

September AFS Meeting

Beth Remmes - "The Great Turning"

We live in an extraordinary moment on Earth. The Information Age and our technological advances have propelled us beyond anything our ancestors could have imagined. However, we are also awash in uncertainty in all facets of our



lives as we are faced with the possibility that this current trajectory is not sustainable.

This session will explore the three main stories of our time: *Business as Usual, The Great Unraveling,* and *The Great Turning.* We will discuss the ways in which our Industrial Growth Society is showing signs of instability and

Beth Remmes

then identify ways in which we can be active participants in the Great Turning in order to move towards a Life Sustaining Society.

Beth Remmes is a Facilitator for The Work that Reconnects. Beth was a speaker at Emory University's CREATE Conference, and has participated in Pachamama Alliance's Awakening the Dreamer Facilitator Training Program and Game Changer Intensive, as well as the Sustainable World Coalition's Emergence to Action course and Environmental Working Group for Environmental Educators. Beth also completed a year long international on-line Work That Reconnects Facilitator Development Program and earned a Certificate in Ecopsychology from Pacifica Graduate Institute.

Calendar

Sep 8	AFS Board Meeting	11:00 a.m.
Sep 8	AFS General Meeting	I:00 p.m.
Sep 14	FFRF/AFS Meeting	7:00 p.m.
Oct I3	AFS Potluck	12:00 p.m.
Oct I3	AFS General Meeting	I: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 Learn about Fox News and Rupert Murdoch at the September AFS/FFRF joint meeting!

Now that summer is over, we would like to welcome everyone back to the monthly joint Atlanta Freethought Society/Freedom From Religion Foundation of Georgia evening meetings!

On Saturday, September 14, from 7:00-9:00 pm, we will view a documentary about the early days at Fox News (*OUTFOXED*). This film is about their creation of fictionalized news. Afterwards we will have a discussion of the subject and find ways we can deal with all the non-factual information in the media.

Please bring your ideas and/or experiences about this subject so that we can all share ideas and stratagies with which to cope.

Some brief announcements about our activities, future meetings, and local issues will follow.

FFRF will provide hot chocolate, coffee, and soft drinks. Please bring snacks (chips and dip, cookies, appetizers) and your favorite beverage. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. so come early to socialize with like-minded people! All events are free and open to the public, and donations are accepted.



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.

Oct 13: Open

Nov 10: Open

Dec 8: Open

Jan 12: Open

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Speakers needed! Please contact Ed Buckner for more info!

AFS Email List

The AFS Announcements email list provides subscribers with reminders and updates on AFS activities. Send an email to **AFS-Announce-subscribe@yahoogroups.com** to subscribe. The AFS Forum email list is a place for discussions of freethought, atheism, agnosticism, church-state separation and religion. To subscribe to this list, send an email to **AFSForum-subscribe@yahoogroups.com**. The AFS Facebook page is at **facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought**. For calender information on AFS activities, please join the **Meetup group**. The AFS website is www.atlantafreethought.org.

To keep up to date on the Atlanta Freethought Society calendar of upcoming events, please join our Meetup group: meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society.

The Atlanta Freethought Society is a member-run organization dedicated to advancing freethought and protecting the rights and reputation of freethinkers, agnostics, atheists and humanists.

We welcome anyone who is interested in learning about living a good life free from religion through attending AFS speeches, debates, and discussions. We employ protests, letters to the editor, broadcast appearances, and any other reasonable and civil means available to achieve our mission.

We define freethought as "the forming of opinions about life in general and religion in particular on the basis of reason and the evidence of our senses, independently of tradition, authority, or established belief."

We actively support a strict separation of church and state as the best means to guarantee liberty for all, regardless of religious belief or lack of belief.

We seek to educate ourselves on many topics but especially on religion and nonreligion. We do this through a series of thought-provoking speakers and programs, and by maintaining a web forum and an extensive library of freethought, religious, and related books, pamphlets, videotapes, and audiotapes.

We provide an organization where freethinkers and non-theists can develop friendships, talk freely, socialize and enjoy each other's company. We do not discriminate against anyone on such irrelevant grounds as race, sexual orientation, age, gender, class, or physical disability. We welcome members and leaders of all political parties and preferences. Any who are like-minded are welcome to join us.

