

## November AFS Meeting Ben Burgis - "Democratic Socialism and the Debate on Medicare for All"

Atlanta Freethought Society is pleased to have **Dr. Ben Burgis** give a talk this Sunday on the topic of Medicare for all, based on his recent essay entitled *The "Strongest Argument Against Medicare for All" Is Very, Very Weak* on the Jacobin website.

Ben Burgis is a philosophy professor at Georgia State University Perimeter College and the author of *Give Them Argument: Logic for the Left*. He's also a regular weekly contributor to *Jacobin Magazine* and he does a regular weekly segment called "The Debunk" every week on *The Michael Brooks Show*.



**Ben Burgis**



Freedom From Religion Foundation and Atlanta Freethought Society will view the sequel to Al Gore's 2007 documentary "An Inconvenient Truth." The 2017 documentary is titled "An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power," which is an update on progress that has been made and a reminder that much more needs to be done. Global climate change and the environment are major issues in the 2020 elections. After viewing the film, we will have a discussion about what we can do to make this a priority for our political leaders. Please bring your ideas and experiences about this subject so that we can all share ideas and coping strategies.

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; donations are accepted.

### 2020 Board Elections

Those who are running for 2020-22 AFS Board members are **Diane Buckner, Dwight Lyman, Daniel Pyron, Laura Ross, and Steve Yothment**, in accordance to the AFS Bylaws. The ballots will be sent out in November, to be returned before or at the December meeting.

To vote and to be a Board candidate, you must be a paid member, You can become a member by filling out the membership form on page 7 of the newsletter and turning it and your payment in to a board member who will then give it to the Treasurer. Thank you for your support!

### IF RELIGIOUS FAITH IMPROVED MORALITY



PRIESTS WOULDN'T RAPE KIDS



SUICIDE BOMBERS WOULDN'T EXIST



AND WOMEN WOULD HAVE EQUALITY

### Calendar

Nov 10	AFS Board Meeting	11:00 a.m.
Nov 10	AFS General Meeting	1:00 p.m.
Nov 16	FFRF/AFS Meeting	7:00 p.m.
Dec 8	Potluck	12:00 p.m.
Dec 8	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](http://www.facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought)

**For the latest in upcoming AFS events, join our Meetup group!**  
[meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society](http://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.

**Nov 10: Ben Burgis**

**Dec 8: Open**

**Jan 12: Open**

**Feb 9: Christopher Cameron on Black Freethinkers**

**Mar 8: Open**

**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](mailto: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](mailto:AFSForum-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). The AFS Facebook page is at [facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought](https://facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought). For calendar information on AFS activities, please join the [Meetup group](#). The AFS website is [www.atlantafreethought.org](http://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](https://meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society).

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*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.

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## Atlanta Freethought News An AFS Publication

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### 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.

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Dear Editor:

**Jim Cole** (“Remember to be light and salt,” 22 October, *Marietta Daily Journal*) would be better off writing about things he understands. He seems not to know, for example, that it took Christianity hundreds of years to evolve past the teachings in Leviticus 25:44ff (and elsewhere) that human slavery is morally acceptable. And he apparently doesn’t agree with most Christian apologists that Commandment IX forbids lying about your neighbor. He is right to suggest that Chinese civilization long preceded Judaism and Christianity; Confucianism including teaching people to treat others as they want to be treated long before Christianity’s version of the golden rule. He is absurdly foolish to claim that only Christians are taught to love unconditionally.

But Cole really shows his ignorance when he discusses secular humanism, which isn’t a religion at all much less a “national religion,” and most assuredly doesn’t teach that “there is no right or wrong” or that “there are no standards to judge anyone.” He could quite readily have learned the truth by simply doing an internet search for the affirmations of humanism, where he would discover, among many other standards, that “We believe in the common moral decencies: altruism, integrity, honesty, truthfulness, responsibility.”

Cole’s purpose in writing seems to have been to slander others rather than to be light or salt.

