

December AFS Meeting

Nick Fish “Stories to Tell: Breaking Barriers and Building Bridges by Putting a Human Face on Atheism”

Nick Fish is a seasoned civil rights and civil liberties activist with more than a decade of political, organizing, and leadership experience with many



Nick Fish

of the nation’s most prominent political organizations and progressive non-profits. A native of Michigan, Nick studied political science at **Albion College** before working in Raleigh, NC, managing a voter outreach office that registered more than 5,000 new voters and knocked on 25,000 doors in the two

months leading up to the 2008 election. After the election, Nick worked in donor outreach, marketing, fundraising, and communications, including with the **Secular Coalition for America**. Before his appointment as president, Nick served as Development Director and National Program Director for **American Atheists**.

Since 2015, Nick has represented American Atheists in the media, including appearances on the **Fox News** programs Spirited Debate, Hannity, and Fox and Friends, and on countless local media outlets. He has been quoted in *The Washington Post*, *CNN*, *Time Magazine*, *Newsweek*, and *The Associated Press*. He has created innovative advocacy and visibility campaigns, including **Atheist-Voter**, and has developed messaging and strategy around American Atheists’ legal, public policy, and outreach campaigns.

The December Potluck

Before the December 9th meeting we will have a Potluck Lunch, starting at noon. Join AFS members and guests for some good food and great socializing. Please bring food according to the first letter of your last name:

A-G: Bring a main dish

H-P: Bring a desert

Q-Z: Bring a side dish

AFS will provide drinks, plates and silverware.

Calendar

Dec 9	Potluck Lunch	12:00 p.m.
Dec 9	AFS General Meeting	1:00 p.m.
Dec 22	Saturnalia/Festivus Party	5:00 p.m.
Jan 13	AFS Board Meeting	11:00 a.m.
Jan 13	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



The Georgia chapter of FFRF and AFS will celebrate the Winter Solstice in honor of our pagan ancestors as well as our new secular customs. The ancient Romans celebrated the god of Saturn by having a banquet, exchanging

gag gifts, reversing social norms and other fun stuff. The modern secular holiday of Festivus includes a banquet, gag gift exchange, airing of grievances, feats of strength, Festivus miracles and other fun stuff.

Please join us for a fun evening for all. To sign up to bring a dish for the potluck dinner go to www.perfectpotluck.com. Doors open at 5:00 p.m. for set up. We plan to start eating at 6:00 p.m.

The gift exchange will start around 7:00 p.m. The gag gift should be as cheap as possible—something from a garage sale or thrift store will be fine. After the gifts are opened we will vote on the most bizarre / weird / strange / obscene or funny gift.

Afterwards we might engage in something fun like dancing or shooting fireworks over the graveyard. If anyone wants to volunteer as a D.J. and bring some dancing music please let Mark Banks know. FFRF & AFS will provide coffee, soft drinks, plates, cups & cutlery.

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.



Jan 13: TBA

Feb 10: TBA

Mar 10: TBA

Apr 14: Scott O. Lilienfeld, PhD - "Intellectual Humility: Research, Theory, and Implications for Skepticism"

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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\$20 for low income.

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

Sustaining Membership is \$100.

Life Membership is \$1000.

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Send E-mail to
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American Atheists Statement on Acting Attorney General's Views on Religious Tests for Judges

www.atheists.org



During a panel discussion between Iowa candidates for Senate in 2014, Acting Attorney General **Matthew Whitaker** explained his preference for federal judges that have a “biblical view of justice” and that he would look for judges who were “people of faith.” He went on to say that if judges have a “secular worldview,” he would be “very concerned about how they judge.”

In response to these comments, American Atheists president **Nick Fish** released the following statement:

“Matthew Whitaker’s utter disdain for the Constitution should immediately disqualify him from serving in government, never mind as the person entrusted with enforcement of our laws. The Trump administration continues its tradition of finding the most rabidly anti-equality, anti-secularism, anti-LGBTQ, anti-woman supplicant to the Religious Right to install as Attorney General. Jeff Sessions was unquestionably one of the worst Attorneys General our nation has ever seen, and Whitaker will certainly reach or exceed that high bar.”

