

December AFS Meeting

Dale McGowan: “How Two-Speed Evolution Has Broken Our Species...and How We Could Fix It”



Dale McGowan

The current culture war isn't a bump in the road to an enlightened future — it's the inevitable outcome of

two-speed evolution, and it will only get worse. There's a way out of the mess...but do we have the courage?

After double-majoring in evolutionary anthropology and music at UC Berkeley, **Dale McGowan** pursued a career as a conductor, composer, and professor of music, including a current gig at Oglethorpe University. He has written and edited 10 books including *Atheism For Dummies*, *Parenting Beyond Belief*, and *Sharing Reality* and founded **Foundation Beyond Belief**, the world's largest humanist charitable organization. He was named **Harvard Humanist of the Year** in 2008 for his work in nonreligious parent education. Dale currently hosts three podcasts: *Raising Freethinkers*, *How Music Does That*, and *The Lucky Ones*. He lives in Alpharetta.

2020 Board Elections

Paid members voting for board members need to have ballots turned in by the December 8th meeting or bring them along to the meeting.

Paying your 2020 dues at this time will also be much appreciated! Thank you so much!

The December Potluck

Before the Dec 8th 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 side dish**
- H-P: Bring a main dish**
- Q-Z: Bring a dessert**

AFS will provide drinks, plates and silverware.

Freedom From Religion Foundation and Atlanta Freethought Society will celebrate the Winter Solstice on Sat, Dec 21, 5-8 pm at AFHall. The ancient Romans celebrated the god of Saturn by having a banquet, exchanging gifts, and reversing social norms. Festus includes a banquet, gag gift exchange, airing of grievances, feats of strength, Festus miracles and other fun stuff.

Please join us for a delightful evening for all.

For the pot luck dinner let's forget the traditional fare—some possible alternatives:

- Pastafarian: lasagna, spaghetti, or pizza.
- BBQ, Chili, Tacos, hot dogs, hamburgers.
- Most of our ancestors lived near water: how about some sea food?
- And let's not forget deserts.
- Drinks: some home brew wine and spirits or maybe some mead?

Doors open at 5 PM for set up. We plan to start eating at 6 PM. The gift exchange will start around 7 PM. The gag gift should be as cheap as possible—something from a garage sale, thrift store or something you want to “re-gift” 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 bring some dancing music please let us know. FFRF/AFS will provide coffee, soft drinks, hot chocolate, plates, cups, and cutlery.

Calendar

Dec 8	Potluck	12:00 p.m.
Dec 8	AFS General Meeting	1:00 p.m.
Dec 21	FFRF Solstice Party	5:00 p.m.
Jan 12	AFS Board Meeting	11:00 a.m.
Jan 12	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](https://www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society)

Programs and Speakers

All programs are on the second Sunday of each month at AF Hall, 4775 N. Church Lane SE, Atlanta, GA, 30339 unless otherwise noted. Programs start at 1:00 PM, but feel free to arrive at 12:00 for socializing. Visitors are always welcome.

The views and opinions expressed by speakers at AFS do not necessarily reflect those of AFS members or its policy.



Dec 8: Dale McGowan

Jan 12: Warren Alan Tidwell

Feb 9: Christopher Cameron on Black Freethinkers

Mar 8: Ben Burgis

AFS Email List

The AFS Announcements email list provides subscribers with reminders and updates on AFS activities. Send an email to AFS-Announce-subscribe@yahoogroups.com to subscribe. The AFS Forum email list is a place for discussions of freethought, atheism, agnosticism, church-state separation and religion. To subscribe to this list, send an email to AFSForum-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. The AFS Facebook page is at facebook.com/AtlantaFreethought. For calendar information on AFS activities, please join the [Meetup group](#). The AFS website is www.atlantafreethought.org. To keep up to date on the Atlanta Freethought Society calendar of upcoming events, please join our Meetup group: meetup.com/Atlanta-Freethought-Society.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Atlanta Freethought News

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\$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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See AFS events and member views at:
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Once Upon a Time in a Land Not So Far Away: Georgia's Tugaloo State Park, Bibles, Steve & Phillip Wells, Perry Mitchell & Pam Woodley, & a Fine Thanksgiving Surprise (Or, "What We Did for Thanksgiving")

By Ed Buckner

In April 2013 the **Buckners** went to a Georgia State Park on an impromptu visit to celebrate **Michael's** 43rd

birthday; we found there nine, yes, 9!, Gideons Bibles in the three bedrooms of the cabin we rented. Complaints led, in fairly short order, to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources ordering all the bibles removed from state park lodging across the state, only to be countermanded in even shorter order by a directive from the Governor and Georgia Attorney General to leave those sacred tomes alone, by god. Though well okay, since there's a First Amendment and all, other books could also be donated and placed in state park cabins, if rules then being worked out were carefully followed. (No rules had ever been needed regarding the Gideons propaganda, of course.)

