

May AFS Meeting

John C. Snider - "Muslims in America: Updated"

The Atlanta Freethought Society is delighted to present as our next speaker **John Chris Snider**, who will conduct an exploration of the obscure and often hidden history of American Muslims from colonial times to the present.

John C. Snider ("Chris" to his friends and Ed Buckner) has long been active in the atheist community. He is a member of **American Atheists**, the **American Humanist Association**, and the Atlanta Freethought Society (where he also served on



John Chris Snider

the Board of Directors). He's a **Humanist Celebrant** endorsed by the Humanist Society to officiate at weddings and other ceremonies. He started the blog **AmericanFreethought.com** in late 2007 and co-hosted the **American Freethought podcast** with his friend David Driscoll until 2016.

Former American Atheists President Ed Buckner Appointed Interim Executive Director of American Atheists

On May 2, 2018, **American Atheists** announced the appointment of former president **Ed Buckner** as interim executive director. Dr. Buckner previously served as president of American Atheists from 2008 to 2010.

As interim executive director, Buckner will oversee the operations of American Atheists and provide guidance and support to the full-time staff while the Board of Directors searches for new permanent leadership for the organization.

"For over fifty years, American Atheists has been the organization willing and able to lead the unapologetic charge to support atheism, atheists, and the absolute complete separation of government and religion," said Buckner. "I'm proud to have led this group before, to have been a long-time life member, and to now have another chance to contribute."

"I have known and worked with Ed for more than a decade," said **Neal Cary**, chair of the American Atheists Board of Directors. "His many years of support for the work of this organization and this community, as well as his steady hand of leadership, will ensure that American Atheists continues to be an outspoken voice in this nation for atheists and atheism as we move forward and continue our work protecting the separation of religion from government."

In addition to his service as president of American Atheists, Buckner was a member of the Board of Directors from 2010 to 2015. He previously served as the executive director for the Council for Secular Humanism from 2001 to 2003 and as president of the Atlanta Freethought Society.

Dr. Buckner holds a bachelor's degree in English from Rice University and a master's degree and Ph.D. in education from Georgia State University.

Calendar

May 13	AFS Board Meeting	11:00 p.m.
May 13	AFS General Meeting	1:00 p.m.
May 28	Black Nonbelievers BBQ/potluck - Pavillion	1:00 p.m.
June 10	Potluck Lunch	12:00 p.m.
June 10	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

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.



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

June 10: Roberta Cook, River Line Historic District

July 8: Mahesh Soori, On Free Will

Aug 12: Eli Sanders, former Christian Leader/Official

Sept 9 Ed and Michael Buckner, "Religion and Politics in the Trump Era"

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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Editor: Laura Ross
Assistant Editor: Steve Yothment

How to Contact the Editor

Send correspondence to AFS at:
4775 N. Church Lane SE,
Atlanta, GA 30339,
phone Laura at 404-634-1005, or send
e-mail to Laura@LauraRossDesign.com
or luara.mom@gmail.com

2018 President

Laura Ross – 404-825-0258

2018 Treasurer

Diane Buckner – 770-432-3049

2018 Secretary

Dennis Martin – 404-817-0413

2018 Board of Directors

Michael Buckner – 404-633-2486
Dwight Lyman – 404-825-0260
Judy Thompson – 404-296-2020
Steve Yothment – 678-364-8703

Atlanta Freethought News

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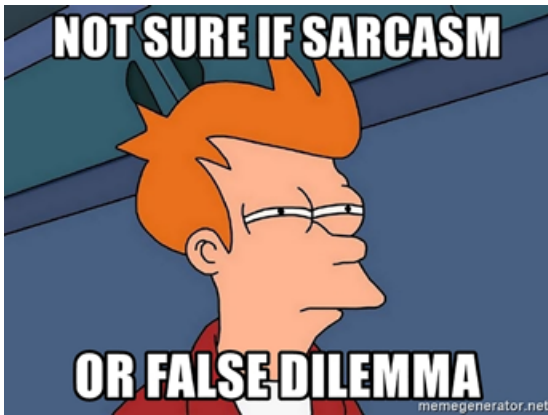
Fallacy of the Month

False Dilemma

By Dennis Martin, PhD (AFS Secretary)

This is the fourth 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.

