually comes back to those who survive. The circularity of these definitions makes the statement a tautology.

Theists, those who believe in the traditional monotheistic God, might be asked what they mean by "spiritual" ?

Theist: The spiritual is a supernatural realm above the natural realm.
Response: What do mean by "supernatural"?
Theist: Oh, that's a realm of non-material things.
Response: What do you mean by "non-material? The mental? Because the mental is just the physical brain.
Theist: No, there's a non-material, spiritual realm different from the natural world.

expounded in numerous studies. A scientist tells them that these same characteristics, and hence the religious experience itself, has been and can be duplicated with drugs, meditation, and neural stimuli.

Theist: My experience was different.
Response: How?
Theist: It had a 'numinous' quality to it (Rudolf Otto's term).
Response: What do you mean by 'numinous'?
Theist: Look it up. It means "having a strong religious or spiritual quality; indicating or suggesting the presence of a divinity."
Response: What do you mean by religious, spiritual, or divine?
Theist: Those terms refer to a dimension or realm that can be experienced by an individual but not measured by your instruments.
Response: That's a tautology! You just invented the word 'numinous' to be different.
"A truly religious experience has a numinous [religious] element to it."
"A truly spiritual experience has a numinous [spiritual] element to it."
"A truly divine experience has a numinous [divine] element to it."

Scholars Say Trump's Religious Right Followers Believe He Will Usher In A 'Christian Nation'

Rob Boston, Wall of Separation

www.au.org



Stormy Daniels

I've heard the same message over and over again: character counts. America's political leaders, speakers at these meetings would thunder, must model moral behavior. They set the standard, so don't follow a leader who comes up short when it comes to "morals" and "values."

Apparently, that's all been tossed out the window. On Sunday March 18, an adult-entertainment film star named **Stormy Daniels** was interviewed by **Anderson Cooper** on "60 Minutes" to discuss her alleged affair with President **Donald Trump**. She **provided salacious details** of her time with Trump in 2006 and asserted that she was later threatened and told not to talk about it.

Leaders of the Religious Right have responded to this by making it clear they're sticking with Trump.

Daniels isn't the only one speaking out. **Karen McDougal**, a former Playboy model, **has asserted** that she too had an affair with Trump in 2006. **Summer Zervos**, a former contestant on Trump's reality show TV "The Apprentice," **is suing Trump** for defamation, asserting that he sexually assaulted her in 2007. (A New York court recently ruled that her lawsuit can go forward.)

Again, leaders of Religious Right group either ignore or deny these charges – even though the allegations are in no way implausible. In Daniels' case, we know that a lawyer for Trump just before Election Day 2016 gave her \$130,000 to keep quiet. The allegations also track with Trump's behavior. After all, Trump himself was caught on tape boasting about how easy it is to sexually assault women when you're rich and famous.

A progressive president facing this tawdry combination of allegations by porn stars and centerfold models would be under constant fire from

I've monitored Religious Right groups for more than three decades, and I have to say, I've seen nothing like what's unfolding these days.

Over the years, I've attended meetings of the Christian Coalition and the Family Research Council's annual "Values Voter Summit." I once sat through a "Reclaiming America for Christ" conference held by the late TV preacher **D. James Kennedy** in Florida, and I've been to gatherings sponsored by smaller or regional Religious Right groups.

Without exception, at every one of these meetings,



Karen McDougal

Religious Right groups. In Trump's case, they're simply shrugging their shoulders.

This isn't just simple hypocrisy; something else is afoot.

Writing in *The Washington Post*, three university professors try to make sense of it. **Andrew L. Whitehead, Joseph O. Baker** and **Samuel L. Perry** **assert that** conservative evangelical support for Trump is driven by Christian nationalism, that is, the belief that the United States is, or ought to be, a "Christian nation." (Of course, for the people who believe this, "Christianity" equates with far-right, fundamentalist versions of that faith.)

Analyzing data from a Baylor University survey on religion, the trio wrote, "The more someone believed the United States is – and should be – a Christian nation, the more likely they were to vote for Trump."

Whitehead, Baker and Perry go on to assert, "Many voters believed, and presumably still believe, that regardless of his personal piety (or lack thereof), Trump would defend what they saw as the country's Christian heritage – and would help move the nation toward a distinctly Christian future. Ironically, Christian nationalism is focused on preserving a perceived Christian identity for America irrespective of the means by which such a project would be achieved. Hence, many white Christians believe Trump may be an effective instrument in God's plan for America, even if

he is not particularly religious himself."

