

The December AFS Meeting

Warren Alan Tidwell “Atheist Mind, Humanist Heart: From Alabama to Ghana and Back”

The speaker for the December 10th program for AFS will be **Warren Alan Tidwell**, who has worked to reintegrate women who had been



considered witches into their communities in Ghana, brought fans of Alabama and Auburn closer together, orga-

nized emergency relief for tornado-torn parts of Alabama, and done a lifetime of good works in just a few years. Tidwell’s talk, “Atheist Mind, Humanist Heart: from Alabama to Ghana and Back,” will certainly continue and enhance his reputation as a speaker who enlightens and inspires.

Warren Alan Tidwell is a writer from Alabama who recently spent a year working to liberate women from refugee camps in Ghana where they live in exile from their home communities. He has spent a number of years working in grassroots disaster relief and once inadvertently started a worldwide act of kindness movement after the tragic shootings at Sandy Hook elementary in 2012. He now writes for Patheos.com.



Warren Alan Tidwell

His talk will include stories of growing up as a closeted nonbeliever in Alabama and how that inspired him to open up about his atheism to live his values and no longer compromise who he is to do humanitarian work.

Tidwell is a first class speaker—the kind who is so entertaining that you don’t really realize until afterwards just how much information he has provided. We’re sure he’ll discuss Ghana, atheism, Alabama, and much more besides. We’re

fortunate to have such a renowned and effective speaker for our program. Those who have heard Tidwell speak and know what he has done are expecting an excellent program.

Calendar

12/10	AFS Board Meeting	11:00 a.m.
12/10	AFS General Meeting	1:00 p.m.
1/14	January AFS Potluck	12:00 a.m.
1/14	AFS General Meeting	1:00 p.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

EJECTS LUCIFER FROM HEAVEN FOR PRIDEFUL WAYS



CREATES ENTIRE SPECIES DEDICATED TO WORSHIPPING HIMSELF



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.



Dec 10: Warren Alan Tidwell

Jan 14: Daniel Horowitz Garcia

Feb 11: Kevin Mink

Mar 11: 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 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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Nelson Price— Repetitive Illogic

Dear Editor,

Nelson Price (“God Answers Our Prayers, Even if the Answer is ‘No,’” MDJ, 12 November) has shown in many earlier columns a complete disregard for logic, but he does it spectacularly foolishly again this time. Price dismisses skeptics who comment on the Sutherland Springs, Texas, church shootings and ask how such horrors can be squared with an all-powerful, all-merciful God. But he offers no basis for rejecting skeptics like me except to say that we just don’t understand God or prayer. (He doesn’t even get the name of the church right, though that’s not Price’s main problem.)

Price offers no defense at all of an all-powerful God who apparently just looked away in Sutherland Springs while children and worshippers were slaughtered, but he does pretend to defend/explain prayer, even declaring that his claim is “confirmed.” All of the examples he provided, however, would be exactly the same if there is no god at all.

If Nelson Price and other Christians want to have faith and religious beliefs with no rational foundation, that is their right. But Price’s fulminations make his religion look silly, not profound.

Regards,

ED BUCKNER
Smyrna GA

Author (with Michael E. Buckner) of
*In Freedom We Trust: An Atheist Guide to
Religious Liberty* (Prometheus Books, 2012)

ebruckner@atheists.org

(Nelson Price’s column is to the right.)

LOCAL COLUMNIST I NELSON PRICE

God answers our prayers, even if the answer is ‘no’

In light of the Sunderland Baptist Church shootings, prayer has very much been in the news lately. Skeptics are boasting prayer doesn’t work or there would have been no shootings. Public figures have been criticized for offering their prayers and condolences to the bereaved.

As an aside, Jesus said, “In this world, you will have tribulation.”

Much misunderstanding exists regarding prayer among persons who do not practice it, and even some who do. Prayer is not a lucky rabbit’s foot to be rubbed when in need of good luck. It is not a parachute to be used to bail out of a problem. Neither is it a spare tire to be used in case of an emergency.

The question of whether God answers prayer deserves consideration. The answer is a confirmed “yes.” That is one of several answers.

Sometimes the answer is “no.” After all, no is an answer. In retrospect, many of us should be thankful He didn’t say “yes” to some of our now obvious foolish prayers.

Sometimes, the answer is “wait a while.” This gives God time to be God and condition the person and arrange circumstances before saying “yes.”