Religious bigotry fuels growing “child welfare crisis”

ffrf.org

A **recently published report** reaffirms The Freedom From Religion Foundation’s opposition to religious discrimination in adoption and foster care.

The Center for American Progress, Voice for Adoption, and the North American Council on Adoptable Children have published a new report confirming that religious exemption laws allowing agencies to deny prospective adoptive or foster parents on the basis of their sexuality is worsening the current “child welfare crisis.”

There were **more than 440,000 children in foster care in the United States in 2017**, according to the Department of Health and Human Services. Some 50,000 of these children will be adopted every year through the child welfare system, while another 20,000 will “age out” of the system before being adopted.

Currently, at least 10 states have laws in place that allow religiously affiliated adoption and foster care agencies to discriminate against LGBTQ prospective parents, despite evidence (and common sense) suggesting that children raised in same-sex households are just as emotionally and physically healthy as those raised by straight couples.

Handing religious groups a ticket to discriminate against LGBTQ families seeking adoption or foster care is morally reprehensible and inimical to the well-being of the hundreds of thousands of children currently in the foster care system.

“Turning away LGBTQ prospective parents by asserting a religious exemption or taking advantage of a lack of state nondiscrimination law is a violation of this group’s rights,” the report states. “It also negatively affects the already strained child welfare system, ultimately harming the children in its care.”

Additionally, turning away LGBTQ parents who are looking to adopt or foster is fiscally irresponsible and puts further financial burden on an already struggling taxpayer-funded system.

“Each child adopted from foster care, even with adoption assistance support, reduces state and federal spending by almost \$29,000 annually when compared with those children who remain in foster care,” the report states. “If the child welfare system finds adoptive families for just 1,000 10-year-old children who would otherwise have aged out of foster care at 18, a rough estimate suggests it would save \$230 million of taxpayer money over eight years.”



Ultimately, the health and care of a child should be the only factor that a child welfare agency and its employees take into consideration — not advancing the bigoted agendas of state contractors promoting discriminatory dogma at the expense of children in need.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation is a national nonprofit organization with more than 32,000 members and several chapters across the country, including members in every state. FFRF’s purposes are to protect the constitutional principle of separation between church and state, and to educate the public on matters relating to nontheism.

Let's Honor The Memory Of World War I Veterans With A Proper Memorial

By Rob Boston/Wall of Separation Blog

www.au.org

The U.S. Supreme Court this term will hear an important case challenging the display of a 40-foot-tall cross on state-owned land in Bladensburg, Md. The structure was erected in 1925 to honor residents of Prince George's County who fought in World War I. In 1985, it was rededicated to honor all veterans of that conflict.

As Americans United has pointed out many times, a cross, as the predominant symbol of Christianity, can't represent all veterans. Crosses are fine for private memorials, but when a sectarian symbol like the Bladensburg Cross is erected and maintained by the government, it sends the message that Christianity has some sort of special relationship with the state. It also excludes veterans who aren't Christian.



I live in Maryland in the county adjacent to Prince George's, so a few days ago I decided to visit the cross. I was curious to see the site. It was not what I expected.

As I had read, the cross is highly visible, sitting at the intersection of several busy highways. The small plot of land that houses the cross contains no other memorials.

I was immediately struck by the poor shape of the cross. Although it has been owned by the state of Maryland since 1956, the cross has obviously not been well maintained. (The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission has admitted as much, calling the structure a "public eyesore.") At the top of the cross, there's a cap of some sort with struts wrapped around the arms.

I'm sure the cross looked much nicer in 1925. In 2018, it just looks sad. I

walked away thinking about men like my grandfather, who fought in the trenches of France during the war. I couldn't help but conclude that we can do better for our deceased Great War veterans than this.

The Bladensburg Cross is indicative of the way this country has tended to overlook World War I veterans. They lack a proper memorial and because of that, some people have tried to press crosses into that service. In 2010, the Supreme Court handed down a ruling in a case concerning a cross in the Mojave Desert that was often described as a World War I memorial. It was certainly nothing special, consisting of two metal pipes painted white. The structure, which now sits on private property, is not exactly accessible and again, as a Christian symbol, it fails to honor all veterans.