Lots of hoopla and publicity followed, as well as donations of books, visits to place said books in state parks, and the like. Easily the most generous and impressive donation of books were the fifteen cases (!) of leather-bound, deluxe, *Skeptic's Annotated Bibles* that **Steve** (annotator) **Wells** and his son **Philip** (editor and publisher) **Wells** gave for the effort. These are collectible books, rich with the full text of the entire King James Version of the Bible, with scholarly, comprehensive, wise annotations, a sewn-in ribbon, and serious heft, physical and intellectual. I feared that they might all be wasted, as we certainly did not have (or anticipate having) any effective means of policing the use—or abuse—of these fine books, but the Wells gave anyway. And they came all the way from Moscow* to Georgia at one point to support our efforts.



Our hope, apparently realized in part, was that the publicity around all this would help us educate Georgians and travelers alike that it is unreasonable and dangerous to allow state government to have a role in religious indoctrination, even if good books got mostly wasted protesting against the "Good Book."

Fast forward six and a half years to ten or twelve days ago—to Thanksgiving weekend 2019. Again we managed to persuade **Michael** to go with us to a state park to celebrate (we see him fairly often, but never enough to suit us). We chose a park I didn't remember knowing about before—Tugaloo State Park, on Lake Hartwell near the South Carolina state line. I never thought about the bibles in cabins stuff until we arrived and **Michael** came out of his bedroom, grinning. In the bedroom we chose, arbitrarily, was the usual Gideons, so we joined **Michael's** delight at what he'd discovered in his: A *Skeptic's Annotated Bible*, in good shape, labeled as being for #10 (our cabin) but also including the label we had applied, giving Governor **Nathan Deal** and Attorney General **Sam Olens** credit for its presence (see photo for full text of label on the title page).

Imagine someone idly leafing through the Gideons, confused or maybe even appalled at all the sexist, pornographic, absurd, violent, anti-scientific

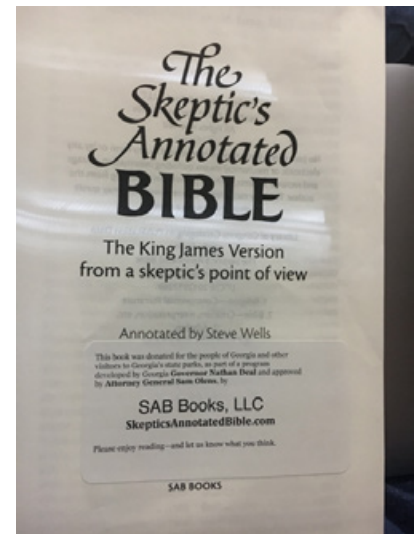
material it contains. Then imagine that person opens *Skeptic's Annotated Bible* (SAB) to the same parts of SAB as earlier consulted in Gideons, to learn that indeed *Song of Solomon* is a pornographic poem or that the *Book of Ezekiel* is mostly truly filthy stuff or that there are a few good bits (even in Ezekiel there are three verses that qualify), some honest bits, some hilarious (mostly unintentionally) verses, many contradictory and/or unscientific ideas, etc. Wells details all this effectively, and his book is well worth reading and owning (great reference book and collectible).

So, we had a great start to our Thanksgiving break, mostly thanks to Steve and Philip Wells, and we urge you to buy their fine book.

But how did that book even get there? Turns out we have two more people to be thankful to (and that my memory isn't what it used to be). In late 2014, AFS members **Perry Mitchell** and his wife **Pam Woodley** volunteered to help with the books-to-counter-bibles-in-state-parks program. They're huge fans of Georgia's State Parks and had plans to welcome in 2015 at one, and they agreed to carry 40 copies of this wonderful book with them, to Tugaloo State Park. (There should have been one in each bedroom, but I'm actually thankful there was even one in the cabin at all five years along. Maybe someone was so happy about finding SAB that they "borrowed" a copy, or maybe park management is holding back half the books in case someone borrows or mutilates a copy, or.... Gotta think positive, right?)