Sometimes, having a sense of humor, He must say, “You have got to be kidding.”

On a more somber note, He must at times query, “Which one of us is God?”

At other times, He must feel, “I thought you would never ask.”

Then there are those decisive times He says “yes” and there is a direct obvious positive response. Most persons of faith have had those occasions when the response of “yes” had to be because of supernatural action.

Most have prayers answered without realizing they were. Every prayer has two aspects. One is the specific “request,” the thing asked for. The other element is the “reason” for which it was asked. God responds in four ways regarding these. 1. Yes to the request and no to the reason. 2. No to the request and yes to the reason. 3. Yes to the request and yes to the reason. 4. No to the request and no to the reason.

An example of No. 2 is a prayer I offered each morning for years. First, God said wait a while.

I offered that prayer as I passed a beautiful lake sight on Stilesboro Road. I prayed God would let me have control of that land on which a consortium could build a Christian school.

My request was for the land. The reason was that there might be a Christian school built on it.

He said “no” to my repeated request. Another group got it. He said “yes” to my reason. A Christian school, Mount Paran Christian School, is there now. I thank God for the “no” and rejoice over the “yes.” The developers have done a magnificent job.

God is under no obligation to prove Himself to any person. At a point, Job questioned Him and, in effect, He said, “I don’t owe you an answer.” I am not going to tempt God by demanding He prove Himself in a given way at a specific time.

Biblically, the Bible instructs the person of faith to ask, seek and knock. I consider that to be my responsibility. Answering is God’s responsibility.

Knowing more than we and loving stronger than we, His answer is always based on those two facts.

*The Rev. Dr. Nelson L. Price is pastor emeritus
of Roswell Street Baptist Church.*

It's Beginning To Look A Lot Like There Won't Be Much Of A 'War On Christmas' This Year

December 1 2017 • Rob Boston in *Wall of Separation*

www.au.org

It's the first day of December, which normally means it would be time to gin things up on the "War on Christmas," but, to be perfectly honest, I'm having some trouble mustering much enthusiasm this year.

I'm not the only one. The Religious Right seems to be losing interest as well.

Let's face it, things just haven't been the same since **Bill O'Reilly** got booted off the Fox News Channel. Old Blowhard Bill was the yuletide's biggest defender. I swear he employed a seasonal staff of holiday elves who did nothing but comb the internet looking for stories about conflict over the placement of nativity scenes and so on. With Bill out of the picture, Fox rarely calls anymore.

In an attempt to survey the seasonal landscape, I've been looking around a bit myself. So far, there are just a few stories out there:

- In Washington, D.C., the government agency that runs the Metro, D.C.'s subway system, is **being sued** by the Archdiocese of Washington because it rejected a Christmas-themed ad. The Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority says its policies bar ads that contain sectarian or political content.
- In San Jose, Calif., a local chapter of the Satanic Temple erected a Christmas tree in a public park, taking part in a program known as "Christmas in the Park," that allows religious and community groups to display decorated trees. The Satanic Temple's tree was topped with a head of Baphomet, a goat-headed deity – and **someone stole the head**. Police are investigating.
- In Somersworth, N.H., an **atheist flag** is flying in Citizens Place, a spot where officials allow residents to display their own messages, usually in the form of flags. **Richard Gagnon**, a town resident and member of the Freedom From Religion Foundation, said he made the request to mark Winter Solstice.
- In Blue Ridge, Ga., town officials **invited residents** to put up private holiday displays in a public park. One man affiliated with American Atheists erected a sign promoting non-belief. It was removed.

These skirmishes are interesting, but they're weak eggnog compared to some of the battles we've fought in years past. In fact, the best evidence for the War on Christmas that I've seen so far comes, ironically, from the White House, where First Lady **Melania Trump** **has decorated** the East Colonnade to look more like the **lair of Krampus** than a Winter Wonderland.

Last year, President **Donald Trump** vowed that you would hear "Merry Christmas" in stores more often (instead of the dreaded "Happy Holidays" or – gasp! – "Season's Greetings"). Of course, Trump has no authority to

dictate what holiday greetings are used in private businesses. His bluster may have pleased the Religious Right, but at the end of the day, Trump's promise was thinner than dollar store wrapping paper.

Although it's only Dec. 1, it looks like the War on Christmas this year may be a bust. What's going on? Remember, the Religious Right powers itself with a kind of perpetual outrage machine. These groups rode the War on Christmas donkey



successfully for many years, sparking donations and getting its supporters in a lather, but all good things must end. After all, there's so much more to be angry about. I hear some football players are still taking a knee during the National Anthem!