Because we are designated by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) educational organization, contributions to AFS are tax deductible.

Views, opinions, positions or strategies expressed by authors are theirs alone and do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, positions or strategies of the Atlanta Freethought Society or any member thereof. The editors of *Atlanta Freethought News* reserve the right to edit or alter in any manner it sees fit any articles deemed to be obscene, offensive, defamatory, threatening, in violation of trademark, copyright or other laws, or is otherwise unacceptable; and also to correct grammar and to conserve space.

Atlanta Freethought News An AFS Publication

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

2019 President

Laura Ross - 404-825-0258

2019 Treasurer

Diane Buckner - 404-257-6008

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Dwight Lyman - 404-825-0260

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Mark Banks – 770-354-1546 Michael Buckner – 404-633-2486 Judy Thompson – 404-296-2020 Steve Yothment – 678-364-8703

Atlanta Freethought News

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Membership in AFS is \$50/year per person, \$20 for low income.

Membership includes voting privileges and AFNews by email/USPS (indicate preferences).

Sustaining Membership is \$100.

Life Membership is \$1000.

Subscriptions only are \$30 for 12 issues.

Please make checks and money orders payable to Atlanta Freethought Society

(or Paypal to afs@atlantafreethought.org).

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

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

Send E-mail to afs@atlantafreethought.org.

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

Atlanta Freethought News

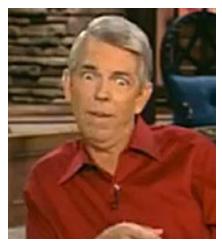
Christian Nationalist David Barton "One of the Greatest Threats to Religious Freedom"

atheists.org

On August 16th, American Atheists responded to comments by Christian nationalist and serial falsifier **David Barton**.

"I got challenged to a debate by the American Atheists Association [sic]," David Barton claimed in a video August 12th. "I said, 'Here's the ground rules. I get to speak 97% of the time. They get to speak 3% of the time.' They said, 'That's not a debate!' I said, 'Look at polling. Right now, 3% of the nation does not believe in God. 97% does.'"

"David Barton is as loose with his statistics as he is with the misattributed



and erroneous 'facts' he peppers his pseudo-scholarship with. Three years ago, he claimed the percentage was 92%," said Nick Fish, President of American Atheists. "There are as many non-religious Americans as there are evangelicals and Catholics, and our numbers are only growing. With 35% of Americans 13-18 identifying as nonreligious, Generation Z is the most atheistic generation ever."

"No matter what numbers David Barton wants to pull out of thin air, he represents the fringe of Christian nationalism. Even Christian conservatives have denounced him as a crank

David Barton

writer. No wonder his Christian publisher **pulled his book** for factual inaccuracies," added Fish. "As we said the last time Barton made this claim, we have no record of the debate he's talking about."

"Let's not get distracted by Barton's fuzzy numbers," said Alison Gill, American Atheists' Vice President for Legal and Policy. "Barton's influence threatens the religious equality of all Americans. As one of the shadowy figures leading the Christian nationalist campaign **Project Blitz**, he is seeking to inject religion into public schools, undermine LGBTQ protections, and deny women the right to control their bodies."

Next month is AFS Board nomination time!

Diane Buckner, Dwight Lyman, Laura Ross, and Steve Yothment's two-year terms on the Atlanta Freethought Society Board of Directors are drawing to a close and all four are eligible to be re-elected; also new candidates can be nominated. The nominations will be made in October and the ballots will be sent out in November, to be returned before the December meeting. To vote and to be on the Board, you must be a paid member (You can find the membership application on page 7 of this newsletter). Please consider potential Board members who would enjoy helping out in these positions.

In order to defeat Barton and Project Blitz, American Atheists is leading the **BlitzWatch** coalition, which is composed of more than 10 national civil rights and religious freedom organizations committed to protecting equality for all Americans. The BlitzWatch campaign monitors, tracks, and defeats attempts by Christian nationalists to implement Barton's distorted view of religious freedom.