Regards,

**Ed Buckner**

Executive Director (2001-2003), Council for Secular Humanism

Vinings/Atlanta 30339

*(Ed’s LTE was published in the Marietta Daily Journal in October 2019.)*

*COLE’s LTE (since I’m blind copying some out of state/non-MDJ readers)*

DEAR EDITOR:

*The main tenets of the national religion, Secular Humanism, are nonjudgmentalism and tolerance. If we evolved from primordial mud, there is no right or wrong. There are only feelings. There are no standards to judge anyone. Everything is tolerated.*

*This regressive religion takes us back to pre-civilization. The only way that man overcame the dinosaurs and voracious animals was by his bloodthirsty nature. If this was the case, what happened that made man seek goodness and a transcendence throughout the world?*

*The Chinese were the first to create a continuing script in 2500 B.C. telling of a massive flood and figures depicting a god. The Torah goes back to 1800 B.C. with Abraham and God. It outlines the journey of the Israelites, God’s chosen people. The Greeks exploded on the scene in the fifth century with discussions of philosophy and the gods.*

*In Matthew 18, Jesus commanded the people to clean up their lives, and then to go to those in their synagogues who were not obeying the commandments and law, and confront them. If they did not change their sinful behavior, they were to go back to them with someone in authority to confront them. If they persisted, they were to treat them like a “Gentile or tax collector.”*

*When it comes to the nonbelievers, the believers in Christ are to be salt and light. The believers are not to condemn, but they are to love them without accepting their sin. This is what salt is to meat. It’s a preservative. The light is their Savior, Jesus, who came to lead mankind to the truth.*

*There are many examples of this in the Bible. When the prostitute was to be stoned by the mob, Jesus asked that “he that was without sin cast the first stone.” When they all threw down their stones, he turned to the woman and said “to go and sin no more.”*

*The multifaceted efforts by the entertainment and educational establishments have focused on the purging of Christian history. Simultaneously, they are replacing it with a pre-civilization “religion” with tribal groups vying for the apex on the “hierarchy of racism.” Secular humanism is a return to a brutish Hobbesian state of nature.*

*The only people in history who are commanded to love unconditionally with an eternal penalty are the Christians. This teaching and others formed the basis for Western Civilization.*

**Jim Cole**

Marietta

# TV Preacher Paula White Secures Official Perch At White House

By Rob Boston / Wall of Separation Blog • [www.au.org](http://www.au.org)

A White House official told *The New York Times* on October 31st that controversial TV preacher Paula White is **joining the Trump administration** in an official capacity.

White, a Florida-based minister known for promoting the “prosperity gospel” – the idea that if you have enough faith, God will reward you with riches – has been allied with Trump since the early 2000s. She’s a member of Trump’s secretive Evangelical Advisory Board, which Trump formed before the 2016 election to woo the Christian nationalist crowd. Americans United has been trying to **bring accountability to this body**, which, according to its own members, doesn’t actually exist.

White has also been one of Trump’s most dependable conservative evangelical apologists. Despite Trump’s frequent **crass behavior**, his **tendency to lie** and his **seeming unfamiliarity** with the basic doctrines of Christianity, White has stood by Trump, going so far as to insist that God put him in the White House and that opposing Trump is opposing God.



White told evangelist **Jim Bakker** during an August 2017 interview that God put Trump in office and that opposition to Trump is opposition to God, remarking, “It is God who raises up a king. It is God that sets one down. When you

fight against the plan of God, you are fighting against the hand of God.”

A few days ago, **she repeated these themes** in another interview with Bakker, asserting, “I might not like the personality, I might not understand him . . . Where do I line up? And you’re gonna have to make a decision that won’t be just held accountable here for how things turn out for you, your children, your grandchildren, but you’re gonna have to stand accountable before God one day. Not based on your opinion, your hurt, your wounding, what you think, what you don’t. Educate yourself. Know the issues, know the word of God, and then if you cannot align with the word of God I don’t see it.”

White also sparked controversy last year when she told her followers to **give her ministry a month’s salary** and implied that bad things would happen to them if they didn’t.