Thanks, Steve, Philip, Perry, and Pam.

*Moscow, Idaho, of course



Florida school district should stop taking part in religious football event, FFRF insists

ffrf.org

The Flagler County school system is committing a major foul in being a part of an annual religion-suffused football event, [contends the Freedom From Religion Foundation in a letter of complaint to the district.](#)

Each year, Flagler County Public Schools participates in a religious event called Football Sunday at the Palm Coast United Methodist Church. Superintendent **James Tager**, Flagler Palm Coast High School Principal **Thom Russell** and Mantanzas High School Principal **Jeffery Reaves** all join in this religious worship service, and the event is attended by members of both schools' football teams, coaches, cheerleaders and the band (which performs there).

Flagler Palm Coast High School head football coach **Travis Roland** said at last year's event:

"I was raised in a Christian household and we can't preach religion in high school, but this opportunity to invite them to come to church gives them the opportunity to hear the word. As a Christian man, I've done my job by at least giving them the open invitation."

It is illegal for school administrators and coaches to organize or participate in religious activities with their students, including team visits to a church for a religious sermon, FFRF points out. School officials may not use their position as public school employees to give religious leaders unique access to students.

"It is well settled that public schools may not advance or promote religion," FFRF Staff Attorney **Chris Line** writes to the school district's legal counsel. "Courts have consistently held that it is illegal for a public school to organize, sponsor or lead religious activities, including at public high school athletic events. Organization of and/or participation in a team visit to a church for a religious sermon are also clearly prohibited."

The promotion of religious views by school staff turns any nonbelieving and non-Christian students into outsiders at their own school, FFRF emphasizes. This is especially problematic in the context of athletics, given the pressure players feel to conform to coaches' expectations so as to not lose favor with the coaches or hurt their playing time.

And the U.S. Constitution's prohibition against school-sponsored religious exercise cannot be overcome by claiming that such activities are "voluntary." As the Supreme Court said in *Engel v. Vitale* (1962), "Neither the fact that the prayer may be denominationally neutral nor the fact that its observance on the part of students is voluntary can serve to free it from the limitations of the Establishment Clause." It also makes no difference if the school requires parents to opt-in to religious practices.

"The combination of football and religion in public schools is insidious and discriminatory," says FFRF Co-President **Annie Laurie Gaylor**. "A public school system can't be permitted to continue playing a role in this devotional event."

FFRF is requesting that the district immediately investigate and take action to ensure that school administrators and coaches not organize or participate in such events.

Department of Education proposed data collection rules may put atheist students at risk

atheist.org

On Nov. 21, in order to avoid an increase in anti-atheist bullying, American Atheists offered improvements to the U.S. Department of Education's proposal to collect religious bullying data.

According to the proposal, the **Trump** Administration would force school staff to collect data on the victim's apparent religion and report the number of incidents of bullying and harassment associated with each religion. However, with this data collection method, schools would routinely consider, investigate, and record students' religion—endangering student privacy and safety.

"When a student's religion or lack thereof is disclosed to other students and school staff, the student may be bullied, harassed, or face discrimination for their worldview," said **Alison Gill**, American Atheists' Vice President for Legal and Policy.

"Sadly many Americans are deeply biased against atheists and religious minorities and likely will not treat them fairly," she added. "Teachers may discriminate against students with contrasting religious beliefs by grading the students differently, offering less help to the students, or failing to include the students in opportunities and activities."

Instead of a staff-driven data collection method, American Atheists recommended anonymous student self-reporting to improve reliability and ensure privacy.

"Anonymous self-reporting would be a more workable solution because atheist and religious minority students who are bullied would be better positioned to identify the cause of the bullying than school faculty," added Gill. "This method of data collection would give bullied students control over their privacy and security and allow them to decide whether or not to report the religious aspect of the bullying."

In addition to employing anonymous self-reporting, American Atheists suggests creating additional privacy safeguards and providing resources for training to local educational agencies.

Let's Not Forget The Human Cost Of Trump's Denial Of Care Rule

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

As we've [noted on this blog](#) several times, Americans United is in court defending patients from the Trump administration's reckless Denial of Care Rule in court. This dangerous directive would invite anyone who works in the health care field, from an intake clerk at a hospital to an EMT in an ambulance, to cite their religious beliefs to deny services to others. It would place the health care of millions of Americans at risk.