FFRF's Andrew Seidel exposes the coordinated effort to put "In God We Trust" in public schools

ffrf.org

The Freedom From Religion Foundation has been leading the charge against Project Blitz, a Christian

nationalist crusade to redefine American law. FFRF Director of Strategic Response **Andrew L. Seidel** explains the divisive impact of displaying the motto in public schools—and why it is so important to Christian nationalists. In a



Andrew Seidel

new piece for *Rewire News*, the last in his threepart series, Seidel writes:

> Christian nationalism will greet schoolchildren returning to classrooms in 16 states this fall. New laws in Louisiana, Arkansas, Kentucky, Florida, and South Dakota encourage or require public schools to display the divisive national motto: In God We Trust.

> Piecemeal reporting on the laws gives the impression that state legislators around the country are spontaneously discovering the value of imposing a religious slogan on a captive audience of schoolchildren. But pious wave is no coincidence, these laws are part of a crusade to rewrite American history and the American identity. They were spawned by Project Blitz, a Christian nationalist crusade that seeks to redefine what it means to be an American—so that to be an American is to be a Christian and to be a Christian is to be an American—and then to rewrite the law accordingly. Project Blitz's goal is to favor Christians, creating a special class, while relegating everyone else to, at best, second-class status.

Emblazoning In God We Trust in public schools furthers that goal. The new laws in most of these states mirror the model bill in the Project Blitz handbook. The laws are not so much a camel's nose under the tent, as they are tethering the camel inside the tent and expecting other people's children to worship it.

Read the rest here.

Federal Appeals Court Allows Minn. Business To Use Religion As An Instrument Of Discrimination

By Patrick Grubel / Wall of Separation Blog • www.au.org

On August 23rd, the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals issued a chilling opinion in a case called *Telescope Media Group v. Lucero* that at a minimum seems dismissive of our entire body of anti-discrimination law and at worst twists the holdings of those cases beyond their accepted application. The court's reasoning could empower many businesses to discriminate against customers because of who they are.

find objectionable."

Breaking from established anti-discrimination precedent, the court also rejected the idea that the state's interest in extinguishing discrimination in public commerce was strong enough to justify the law's effect on the company's speech.

Some background: The Minnesota Human Rights Act, like countless anti-discrimination laws across the country, prohibits businesses in the state from discriminating against customers based on their race, religion, sex and sexual orientation, among other protected characteristics.

Carl and Angel Larsen, the owners of a videography company called Telescope Media in St. Cloud, sued state officials to demand an exemption from that law. They asserted that due to their fundamentalist Christian beliefs, they could only film weddings for opposite-sex couples and would deny that same service to same-sex couples. A well-heeled Religious Right legal group, Alliance Defending Freedom, represented the Larsens in court.

If this sounds familiar, it's because dozens of similar cases have cropped up in recent years, including *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*, which the U.S. Supreme Court decided a little over a year ago. But while Justice **Anthony M. Kennedy** crafted a narrow ruling that



Photo by Sharon McCutcheon on Unsplash

refrained from creating a new right for religious business owners to ignore the anti-discrimination laws that apply to everyone else, Judge **David Stras**, the Trump-appointed jurist who wrote the Telescope opinion, exercised no such restraint.

Building on recent Supreme Court decisions, the 8th Circuit panel ruled that the company's business of creating videos is, "in a word, speech." And because it is speech, the owners have a First Amendment right to turn away any customer whose equal treatment would imply a message with which the owners disagree – here, the validity of a marriage that is not between one man and one woman. Like a newspaper or a feature film, the court said, the wedding-video company cannot be "coerce[d]" into "promoting 'ideas they

As Judge Jane Kelly noted in her dissent, however, "caselaw has long recognized" just the opposite: that the First Amendment "do[es] not allow business owners...to deny protected persons equal access to goods and services under a neutral and generally applicable public accommodations law."

Kelly ably explained that this case was really about commerce, not speech. The Larsens, through their company, sell a service to the public. And the law is clear that once a person opens up their services to the public, they do not have a constitutional right to discriminate against their customers or employees. She also highlighted that the state's interest in ensuring that no one suffers discrimination at the hands of public accommodations because of their sexual orientation was of utmost importance.

Though this case dealt only with a wedding-video company, the ruling may cause extensive harm in the states governed by the 8th Circuit. The logic would apply to any business whose service is "expressive," and, as the

dissent warns, "'[i]t is possible to find some kernel of expression in almost every activity a person undertakes." What happens next may have implications for the rest of the country.