Plans are under way to create a national World War I memorial in Washington, D.C. Rather than fight over the crumbling Bladensburg Cross, I wish government officials in Maryland and elsewhere would focus their energies on creating a proper secular memorial in the nation's capital, one that does something the structure in Bladensburg can never do: honor *all* of the men and women who gave their lives during the Great War.

The Johnson Amendment Is Under Attack – Again.

By Rob Boston/Wall of Separation Blog

www.au.org

The 115th Congress is winding down, but before it does, it looks like we're going to have to fend off an 11th-hour attack on the [Johnson Amendment](#).

A handful of House Republicans have for years been trying to undermine the amendment, a federal law from 1954 that bars houses of worship and other tax-exempt non-profits from intervening in elections by endorsing or opposing candidates for public office. They accelerated their efforts after **President Donald Trump** took office, perhaps emboldened by Trump's February 2017 **vow to "get rid of and totally destroy"** the Johnson Amendment.

These legislators have repeatedly promoted efforts in Congress to repeal or weaken the provision. Now, they're about to give it one more shot, attempting to push language undercutting the Johnson Amendment in a must-pass spending bill to fund the operations of the federal government. This provision would make it nearly

impossible to enforce violations of the law by houses of worship by weighing the IRS down with various onerous bureaucratic requirements.

AU has blocked these efforts before, and we're going to do our best to do it again. But our opponents are determined. They know this will become much harder to do come January. U.S. Rep. **John Culberson** (R-Texas), one of the chief proponents of gutting the Johnson Amendment, lost his seat in November, and once Democrats are in charge of the House, we hope that anti-Johnson Amendment proposals won't get as much traction in that body.

The American people are clear: They don't want to see their houses of worship politicized – [polls on this issue](#) aren't even close. The vast majority of U.S. faith leaders agree. That's why more than 4,500 religious leaders from across the theological spectrum have [signed a joint letter](#) to Congress telling its leaders to leave the Johnson Amendment alone.

Unfortunately, numbers like that mean nothing to Religious Right groups or the politicians who do their bidding. It's why it's crucial that we stop this latest effort to open the floodgates for church-based partisan politicking. We need your help. [Please let your representative and senators](#) know that you support the Johnson Amendment and don't want to see any language weakening the law added to the spending bill.

In Case You Have Forgotten, The Religious Right Still Hates Public Schools

By Rob Boston/Wall of Separation Blog

www.au.org

Periodically, Religious Right groups issue calls for upstanding Americans to pull their children out of public schools. Over the years, entire organizations have sprung up to promote the idea.

Few have had staying power, but the Religious Right keeps at it. The latest anti-public school screed comes from **Cathy Ruse**, identified as

them thinking. (Years earlier, he had also challenged a science teacher in his district who was pushing creationism.) Maybe the teacher went over the top, but I should note that he had **plenty of defenders** – and remember, this was an advanced placement course designed to prepare students for college, where these types of freewheeling classroom discussions are common. The matter went to court, where the teacher was cleared.

Yikes! Howard Zinn: Ruse asserts that public school history teachers are steeped in Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States*, which she calls "a primer for hating America." Of course, she presents no evidence that history teachers are relying on Zinn; I suspect most of them are using a state-mandated textbook. If you've not read Zinn's book – and I have – it's an attempt to tell American history through the eyes of people who weren't treated so well – Native Americans, African Americans and women. If Zinn's telling comes off as a little bit harsh, it's probably because our nation often did bad things to those people, like steal their land, kill them, enslave them and deny their basic rights. It's a painful past, and Zinn forces us to face it. An accurate rendering of history means that we must not be afraid to own our mistake. Perhaps we can even learn from them.



Funny thing about the Religious Right's "get-your-kids-out-of-those-godless-socialistic-government-schools" movement: It's a flop. I started hearing it

senior fellow and director of human dignity at the Family Research Council (FRC). Ruse, who insists on calling public schools "government schools" (because in Rightwingland, everything the government does is bad), **marshals three lines of attack** against public schools. None is persuasive.