The **False Dilemma fallacy** is often called the Either-Or Fallacy, the Black-or-White Fallacy, and Bifurcation. It occurs when a speaker offers several (usually two) alternatives in an argument or discussion when there are actually more alternatives. This is one way it can occur, but there are other ways. I need to explain a dilemma first.



A **Dilemma** is the name a formally valid argument with a specific pattern: A or B. If A, then C. If B, then D, So, C or D. Simply put, A leads to C, B leads to D, and you have to pick A or B. So, either C or D is going to happen. The structure of this valid argument pattern is called a "Dilemma."

"I can stay married or get divorced. If I stay married, I will be miserable. If I get divorced, I will be poor. So, I will be miserable or poor." This is a real dilemma if the three premises are true. However, there are three ways that this can be a false dilemma.

Picture the Dilemma as two horns. One horn is A leading to C. The other horn is B leading to D. The two horns are joined at base by the A or B statement. **Going Between the Horns of a Dilemma** is the same as the Either-Or Fallacy above—saying that between the choices of A and B is another choice E that hasn't been discussed yet. You can try marital counseling first. **Taking the Dilemma by the Horns** is to show that one of the horns (the if...then statements) isn't necessarily the case. Getting divorced doesn't necessarily mean you will be poor. **Showing the Desirability of an Alternative** is a third way that a false dilemma can occur. In the above example, you might re-think: Being poor is a simpler life; that might be good for me right now. In other words, it's only a real dilemma if both consequences are C and D are undesirable.

How to Spot

Unlike some fallacies which can be spotted in what is being said, the False Dilemma fallacy is found in what is not being said—in the alternatives and other solutions that are not being discussed. You don't have to have a full-blown dilemma structure. Any either-or statement that is incomplete is a false dilemma. So, as a critical thinker, you have to come up with these other alternatives.

Certain terms alert you to the fact that you are being given alternatives. Terms such as: or, unless, either...or..., and/or, alternatives, options, choices, electives, picks, selections, etc.

Statement from American Atheists Interim Executive Director Ed Buckner

atheists.org



Following his appointment as Interim Executive Director by the American Atheists Board of Directors, Dr. Ed Buckner released the following statement:

"I am deeply honored that the Board of Directors of American Atheists has asked me to assume a limited role as Interim Executive Director. I accepted the position because I'm a proud atheist and because I have great respect and admiration for the organization and in its current board and staff.

"In this role, I will work under the guidance of the Board of Directors to lead the work of American Atheists and to be a spokesperson for atheists, whose voices are far too often missing from our national discourse.

"For over fifty years, American Atheists has been the organization willing and able to lead the unapologetic charge to support atheism, atheists, and the absolute separation of government from religion. I'm proud to have led the group before, to be a longtime life member, and to now have another chance to contribute.

"I have complete confidence in the leadership of the Board of Directors and the professionalism and dedication of the staff of American Atheists. These are all people of great integrity and steadfast dedication to the mission of this organization who bring diverse life experiences, skills, and perspectives to bear in accomplishing the mission of American Atheists.

"All of us who work for and lead American Atheists are now looking to the future as we continue our mission to fight for atheists' rights and the absolute separation of religion from government. I am happy and honored to be a part of this. Looking forward, the board has pledged to conduct a wide-ranging and thorough but speedy search for a new leader."

House Flap Over Chaplain's Firing Highlights The Dangers Of Mixing Religion And Government

By Maggie Garrett/Wall of Separation Blog

www.au.org

On April 16, **Paul Ryan** announced that the House of Representatives' chaplain, the **Rev. Patrick J. Conroy**, would be stepping down in May. This week, it was revealed that Ryan, after being pressured by some Republicans, forced Conroy out of his post. The ouster has prompted outrage among members of the House.

That there is controversy surrounding the House Chaplain should surprise no one. The House chaplaincy is the quintessential mixing of religion and state that our founders warned us about.

There is a lot of speculation about why Ryan and other Republicans called for his firing. In fact, U.S. Rep. **Gerry Connolly** (D-Va.) and three other members are [circulating a bipartisan letter](#) requesting more information from Ryan that they plan to send to the speaker today.

Many believe the firing was sparked by a Conroy invocation that some Republicans perceived to be critical of the Republican tax bill. The words that offended: "May their efforts these days guarantee that there are not winners



and losers under new tax laws, but benefits balanced and shared by all Americans."