This decision is yet another example of how Religious Right legal groups – abetted by an increasingly receptive federal judiciary – are using notions of speech and religion to harm others, deprive them of full dignity and participation in public life and lay waste to our constitutional tradition of protecting vulnerable groups from discrimination.

Federal Appeals Court Green Lights Discrimination Against Non-Theists

By Rob Boston / Wall of Separation Blog • www.au.org



A federal appeals court on August 23rd handed down a disturbing ruling that elevates the rights of theists over those of non-theists. The 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals' decision in Fields v. Speaker of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives is part of a troubling trend in the courts that not only dilutes separation of church and state but grants special privileges to people because they believe in a god.

Americans United and American Atheists brought the case on behalf of a group of nontheists in the state who wanted to do something theists do frequently: give guest invocations before the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. Officials at the House refused, and AU filed suit.

It's important to remember that Americans United and its allies were not trying to stop the prayers before the House entirely. All we sought was equal treatment between believers and non-theists.

Nevertheless, the court ruled 2-1 that the House could constitutionally turn away the non-theists. Its logic is troubling. According to the court, non-theistic people are not capable of meeting the goals of legislative prayer - only believers in the divine can do that.

"[O]nly theistic prayer can satisfy all the traditional purposes of legislative prayer," wrote the court. "Second, the Supreme Court has long taken as given that prayer presumes invoking a higher power."

The court went on to say, "[A]s a matter of traditional practice, a petition to human wisdom and the power of science does not capture the full sense of 'prayer,' historically understood. At bottom, legislative prayers seek 'divine guidance' in lawmaking."

The court buttressed its argument by pointing to "historical practices." This is blind to the reality of modern-day America where increasing numbers of people are declaring themselves "nones" - individuals who seek spirituality outside the

confines of a house or worship or discard religion entirely.

As Judge L. Felipe Restrepo noted in his dissent, limiting prayer to theists only requires the government to wade into a theological thicket. Buddhism, he noted, doesn't have a concept of a personal god but is still considered a major world religion. Yet under the rules of the Pennsylvania House, Buddhists could be excluded from offering guest prayers. (The court's majority opinion, however, insisted that it would be unconstitutional to exclude Buddhists.)

Restrepo further observed, "By mandating that all guest chaplains profess a belief in a 'higher power' or God, the Pennsylvania House fails to stay 'neutral in matters of religious theory'; in effect, the Pennsylvania House 'promote[s] one . . . religious theory' - belief in God or some sort of supreme deity - 'against another' - the denial of the existence of such a deity."

While the ruling is limited to the issue of legislative prayer, it's still troubling. It's yet another in a problematic line of recent decisions that allow government entities to endorse and promote religion (just about always Christianity) as long as it's being done for "historic" purposes. (The U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in the **Bladensburg Cross case** is another example of this.)

While treating non-theists like second-class citizens may have been part of our nation's history, it's a shameful practice, hardly something we ought to uphold today. Yet rulings like the one in the Fields case do just that: They give preference to believers in god while sending a message of exclusion and even scorn to non-theists. That type of unequal treatment is exactly what the separation of church and state is intended to prevent.



"The Constitution is the guide which I never will abandon." ~George Washington



The U.S. was founded upon secular values.

September 2019

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. Club-house phone number: (404) 881-9188. This is similar to Alcoholics Anonymous group.

Marietta Skeptic/Humanist Meetup has various gettogethers 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)

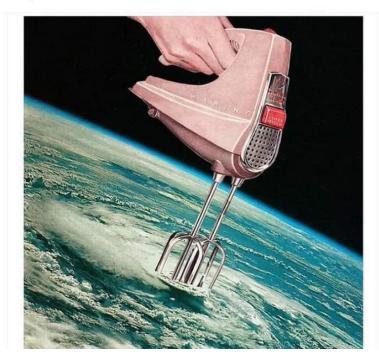
There will be a **meetup for Decatur Atheists** Sun, Sep 9, 6 pm, Thinking Man Tavern, 537 W. Howard Ave, in Decatur. (www. meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths) will meet at 7-9 pm, Mon, Sep 9th at UUCG, 12 Bethesda Church Rd, Lawrenceville. The topic is "Parody and Protest: Satan, Bob and the Spaghetti Monster." (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. Check website for more info. (www.atlantaastronomy.org)

FFRF/AFS joint meeting is Sat, Sep 14, 7-9 pm, AF Hall.