So it appears that the Religious Right is moving on. There's always another target to attack, another "culture war" fight to pick and another claim of "persecution" to

assert.

Before he left Fox, O'Reilly **declared victory** in the War on Christmas. Again, it was mere bluster. The goal of O'Reilly and his theocratic pals was to force all of us to acknowledge Christmas as a religious holiday – and they failed miserably.

Our rights remain intact. If you want to go full-on Victorian Christmas with midnight mass, hymns and manger scenes, you have that right. If you want to celebrate a secular version that focuses on snowmen, Santa and sleigh bells you can. You can celebrate another holiday. Want to ignore them all? You can!

Despite the best efforts of O'Reilly, the **American Family Association** and other members of the "Christmas Police" who obnoxiously insist that you have to do things their way, we still have the right to decide for ourselves how, when and if to celebrate this month, as guided by conscience.

It's a great gift – and I call it a victory for our side.

Atheists' Holiday Billboards Say "Skip Church" to Avoid Fake News

www.atheists.org

Continuing its annual tradition of holiday season billboards, American Atheists has launched two campaigns. One urges Americans to skip church to avoid the original "fake news," and the other advertises their upcoming national convention in Oklahoma City.

On the first billboard, an illustration of a traditional manger scene accompanies the words "Just skip church. It's all fake news!" along with a holiday greeting from American Atheists. The second billboard shows the Oklahoma City skyline with Santa's sleigh flying overhead and says, "Just like Santa Claus, the Atheists are coming to town!" in a reference to the [2018 National Convention in Oklahoma City, March 30 to April 1](#).

The billboards will be up for the month of December in Albuquerque, NM; Dallas-Ft. Worth, TX; and Oklahoma City and Tulsa, OK.

"Everyone knows that the stories we're told in church aren't the truth," said David Silverman,

president of American Atheists. "People ignore that fact because they enjoy the community, the friendship, and the traditions that go along with religion. But we're here to tell them that churches don't have a monopoly on any of that. There's a fantastic and vibrant community of atheists all across the country creating their own traditions and lifelong friendships."

"Spend time with your friends and family, give gifts, do charitable work, and enjoy the season. You can do all of that while also celebrating the truth," added Silverman.

The issue of "fake news" has been pervasive in American politics for more than a year. [According to a December 2016 Pew Research Center survey](#), almost two thirds of Americans say that made-up news causes a great deal of confusion about the basic facts of current events.

"People are rightly skeptical about some of the news they see on Facebook, hear from their family, or are told by elected officials," said Nick Fish, national program director for American Atheists. "But too often, they don't extend that skepticism to their religious views and what their religious leaders are telling them."

"And right now, we could all use a little more skepticism about the things we're told, no matter the source," Fish added.



This billboard design appears in the Albuquerque and Dallas markets.



This billboard design appears in the Oklahoma City and Tulsa markets.

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 on Sat, Dec 9 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)

Atlanta Astronomy Club will meet at Atlanta Freethought Hall on Sat, Dec. 9 3-5 unless otherwise noted. Check website for more info. (www.atlantaastronomy.org)

There will be a **meetup for Decatur Atheists** Sun, Dec 10, 6 pm, Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths) will have their holiday party Mon., Dec 11, 7 pm at UUCG, 12 Bethesda Church Rd, Lawrenceville. December is the time for their regular Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Solstice, Festivus Whatever We Want holiday party. Bring a dish or drink to share and prepare to socialize. Also bring a small gift for a white elephant (dirty Santa) gift exchange. (www.meetup.com/brighs-295)

Black Nonbelievers will have their General Meeting at Little Five Points Community Center, 1083 Austin Ave NE, Atlanta on Sun, Dec 17, 3 pm. The special guest will be Dr. Dauv

Evans who has published his long-awaited book *Emancipation of a Black Atheist*. Dr. Evans first spoke at BN Nov 2014 and interviewed some members for this release. There will be copies for sale. (www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers)

Sunday Assembly Atlanta will have a general assembly (Topic TBA) Sun Dec 17, 5:30 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, Dec 24 12:30 pm at Einstein's, 1077 Juniper St Ne, Atlanta to Let's discuss ways to enliven their creed while enjoying a holiday meal as they set our agenda for the year ahead. Share your thoughts and ideas.. They meet every 4th Sunday. (www.meetup.com/Ethical-Humanists-of-Atlanta)