“It is the basis or underlying support for your success in 2018,” White wrote on her website. “It is GOD’S PRINCIPLE OF FIRST FRUITS. All Firsts belong to God. When you honor this principle it provides the foundation and structure for God’s blessings and promises in your life, it unlocks deep dimensions of spiritual truths that literally transform your life! When you apply this everything comes in divine alignment for His plan and promises for you. When you don’t honor it, whether through ignorance or direct disobedience there are consequences.”

The Times reported that White will work in the White House’s Office of Public Liaison. Her job, an anonymous administration official said, will be

to offer advice on the administration’s Faith and Opportunity Initiative, Trump’s name for the faith-based initiative, which funnels tax money to religious groups ostensibly to fight social ills. There’s a certain irony in a person who believes poor people just need to have more faith in God to get rich advising the government on the provision of social services, but White, who has no experience in public service, will probably spend most of her time shoring up Trump’s conservative evangelical base in advance of the 2020 election.

White and Trump share certain things in common – both have checkered pasts when it comes to money and both have resisted any attempts to hold them accountable for their actions.

In 2007, U.S. Sen. **Charles Grassley** (R-Iowa) **launched an investigation** into six large prosperity gospel ministries that he believed might have been violating federal law by using tax exemption to fund lavish lifestyles for ministry heads. Among the ministries Grassley examined was White’s Without Walls International Church in Tampa, which at the time she ran with her then-husband, **Randy**. Grassley asked the ministry to provide a list of expense account items “including, but not limited to, clothing expenses and any cosmetic surgery for years 2004 to present.” White provided some basic financial data about the ministry but refused the full request for information. Four years later the Grassley inquiry collapsed under withering attacks from Religious Right activists. White claimed this as vindication.

It’s worth noting that White’s theology has plenty of critics in the Christian community. **Russell D. Moore**, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention and hardly a liberal, has **bluntly stated**, “Paula White is a charlatan and recognized as a heretic by every orthodox Christian, of whatever tribe.”

When she’s not boosting Trump among evangelicals, White will likely join the president in promoting an agenda that is relentlessly anti-LGBTQ rights, anti-reproductive rights, anti-religious minority rights and anti-separation of religion and government. **Your support of Americans United** is crucial to helping us stand up to every part of it.

P.S. Americans United President and CEO **Rachel Laser** has denounced White’s appointment. You can read her **powerful statement here**.

# Ben Carson Has No Idea What Separation Of Church And State Means

By Rob Boston / Wall of Separation Blog • [www.au.org](http://www.au.org)

Secretary of Housing and Urban Development **Ben Carson** raised a few eyebrows earlier in October when he referenced separation of church and state during an opening prayer before a cabinet meeting.

During the prayer, **Carson thanked God for President Donald Trump**, adding that he appreciates Trump's advisers who "help us all to recognize as



a nation that separation of church and state means that the church does not dominate the state, and it means the state does not dominate the church."

That part's not so bad, but Carson followed with this: "It doesn't mean that they cannot work together to promote godly principles."

Well, no, it means exactly that. For the government to take on the task of promoting "godly principles," it would first have to determine what's godly and what's not. It would have to elevate one version of faith over others and never be neutral on matters of theology. That sort of thing might fly in the **Republic of Gilead** but not here. Nothing could be more dangerous.

Furthermore, this administration has an appalling record on separation of religion and government. As Americans United President and CEO **Rachel Laser** told **the Associated Press**, Carson's remark is "hypocritical and does a disservice to this constitutional principle."

Added Laser, "Church-state separation means that all Americans have the right to believe or not, as long as they don't harm others. This administration's policies and rhetoric, by contrast, privilege a narrow set of religious views above all others."

Laser's comments appeared in newspapers and online news nationwide. It was the third time in recent weeks that AU has taken on Trump administration officials for trashing church-state separation. AU criticized Attorney General **William Barr** for delivering an **appalling talk assailing secular government** at the University of Notre Dame Oct. 11. The same day, Secretary of State **Mike Pompeo** gave a proselytizing speech on "Being a Christian Leader" to an audience in Tennessee. Americans United **has requested** that the department's Inspector General's Office investigate the talk.