Hey atheists if God doesn't exist then explain this



See page 1 for more information. (www.meetup.com/ Freedom-From-Religion-Foundation-of-Georgia)

Atlanta Atheists Third Sunday Meetup is Sun, Sep 15, 2-4 pm, Publik Draft House, 654 Peachtree St NE, Atlanta. (www. meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

Black Nonbelievers will have their general meeting on Sept 15 from 3-5 at The Bakery ATL, 825 Warner St, Atlanta. Go to the Meetup page to find out more. www.meetup.com/ Black-Nonbelievers

Sunday Assembly Atlanta's upcoming assembly is on Sun, Sep 15th, 5:30 pm at First Existentialist Congregation, 470 Candler Park Dr NE, Atlanta. The topic is "Giving Life" with speaker **Nina Martinez**, who is the first living HIV+ kidney donor. This will conclude with a potluck supper.

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, volunteering, queer beyond belief group, public speaking series, etc. Please check the Meetup page for other activities. (www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly)

Ethical Humanists of At-

lanta: All are invited to join Activists Recruiting, Organizing and Mentoring in Atlanta (AROMA) for our metro-Atlanta meet and greets on Thurs, Sep 26, 7:30-9pm at Little Five Points Community, 1083 Austin Ave NE, Atlanta. (www.meetup.com/Ethical-Humanists-of-Atlanta)

Satanic Temple Atlanta

meets the fourth Sunday at The Highlander, 931 Monroe Dr Atlanta from 2-5 pm. They are accepting donations for Lost-n-Found Youth. (www.

Meetup for Atlanta Atheists Sun, Sep 22th, 4-6 pm, Kegan's Irish Pub, 4687 S. Atlanta Rd SE #224, Smyrna. (www.meetup. com/Atlanta-Atheists)

facebook.com/TSTATL/)

Atlanta Skeptics has "Drinking Skeptically" on the first Friday of each month at 7 pm, Taco Mac at the Prado 5600 Roswell Rd, Sandy Springs, though location is subject to change. (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, Ancient Greek language classes, and other events. (www.fellowshipofreason.com)

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afs@atlantafreethought.org (Save time and postage (by making a payment via Paypal to:	Receive newsletter by email (No charge for members) Receive paper newsletter by mail (No charge for members)	Extra donation (Thank you!) \$ Total: \$	Shipping and handling for Books \$	Books $\$_{}$ Any other things you'd like to tell us?		Life Member \$1000\$ Phone: HWW	Sustaining \$100\$	Low Income \$20\$ Address:	Individual \$50\$ Name	Membership Dues# of mems Total	Annual dues are:	any Ars meeting.) Thank you for your support! We look forward to your being with us in the coming months!	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	Life memberships: Avoid the hassle of renewing every year. A life membership lasts a lifetime.	Sustaining memberships: One person can become a sustaining member for \$100 per year.	Individual memberships: One person can become a member for \$50 per year.	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!	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 <i>Atlanta Freethought</i> News,	(Or renew your membership with this form or online at www.AtlantaFreethought.org!)	Become a Member!
AFS Art Committee approval: Signature/date	Owner agrees to terms: Signature/date	reethought.org). Installation & removal will be done by artist/ owner overseen by AFS art committee. Damage to building will be repaired by artist/owner. The owner assumes all risk for artwork at all times. AFS will not be responsible for any damage or loss while artwork is in our posession.	Terms: All artwork displays will be submitted to Atlanta Freethought Society art committee for approval (afs@atlantaf-	Is artwork for sale? Yes / No \$ Upon sale owner agrees to pay AFS a 33.3% fee.	Email:	_ Phone(s):		- Address:		_ Owner if other than above:	Display dates: from toto			Description of artwork (subject, color, dimensions, weight, frame, price, materials, other info — list on separate page if necessary):	Email:	Phone(s):		Address:	Person or entity displaying art:	www.atlantafreethought.org afs@atlantafreethought.org	ATTE N Church I and CE Atlanta CA 20239

I:00 at AF Hall

September 8th meeting 4775 N. Church Lane SE Atlanta, GA 30339

Beth Remmes

Dare To Think

For Yourself!



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