The rule, which was promulgated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), was scheduled to go into effect Nov. 22. Thanks to legal action by Americans United and other groups, [that didn't happen](#). Three federal courts have blocked the rule.

But there was another development last week that shouldn't be overlooked: A federal judge in Washington state, who had previously ruled from the bench that the Denial of Care Rule must be invalidated, issued a written opinion explaining why the rule must fail.

U.S. District Judge **Stanley A. Bastian's** written opinion is notable because he does something the other judges who have heard this matter haven't done: He goes into detail about the real harm to real people this rule would cause.

"It seems elementary that increasing the number of medical professionals who would deny care based on religious or moral objections would not increase access to care; instead, access to care will deteriorate, especially for those individuals in vulnerable populations who will be the target of religious or moral objections," observed Bastian.

Bastian also discussed how the rule would disproportionately harm members of vulnerable populations.

"[T]he Court agrees with Plaintiff's position that the Rule is arbitrary and capricious because HHS disregarded the comments and evidence showing the Rule would severely and disproportionately harm certain vulnerable populations, including women; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people (LGBT individuals); individuals with disabilities; and people living in rural areas," wrote Bastian. "What is particularly glaring is HHS's willingness to rely on anecdotes of bias and animus in the health care sector against individuals with religious beliefs and moral convictions ... but disregarding 'anecdotal accounts of discrimination by LGBT' people, citing the lack of suitable data for estimating the impact of the rule. HHS's 'internally inconsistent' treatment of the anecdotal evidence – relying upon it when it supports the rule but dismissing it when it does not

– renders the rulemaking process arbitrary and capricious."

Bastian also added an important detail: The Denial of Care Rule violates the basic tenets of medical ethics.

"[T]he Rule is arbitrary and capricious because HHS failed to conduct a reasoned analysis of the requirements of basic medical ethics in adopting the Rule," he wrote. "HHS failed to consider that the Rule's new statutory definitions, which would allow an employee to refuse to participate in life-saving treatment without notice and permits health care entities and providers to withhold basic information from patients, would contravene medical ethics and deprive patients of the ability to provide informed consent."

Arguments made in a court of law are sometimes difficult for the layperson to grasp. That's why Americans United, as it has pursued this litigation, has also used [social media](#), [press statements](#) and [Church & State articles](#) to make it clear what's at stake: You or someone you love could be denied vital medical care because of a stranger's religious beliefs.

That's not right, and [with your help](#), Americans United will continue to fight the misguided Denial of Care Rule in court. We'll also explain to the American people exactly what's at stake – nothing less than millions of Americas' ability to access safe health care untainted by religious discrimination.



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 Sunday Seculars at Starbucks, Peachtree East Shopping Center Sun mornings 10-12 (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)

Black Nonbelievers' general meeting is Sun, Dec 15, 3-5 at The Bakery at 825 Warner St SW, Atlanta. The speaker is **Chris Cameron**, author of the book *Black Freethinkers*. www.meetup.com/Black-Nonbelievers

There will be a **meetup for Decatur Atheists** Sun, Dec 8, 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, Dec 9 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. Check

website for more info. (www.atlantaastronomy.org)

Ethical Humanists of Atlanta: Mixed group documentary night is Fri, Dec 13, 6:45-10pm at Unitarian Universalist Northwest Congregation, 1025 Mt. Vernon Hwy Sandy Springs. The film that will be shown is "Won't You Be My Neighbor" about the life and legacy of Fred Rogers and "Mr. Rogers Neighborhood". (www.meetup.com/Ethical-Humanists-of-Atlanta)

FFRF and AFS Saturnalia/Festivus Potluck and Gift Exchange Party is Sat, Dec 21, 5-8 pm, AF Hall. See page 1 for more information. (www.meetup.com/Freedom-From-Religion-Foundation-of-Georgia)

Sunday Assembly Atlanta's upcoming assembly is on Sun, Dec 15, 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)

Satanic Temple Atlanta has "Donatin' with Satan" on Fri, Dec 20 at The Highlander, 931 Monroe Dr Atlanta from