It's probably no coincidence that this administration, which is under scrutiny for a growing scandal that threatens to culminate in Trump's impeachment, is desperately trying to bury its misdeeds under a cloak of religiosity. But Carson and his fellow Trump travelers have forgotten one important thing: that church-state separation is a real, vital constitutional principle – one that rebukes them at every turn.

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## The Trump Administration Is Allowing Discrimination Against LGBTQ Americans And Others – Again

By Rob Boston / Wall of Separation Blog • [www.au.org](http://www.au.org)

President **Donald Trump** struck another blow against religious freedom, LGBTQ rights, equality and simple decency on November 1st. Bowing once again to his Christian nationalist allies, Trump's Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) **proposed a new rule** that will repeal key nondiscrimination provisions across all agency programs.

The rule is being interpreted in the media as

mainly an attempt to allow taxpayer-supported adoption and foster care agencies that are religious in nature to refuse to work with people who fail to meet a strict religious litmus test, chiefly members of the LGBTQ community.

It does that, which is bad enough, but the rule does much more because it affects all HHS programs. HHS is a sprawling agency that sponsors more than 100 programs, dealing with issues such as homelessness, senior care, refugee resettlement, public health and emergency housing. Potentially millions of Americans could be harmed if they are denied critical services because of this reckless rule.

# 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](http://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](mailto: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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.recoveringfromreligion.org). ([www.meetup.com/Recovering-From-Religion-Morrow-Chapter](http://www.meetup.com/Recovering-From-Religion-Morrow-Chapter))

**Black Nonbelievers** will be at SeaCon 2019 Nov 10, 12 pm. See website for more info. [www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers](http://www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers)

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

**GUST (Gwinnett: Understanding Secular Truths)** will meet at 7-9 pm, Mon, Nov 11 at UUCG, 12 Bethesda Church Rd, Lawrenceville. The topic is What to Do with the Religious Baggage? ([www.meetup.com/brights-295](http://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](http://www.atlantaastronomy.org))

**Ethical Humanists of Atlanta:** Volunteering at Full Circle Farm Sanctuary 961 Whitehouse Pkwy, Warm Springs, Sun, Nov 17 11-4. Dress for the weather and wear sturdy shoes. Bring vegan dish for potluck. ([www.meetup.com/Ethical-Humanists-of-Atlanta](http://www.meetup.com/Ethical-Humanists-of-Atlanta))

**FFRF/AFS** joint meeting is Sat, Nov 16, 7-9 pm, AF Hall. See page 1 for more information. ([www.meetup.com/Freedom-From-Religion-Foundation-of-Georgia](http://www.meetup.com/Freedom-From-Religion-Foundation-of-Georgia))

**Sunday Assembly Atlanta's** upcoming assembly is on Sun, Nov 17, 5:30 pm at First Existentialist Congregation, 470 Candler Park Dr NE, Atlanta. At press time, the topic had not been announced.

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](http://www.meetup.com/Sunday-Assembly))

**Satanic Temple Atlanta** meets the fourth Sunday at The Highlander, 931 Monroe Dr Atlanta from 2-5 pm, though at press time a November event had not yet been posted. The Satanic Temple facilitates the communication and mobilization of politically aware Satanists, secularists, and advocates for individual liberty. ([www.facebook.com/TSTATL/](http://www.facebook.com/TSTATL/))