This line of thinking echoes the mental gymnastics on display in a new book titled, *The Faith of Donald J. Trump: A Spiritual*



Summer Zervos

American Atheists Submits Testimony Opposing Alabama Constitutional Amendment Allowing Ten Commandments

www.atheists.org

Biography, by **David Brody**, a reporter for TV preacher **Pat Robertson's** Christian Broadcasting Network, and **Scott Lamb**, a vice president at Liberty University. Brody and Lamb assert that Trump is among the “elect,” a figure chosen by God to do divine work in the realm of politics.

So it's official: The Religious Right no longer cares about character. If the movement's followers must discard principle and twist themselves into knots to appoint Trump a kind of latter-day prophet, they're willing to do it.

How did the moral majoritarians, “values voters” and neo-Puritans of the Religious Right arrive at such a strange place? The armchair psychologist in me attributes it to fear.

America is changing. Far-right Christian fundamentalist supremacists have been forced to cede power and acknowledge the rights of those who believe differently. They're seeing women, LGBTQ people, non-believers and others assert their rights, and they don't like it. They've watched as Americans rejected their views on issues like marriage equality, and they are frightened. They see a future America that is more diverse than ever. It scares them. In response, they cling to a vision of an officially “Christian America” **that never was** and never will be – and they'll even latch on to a guy like Trump if they think he can deliver it.

Now, there's a slight possibility that a serial philanderer and petulant Twitter addict who can't muster the moral courage **to denounce evil** when it's staring him in the face will somehow manage to lead the Religious Right (and drag the rest of us) to the Christian nation of the theocrats' dreams – but it looks like a longshot.

It's not just that the quest for a Christian nation has historically been a fool's errand – though it has been, as many zealots have learned over the years. Rather, what's undermining the new crusade is the irony-rich realization that the Religious Right was correct about one thing after all: Character does still count for something.

And when your leader has amply demonstrated time after time that he's utterly devoid of character but you choose to blindly follow him anyway, the odds that he'll eventually lead you over a cliff are very good.

On behalf of its constituents in Alabama, American Atheists submitted testimony opposing HB 144 and SB 181, bills that would seek to amend the Alabama Constitution to ostensibly allow Ten Commandments monuments to be placed on public land. These measures, however, would not change the fact that such monuments would remain unconstitutional under the United States Constitution.

The bills at issue would create a ballot measure to amend the Alabama Constitution to include language explicitly permitting the Ten Commandments to be displayed “in a manner that complies with constitutional requirements” on public property “owned or administrated by a public school or public body.” This amendment is both unnecessary and wasteful, as the U.S. Constitution and federal courts have consistently held that such displays are permissible only if they advance a legitimate secular purpose. These displays do not.

If Alabama simply wishes to place materials with religious significance on public property in ways that align with the US Constitution, the state may already do so, and there is no need to amend Alabama's Constitution. If the state seeks to place religious monuments on public property as an endorsement of religion, passage of these measures will do nothing to support that goal – such placements will continue to be invalid under the US Constitution.

Elected officials and lawmakers in Alabama have tried to place displays of the Ten Commandments on public property since at least 1992, sparking numerous lawsuits and costing state taxpayers millions of dollars. The proposed constitutional amendment includes language that would require that the state not spend tax dollars defending the constitutionality of the provision, further evidence that lawmakers know this is merely a political stunt.

...these measures appear to be blatant political pandering, made in mocking disregard for the Constitution of the United States, for the separation of religion and government which is the bedrock of our religious liberty, and for the Alabama taxpayers who must foot the bill for this perennial nonsense.

You can read the [full testimony here](#).



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)

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.

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)

Recovery from Religion - Morrow Chapter meets monthly at Barnes & Noble Booksellers Southlake, 1939 Mount Zion Road, Morrow, GA. Join the Meetup group for more information. 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 Decatur Atheists** Sun, Apr 8, 6 pm, Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths) will meet Mon., Apr 9, 7 pm at UUCG, 12 Bethesda Church Rd, Lawrenceville. The topic is **Getting the Hell Out**. The threat of eternal punishment is a central part of religious indoctrination. The fear of hell can keep believers attached to their beliefs long after they seem irrational. It's also a fear that can stick with those who leave their belief. Get together and celebrate the real Good News: There is no Hell! (www.meetup.com/brights-295)

Atlanta Astronomy Club will meet on the third Friday at 7:30 pm each month at Fernbank Science Center, 156 Heaton Park Dr, Atlanta, GA 30307 unless otherwise noted. This month's meeting will be Apr 16. Check website for more info. (www.atlantaastronomy.org)

Black Nonbelievers At press time, there was not a scheduled meetup for April, so be sure to check the Meetup page. Mandisa Thomas will speak at Sunday Assembly Atlanta on April 15. See below. (www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers)