Meanwhile, some members are questioning Ryan's authority to fire the chaplain and are [contemplating legislation](#) to prevent similar action in the future. Others are

[questioning Ryan's Catholicism](#), since Ryan appears to have fired Conroy, a Catholic priest, for statements about protecting the poor. And a debate is now swirling over whose theology, Ryan's or Conroy's, is more Catholic. Others still are asking whether the invocation itself—potentially touching on a political matter—was proper or whether Ryan has any ability to put restrictions on what the chaplain says.

The controversy, however, doesn't end with the firing of Conroy. The issue of the [hiring of the new chaplain](#) is creating problems of its own. U.S. Rep. **Mark Walker** (R-N.C.), who is on the hiring committee, says he wants to hire a chaplain who has a family and can better relate to the experiences members of Congress face. Of course, such a requirement would preclude the hiring of another Catholic priest. Rep. Connolly responded: "We, on its face, would consider such a remark to be anti-Catholic—on its face. So you're eliminating anyone who's a Catholic priest, a Catholic nun, from being the chaplain of the House. The largest denomination in the country."

Ryan has fed the anti-Catholic concerns with vague remarks like, "not all of my members feel that they got spiritual guidance from him."

U.S. Rep. **Emmanuel Cleaver** (D-Mo.), the only Democrat on the chaplain hiring committee and an ordained Methodist minister, appears to recognize that fighting over the chaplain doesn't look good for Congress, remarking, "All I would like is to prevent us from looking like the House of

Clowns. And having yet another controversy that may boil down to fighting over religion and which side is right—this is just not healthy."

But what Cleaver's statement seems to overlook is that there is no way to have a House chaplain without inviting the "fighting over religion" and determining "which side is right." It is just that usually, the debate is not so open and visible.

As **Charles Haynes**, vice president of the Newseum Institute/[Religious Freedom Center](#), [tweeted](#) about the current controversy, this is a "case study in why government-funded prayers are bad for authentic religion and violate liberty of conscience."

Having a chaplain puts the House of Representatives in the position to pick one religious leader over all others. Yet the House membership includes representatives who are Buddhist, Humanist, Muslim, Hindu, Jewish, Orthodox Christian, Catholic, numerous Protestant denominations and those with no religion at all. Some members of the House and the public will be represented while others aren't, sending a message that Congress has sided with and favors some faiths over others. And with the remarks from some quarters, it seems like there might be an unspoken religious test being placed on the next chaplain's selection. And that, too, is a big problem.

Of course, the House is unlikely to abolish the chaplaincy because the Supreme Court has upheld legislative chaplains and prayers. But the court has also made clear that governmental bodies must not discriminate based on religion in selecting chaplains. The House should pay heed to that principle, both in picking its next chaplain and in ensuring that its guest chaplains represent reflect the religious diversity of its members and all Americans.

On the morning of April 27, Conroy's invocation asked God to give members "the wisdom and magnanimity to lay aside what might divide us." I might suggest that mixing religion and government is the source of division.

Editor's note: *On Thursday, May 3rd, Speaker Paul Ryan flip-flopped on the decision to retain House Chaplain Patrick Conroy through the rest of his term, in an attempt to bypass the controversy. Maybe Congress should honor the first amendment and keep government out of the religion business.*

FFRF Offers 'A' Badge to Counter Scout Bias

ffrf.org

Even as the Boy Scouts of America is overhauling its membership and nomenclature to be inclusive, it still has a blind spot regarding a marginalized group: the nonreligious.

"For 108 years, the Boy Scouts of America's flagship program has been known simply as the Boy Scouts," **the Associated Press reports**.



"With girls soon entering the ranks, the group says that iconic name will change. The organization on Wednesday announced a new name for its Boy Scouts

program: Scouts BSA."

The Freedom From Religion Foundation welcomes this move, as it did the group's repeal of its ban on gays. But it decries the fact that the scouts will still discriminate against the nonreligious and their families, excluding atheists, agnostics and nonbelievers. After it announced last fall that the membership was being opened up to girls, the leadership reiterated its prejudice.

"We believe this nation needs and deserves more youth focused on the foundations that still serve as bedrock of our movement — **duty to God and country with a desire to help other people at all times**," an **October statement signed by the organization's national president**, commissioner and chief scout executive said, with the bold emphasis in the original letter.