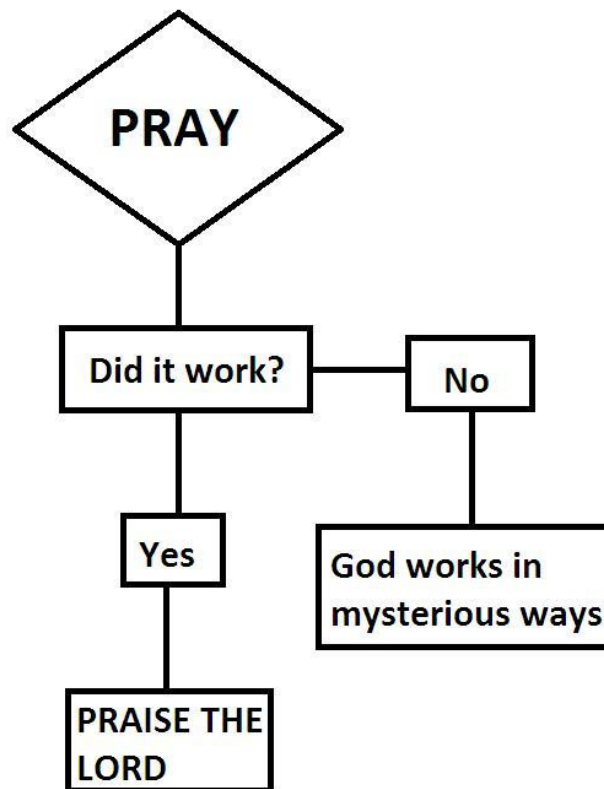
**Atlanta Atheists Monthly Meetup** is Sun, Nov 24, 4 pm, Keegan's Irish Pub, 4687 S Atlanta St #224, Smyrna. ([www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists](http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists))

[www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists](http://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists))

**Atlanta Sceptics** has "Drinking Sceptically" 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/AtlantaSceptics](http://www.meetup.com/AtlantaSceptics))

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



# Become a Member!

**(Or renew your membership with this form or online at [www.AtlantaFreethought.org](http://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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 Low Income \$20 \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Sustaining Member \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: H \_\_\_\_\_ W \_\_\_\_\_

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## AFS Art Display Program

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[www.atlantafreethought.org](http://www.atlantafreethought.org) [afs@atlantafreethought.org](mailto: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](mailto: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: \_\_\_\_\_

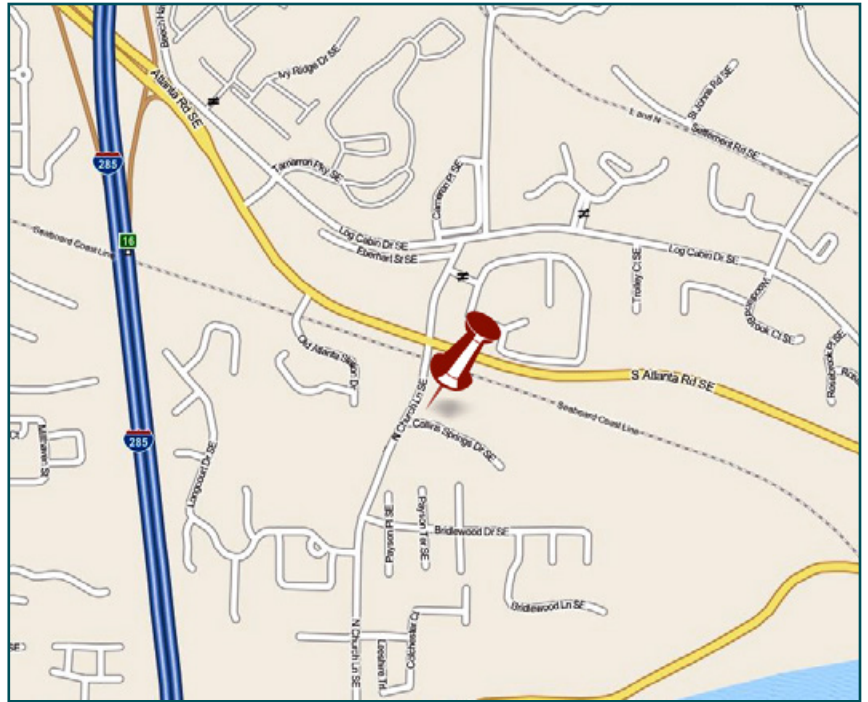
Signature/date \_\_\_\_\_

*Dare To Think  
For Yourself!*



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

**Ben Burgis**



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