They are:

Some public schools are treating transgender kids decently: Public schools are charged with the task of treating everyone who comes through the door equally. This means that kids from the LGBTQ community have the right to attend these institutions with their dignity intact. To Ruse, this is a propaganda campaign, and she claims that a cartoon "gender unicorn" is being used to brainwash children. Here's what's really going on: The FRC and groups like it spent years bashing gays and lesbians and working to deny them basic rights. They suffered a major setback when the U.S. Supreme Court upheld marriage equality in 2015. After that ruling, they seamlessly moved on to attacking the trans community, usually children. That's an example of their "family values."

Public schools hate Christianity: Ruse's main piece of evidence here is a nine-year-old case involving an advanced placement history teacher in California who said some provocative things about religion to stir up his students and get

in the late 1980s, and it hasn't caught on. Over that time, the number of children attending public schools has remained constant at 90 percent.

Americans United was founded in part to defend the public school system from those who would subvert it for their own ends. We stand for a system of education open to all, welcoming to all and protective of all. We stand for public schools that respect the religious and non-religious beliefs of all students while never engaging in anything like religious coercion or pressure. We stand for schools that let children know that they're not all the same – and that's all right.

Some would have our public schools become captive to a narrow, exclusionary and, frankly, mean-spirited version of Christianity that preaches division and fear. Our public schools will never be that way because the American people are better than that. Those who are unhappy are free to leave the system. I don't think many will follow them.



i really hate seeing children at gay rallies. in most cases, they don't understand what they're doing and what they're promoting. i think most children are pressured into going to gay rallies by their parents and, therefore, pressured into believing in gay marriage.

I really hate seeing children in churches. In most cases, they don't understand what they're doing and what they're promoting. I think most children are pressured into going to churches by their parents and, therefore, pressured into believing in a magic man in the sky who will send them to hell if they touch themselves or eat shrimp.

omg

Other Meetings of Interest in Metro Atlanta

The Atlanta Science Tavern has several meetings planned. Please check meetup page for more information. (www.meetup.com/AtlantaScienceTavern)

The SOS (Secular Organizations for Sobriety) meets on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. in Roswell. For more information, send an email to donnajgore@yahoo.com.

We Agnostics Atlanta meets on Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Galano Club, 585 Dutch Valley Rd NE, Atlanta, GA 30324. Clubhouse phone number: (404) 881-9188. This is similar to Alcoholics Anonymous group.

Marietta Skeptic/Humanist Meetup has various get-togethers and discussion groups. Several upcoming events. (www.meetup.com/Marietta-Atheists-Meetup)

The Peachtree City Humanists participate in social and educational activities such as dinners, lunches, coffees, outdoor recreation, discussion groups, and book clubs with topics that include science, psychology, philosophy. (www.meetup.com/Peachtree-City-Humanists-PTCH)

The Southern Crescent Freethinkers sponsor *Navigators*, *Owl & Ibis: A Confluence of Minds*, and meet for dinner, etc. Several upcoming events each month. (www.meetup.com/Southern-Crescent-Freethinkers)

Recovery from Religion - Morrow Chapter meets monthly at Barnes & Noble Booksellers Southlake, 1939 Mount Zion Road, Morrow, GA. Join the Meetup group for more information. There is no proselytizing of any kind allowed at these meetings. For more information and resources, please visit www.recoveringfromreligion.org. (www.meetup.com/Recovering-From-Religion-Morrow-Chapter)

There will be a **meetup for Decatur Atheists** Sun, Dec 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. Nov 10 at UUCG, 12 Bethesda Church Rd, Lawrenceville. It's that time again! December is the time for GUST's regular Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Solstice, Festivus Whatever We Want holiday party. Bring a dish or drink to share and plan to socialize. Also bring a small gift as there are plans to do a white elephant (dirty Santa) gift exchange. (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)

Freedom From Religion Foundation of Georgia and **AFS** will celebrate Festivus/Saturnalia, at Atlanta Freethought Hall from 5-9 pm on Sat. Dec. 22. See page 1. (www.ffrfga.org - email is ffrfoga@gmail.com)

Sunday Assembly Atlanta's upcoming assembly will be held on Sun. Dec. 16, 5:30 pm at First Existentialist Congregation, 470 Candler Park Dr NE, Atlanta. For a change of pace, this is an mostly music assembly with secular holiday tunes and other fun upbeat rock songs and karaoke!