FFRF has come up with a creative way to address the Boy Scouts' prejudicial attitude toward nonbelievers. At the urging of its member **Richard Kirschman**, it has produced a badge similar to the scouts' merit badges, which are typically sewn on uniforms or sashes. The badge, featuring a red "A" based on a symbol of atheism and agnosticism popularized by distinguished scientist and atheist **Richard Dawkins**, is being issued in collaboration with the **Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason & Science**.

Scouts who wish to earn this badge are asked to help disprove the group's misguided claim that nonbelievers cannot be good citizens. At Dawkins' suggestion, the scout or youth seeking a badge need only send FFRF a short essay addressing the Boy Scouts of America's claim that nonbelievers can't be good citizens. FFRF will not charge scouts money for the badge. The requirements, paralleling typical merit badge requirements, ask scouts to learn about secularism and the rich history of dissent from religion.

Trump Administration Continues Daily Assault on Religious Freedom

atheists.org

At a ceremony in the White House Rose Garden on May 3rd, President **Donald Trump** signed an **executive order** creating the "White House Faith and Opportunity Initiative," an office that would further undermine religious freedom and pour even more taxpayer money into religious groups that are free to discriminate, have little accountability and zero transparency.

"The separation of religion and government has never been under greater attack," said **Alison Gill**, Legal & Policy Director of American Atheists. "This executive order would permit religious groups receiving taxpayer money to offer public services steeped in religion without providing opt-outs or referrals to alternative providers. Americans should not have to wade through religious messages and proselytizing in order to access essential government services."

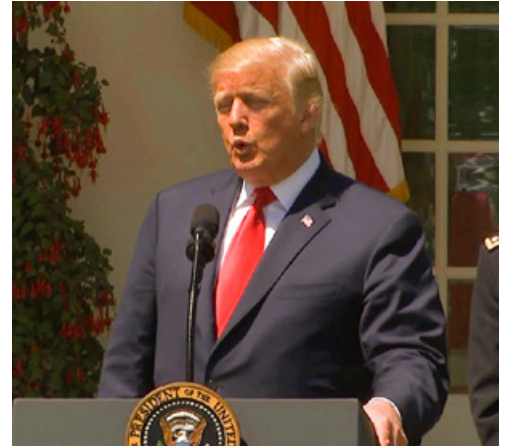
Unlike faith-based initiatives by previous administrations, Trump's initiative will require every department of the federal government to look for ways to partner with religious groups, not just faith-based offices, under the coordination of the new White House office.

"The new initiative will channel ever more federal money into churches aligned with the President, ostensibly for public services, but far too often used for proselytizing and religious activity," said **Ed Buckner**, Interim Executive Director of American Atheists. "Our nation's Founders believed that it was unjust and tyrannical to tax all to fund the religious beliefs and practices of a few. Mr. Trump should spend less time watching cable news and more time reading the plain language of the Constitution."

This executive order joins a long list of unconstitutional actions committed by this administration to advance their distorted view of religious freedom.

In February, **Attorney General Jeff Sessions** installed "**religious freedom**" czars in every US attorney's office and announced that all litigation that could potentially involve religious issues must receive prior approval from political appointees at the Department of Justice. In January, the **Department of Health and Human Services** created a new office tasked with allowing healthcare institutions to deny services to patients on the basis of their own religious beliefs.

And this week, the **New York Times reported** that new federal policies are diverting disaster relief funds away from victims and public services and instead directing them to churches and religious schools.



Kingsley Amis once said that religion and masturbation were alike in one regard. Feel free to practice them, that is, but no one really wants to hear you go on about it.

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)

Ethical Humanists of Atlanta will take an urban peace walk from the Carter Center to the Martin Luther King Jr. Center on Sat, May 12 9 am, 453 Freedom Pkwy NE, Atlanta and then to Krog Street Market for lunch. All are welcome, and the moms in attendance will receive a gift! (www.meetup.com/Ethical-Humanists-of-Atlanta)

Black Nonbelievers will have a Mother's Day brunch at Copelands of New Orleans, Cumberland, 3101 Cobb Parkway on Sunday, May 13. (www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers)

There will be a **meetup for Decatur Atheists** Sun, May 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., May 14, 7 pm at UUCG, 12 Bethesda Church Rd, Lawrenceville. The topic had not been announced at press time. (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 May 18. Check website for more info. (www.atlantaastronomy.org)

Sunday Assembly Atlanta will present **Stand By Me** on Sun May 20, 5:30 pm at First Existentialist Congregation, 470 Candler Park Dr NE, Atlanta. The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members. ~ *Coretta Scott King*

This month, SSA will focus on how and why we stand by one another. The speaker is **Brian Kammer**, executive director of the **Georgia Resource Center**, which provides pro bono legal representation to people on death row. His work has led him to the conclusion that the capital punishment system is profoundly broken, and has exposed debilitating problems of poverty, racial discrimination and inequality in Georgia and the nation.