There will be a **meetup for Atlanta Atheists** Sun, Dec 24, 4 pm, 5 Seasons Brewing, 5600 Roswell Rd, Prado Shopping Center, Sandy Springs. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

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

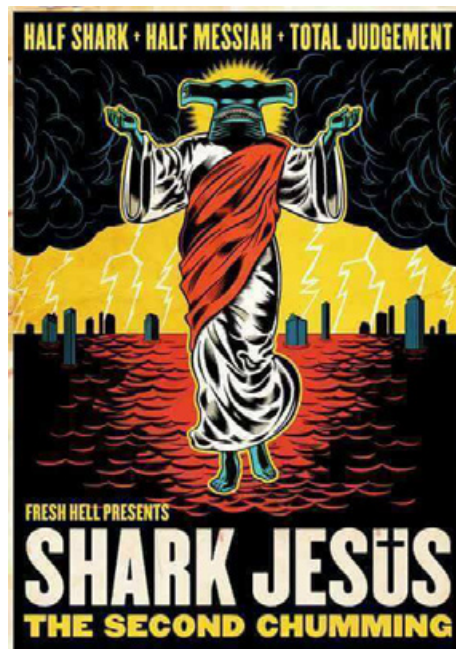
Atlanta Atheists has first Sunday meetups each month: the place varies. Check Meetup for info on the get-together. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

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)

Americans United for Separation of Church and State has a meeting on Sat, Jan 20 at 7 pm. Bring new potential members and have a talk about where the future is headed if AU don't address it. AU also plans to begin having meetups in several places, not just Manuel's Tavern. (www.meetup.com/americansunited-georgia)

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

Freedom From Religion Foundation of Georgia does not have a meetup scheduled at presstime; check Meetup and Facebook. (www.meetup.com/Freedom-From-Religion-Foundation-of-Georgia)



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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!

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Sustaining memberships: One person can become a sustaining member for \$100 per year.

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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

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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: _____

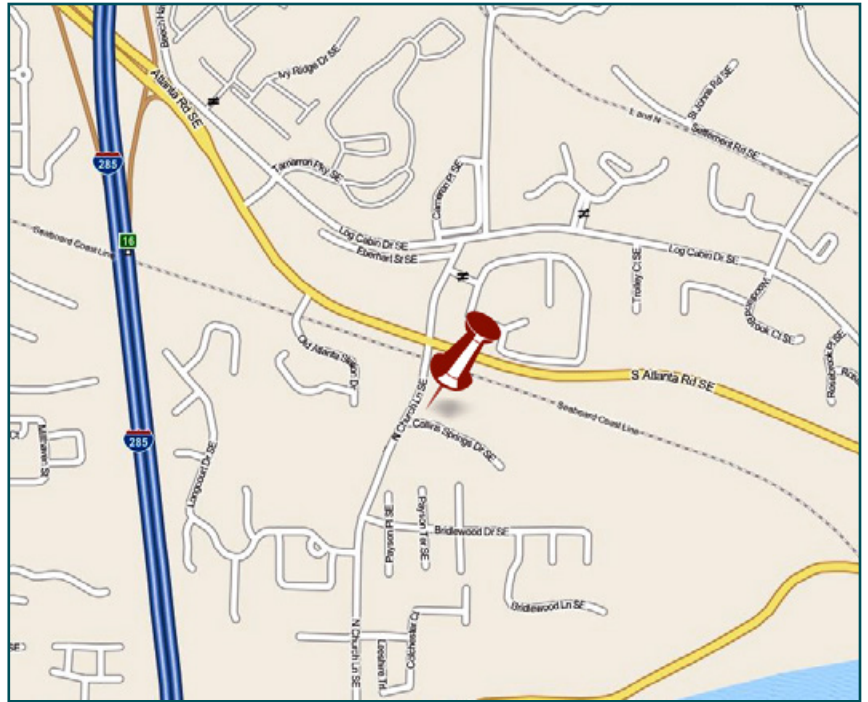
Signature/date _____

*Dare To Think
For Yourself!*



**December 10th meeting
1:00 at AF Hall
4775 N. Church Lane SE
Atlanta, GA 30339**

**Warren Alan
Tidwell**



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IN TIME FOR DECEMBER 10 AND RENEW YOUR DUES FOR 2018.
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