Atlanta Atheists will have a Third Sunday meetup at Eleventh Street Pub, 1041 W Peachtree St NW Atlanta on Sun, Apr 15 4 pm. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

Sunday Assembly Atlanta will present **Step Up!** on Sun Apr 15, 5:30 pm at First Existentialist Congregation, 470 Candler Park Dr NE, Atlanta. Step Up! Movements, communities, and action can't happen without you! Right on the heels of the Atlanta's Rally for Science, in a time of massive marches and a ground swell of activity, it's the time to get involved in what you're passionate about. This month SAA will be joined by the incredible **Mandisa Thomas**, president and founder of Black Nonbelievers, national speaker, and activist. 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 on ethical living, which is the philosophy of making decisions for daily life which take into account ethics and moral values, particularly with regard to consumerism, sustainability, environmentalism, wildlife and animal welfare. Sun, Apr 29 12:30-2:00, Manuel's Tavern 603 N Highland Ave, Atlanta. (www.meetup.com/Ethical-Humanists-of-Atlanta)

There will be a **meetup for Atlanta Atheists** Sun, Apr 22, 4 pm, 5 Seasons Brewing, 5600 Roswell Rd, Prado Shopping Center, Sandy Springs. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

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

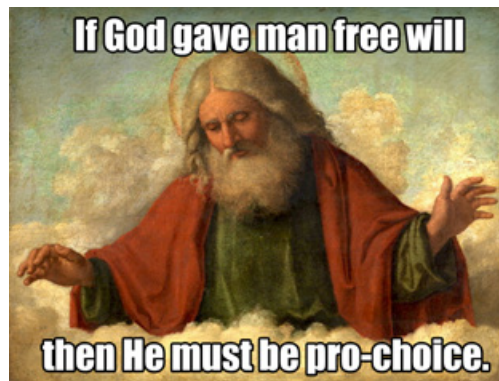
Atlanta Atheists has first Sunday meetups each month: the place varies. Check Meetup for info on the get-together. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

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 does not have a meetup scheduled at press time. Check website or email for more information. (www.ffrfga.org - email is ffrfoga@gmail.com)

Americans United for Separation of Church and State does not have a meetup scheduled at press time. Check Facebook and Meetup for more information. (www.meetup.com/americansuntied-georgia)

Gainesville Atheists does not have a meetup scheduled at presstime. (www.meetup.com/Secular-Atheist-Study-the-Scriptures-SASS-Gainesville)



Become a Member!

(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!

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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: _____

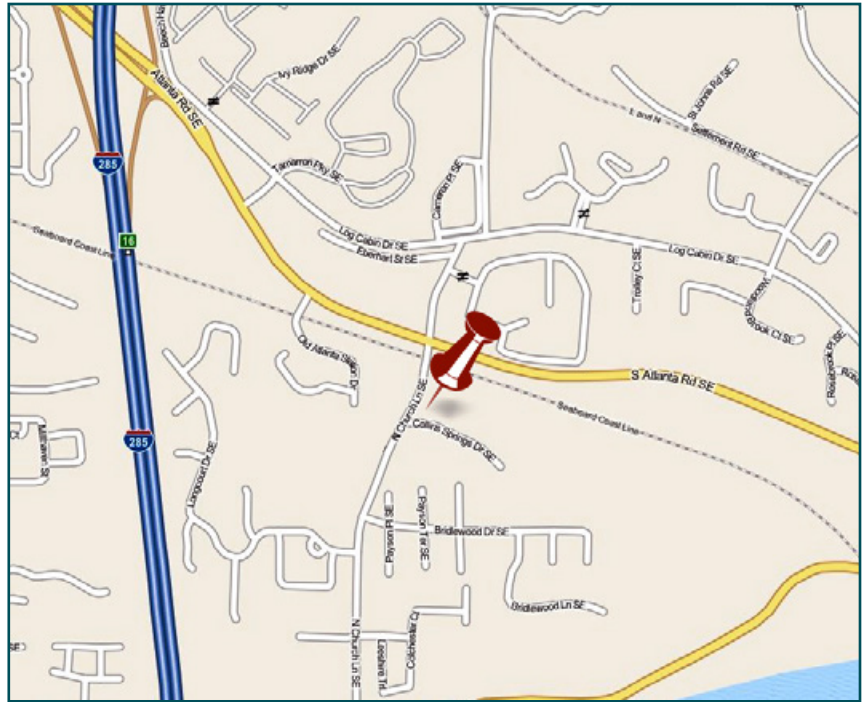
Signature/date _____

*Dare To Think
For Yourself!*



**April 8th meeting
1:00 at AF Hall
4775 N. Church Lane SE
Atlanta, GA 30339**

Susie Allen



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