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)

There will be a **meetup for Atlanta Atheists** Sun, May 27, 4 pm, 5 Seasons Brewing, 5600 Roswell Rd, Prado Shopping Center, Sandy Springs. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

Black Nonbelievers will have their annual BBQ/Potluck at the outdoor pavillion at Atlanta Freethought Hall on Mon, May 28, 1 pm. Hot dogs, burgers and soft drinks will be

provided; please bring a dish to share, or even to cook. Desserts are welcome too. See you there!!! (www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers)

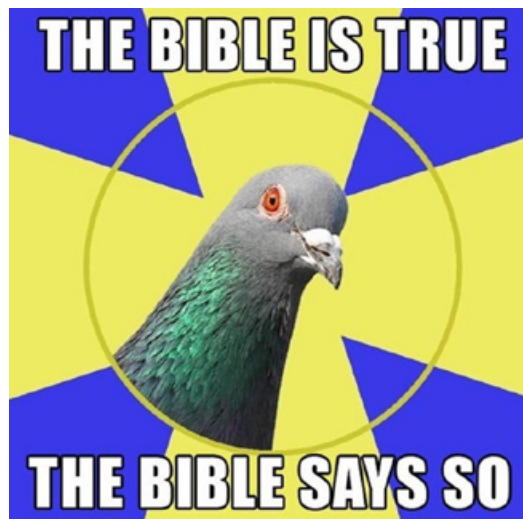
Atlanta Skeptics has "Drinking Sceptically" on the first Friday of each month. 5 Seasons Brewing, Prado Shopping Center, 5600 Roswell Rd, Sandy Springs. (www.meetup.com/AtlantaSkeptics)

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)

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!

Annual dues are:

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Subscription only \$30 _____

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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: _____

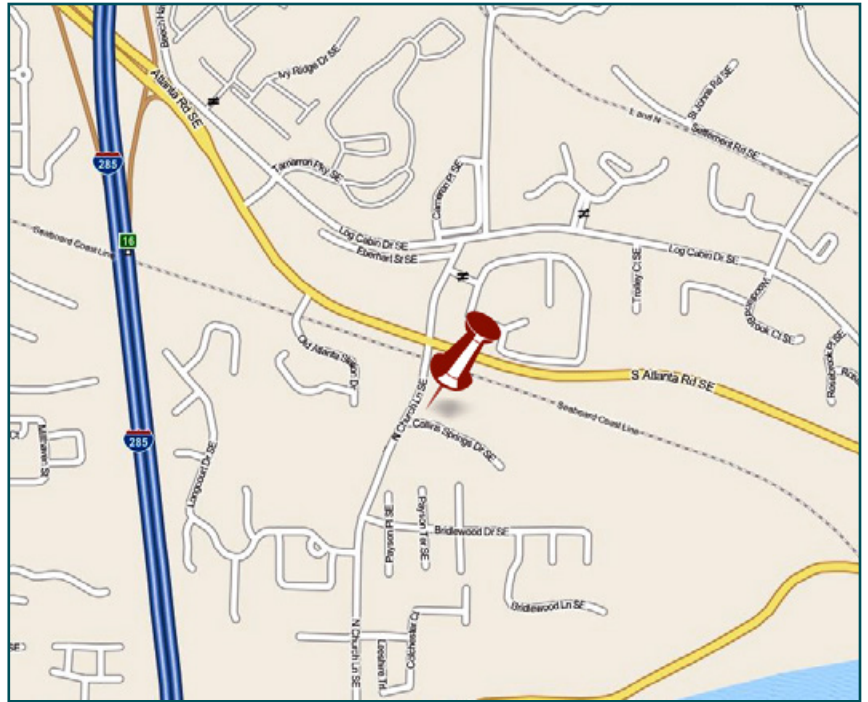
Signature/date _____

*Dare To Think
For Yourself!*



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

John Chris Snider



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