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)

Black Nonbelievers Please join BN for the end of year meeting! They will discuss the highlights of 2018, and what to look forward to in the new year. As always, there will be refreshments provided and merchandise for sale. (www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers)

There will be a **meetup for Atlanta Atheists** Sun, Dec 23, 4 pm, 5 Seasons Brewing, 5600 Roswell Rd, Prado Shopping Center, Sandy Springs. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

Ethical Humanists of Atlanta: Next meeting is Sun, Dec. 23 12:30-2 pm at Manuel's Tavern, 603 N. Highland Ave, Atlanta. "Our shared task is to live decently, compassionately, and caringly in the world we inhabit." Come join the conversation. Ethical living is the philosophy of making

decisions for daily life which take into account ethics and moral values, particularly with regard to consumerism, sustainability, environmentalism, wildlife and animal welfare.

Any recently made decision have you questioning its ethical or moral value? Maybe you're teetering or avoiding making a choice due to uncertainty. There's no guarantee questions will be answered, nor an action plan fully evolved, but trust good conversation to occur. Come and let's learn from one another; building forward one step at a time. (www.meetup.com/Ethical-Humanists-of-Atlanta)

Atlanta Skeptics has "Drinking Sceptically" on the first Friday of each month at 7 pm. 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 is going into their 21st year and 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)

Don't laugh at him Bob.. You still believe in God.



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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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 _____

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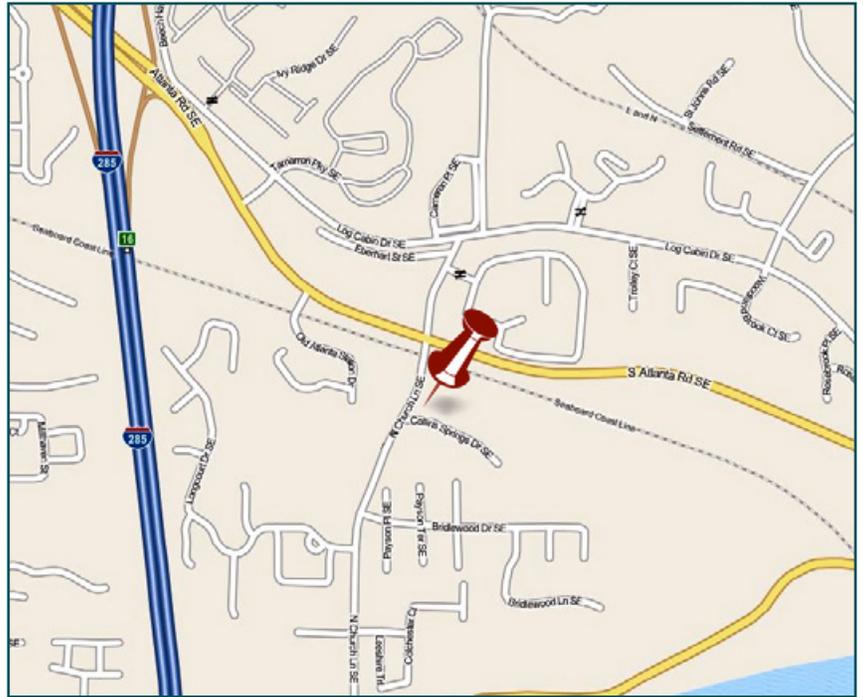
*Dare To Think
For Yourself!*



**December 9th meeting
1:00 at AF Hall
4775 N. Church Lane SE
Atlanta, GA 30339**

Nick Fish

ALSO POTLUCK LUNCH!



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IN TIME FOR DECEMBER 9 AND RENEW YOUR DUES FOR 2019.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

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Atlanta Freethought Society
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