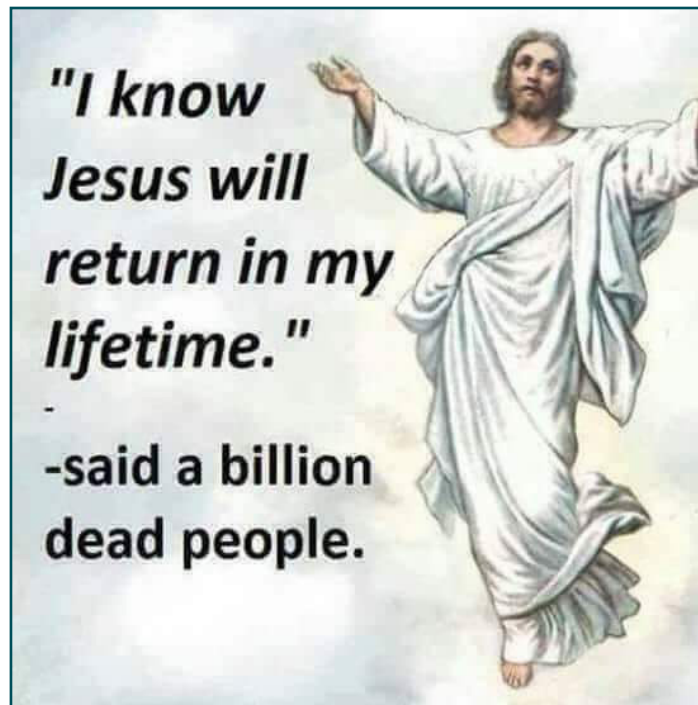
8 pm - 2 am. **Valkyrie and the Casket Creatures** will play rock and roll. **Captain & Maybelle** will host and perform their death defying acts. This is a benefit for **Feminist Women's Health Center**. \$10 cover. (www.facebook.com/TSTATL/)

Atlanta Atheists Monthly Meetup is Sun, Dec 22, 4 pm, Keegan's Irish Pub, 4687 S Atlanta St #224, Smyrna. (www.meetup.com/Atlanta-Atheists)

Atlanta Skeptics 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/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. Meetings for book discussion, philosophy, a classic film course, Ancient Greek language classes, and other events. (www.fellowshipofreason.com)



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!

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Life Member \$1000 _____ Email: _____

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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 _____

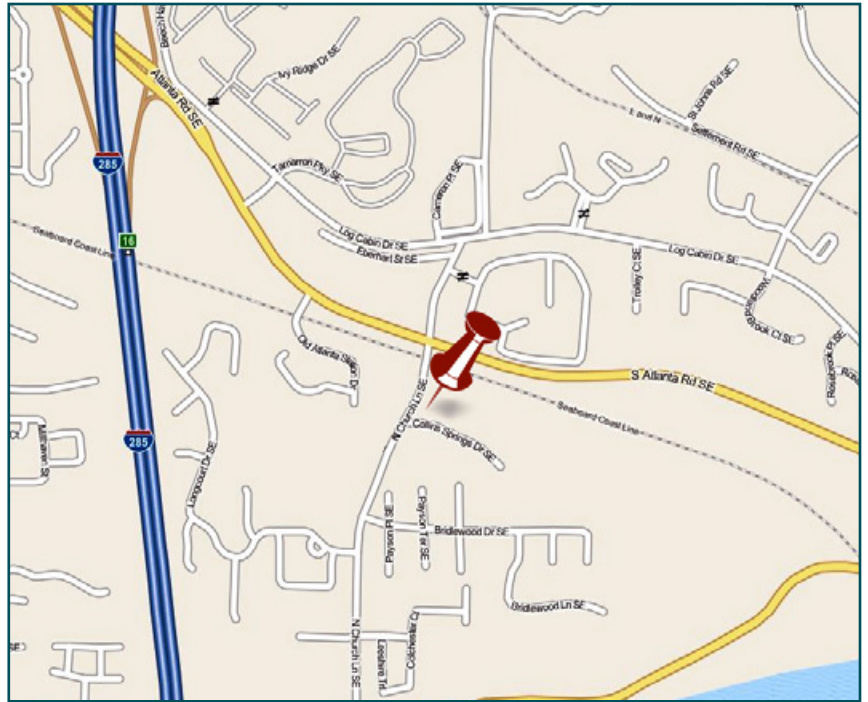
*Dare To Think
For Yourself!*



**December 8th meeting
1:00 at AF Hall
4775 N. Church Lane SE
Atlanta, GA 30339**

Dale McGowan

ALSO POTLUCK LUNCH!



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IN TIME FOR DECEMBER 8 AND RENEW YOUR DUES FOR 2020.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!**

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