

# The Existentialist

Newsletter of the First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta

470 Candler Park Drive, N.E., Atlanta, GA 30307 • Founded in 1976 •

A Philosophically Based Spiritual Community

Dedicated to Human Liberation

and Founded on Existentialist and Feminist Principles •

## Garden at First E

Winter is almost over--although we had a few snow flurries last week--and it's time to think about starting a garden. At First E, we are lucky to have Fred Conrad, one of our newer members and a master gardener. Fred will be overseeing our garden this year. Fred leads the Community Gardens Project of the Atlanta Community Food Bank, and in his role as Community Garden Coordinator, he and his volunteers support about 100 neighborhood community food gardens across metro Atlanta.

On Tuesday, March 5. Volunteers from Vanderbilt University Alternative spring Break helped Fred and First E volunteers start our the garden. The Atlanta Community Food Bank provided tools, instruction, and refreshments. So contact Fred at [fred.conrad@yahoo.com](mailto:fred.conrad@yahoo.com) if you would like to have a plot, or if you simply would like to work in the dirt for a few hours.

~

## May You Live in Interesting Times....

By Libby Ware

Maybe you've heard this curse—often given Chinese origins. While there is no proof that it does come from China, the "curse" indicates that times of tranquility are less interesting and therefore, more desirable. Growing up in the 1960's, I don't think there has been a time in my life that wasn't interesting, both nationally, internationally, and personally. Nonetheless, this is the name and focus of



*Fred Conrad, Master Gardener, at the site of First E's Community Garden*

the UUA Midsouth Region's Conference that takes place Friday, April 26, and Saturday, April 27, at UUCA (Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta) on Cliff Valley Way. Congregational funds are available for registration, so please consider joining the Midsouth Regional Conference. Having the conference in Atlanta increases our chance for participation in influencing the direction the regional UUA can take. As Board Chair, I'd like to see a delegation of us from First E.

From the registration form: "There is much to contemplate, learn and decide! Transformation and growth is happening throughout our movement. We are more aligned now than ever before. As we move forward we want to be better equipped to help work more effectively, foster more vibrancy in our congregations and support excellence in lay leadership. Those are tall challenges but progress is being made.... Learn what's been

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**First Existentialist  
Congregation of  
Atlanta**

470 Candler Park Drive,  
NE  
Atlanta, Georgia 30307  
404-378-5570  
www.firstexistentialist.org

All Are Welcome  
Join us in our  
Celebrations of Life on  
Sundays at 11:00 a.m.  
Children's Program  
during Sunday services

Fellowship Minister:  
Marsha Mitchiner,  
revm@bellsouth.net  
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*We are a philosophically based  
spiritual community  
dedicated to  
human liberation  
and founded on existentialist  
and feminist principles.*



## **Notes From the Board**

*By Libby Ware, Board Chair*

**The Board** met on Monday, March 4, 2013, at 7:00 pm. At the February board meeting, Rhonda Wildman asked that we contact organizations involved in spousal violence regarding our Security Policy. Phyllis reported that she spoke to three organizations: Atlanta Victim Assistance, Men Stopping Violence, and the Women's Resource Center. Men Stopping Violence was most helpful and would like to have a larger conversation with the congregation. We passed their suggestion on to the Program Guild. The Women's Resource Center said that it sounds like we have things in place and suggested that there be a place where children can be locked safely in case of an intruder. AtlantaVictim Assistance said they did not know how to help us.

There are several meetings for the Special Use Permit planned. (Since the meeting our application has been approved by The Candler Park Neighborhood Organization and the Neighborhood Planning Unit.)

Marsha will be soliciting volunteers for the 420 Fest food booth which will take place April 19, 20, and 21. She will have a schedule shortly.

Rick told us about New Morning, a preschool program, that is interested in renting the downstairs. They requested several changes to the downstairs area and said they prefer to not share the space with an after-school program. Since Cheri is planning to resume her after-school program once the Special Use Permit is approved, Rick is going to ask New Morning if they are open to sharing the space.

We approved two fundraising ideas: (1) Bill and Eli Perras, folksingers, who will split proceeds from ticket prices with us and we can sell food and drinks [June 29]. (2) Scott Hooker, Janna Nelson, and their son David Nelson-Hooker are raising funds for a new keyboard for Scott so he can give his old one to David. We are only asking \$50 to pay for utilities [June 22].

Retreat at the Mountain—Karla proposed that it be all about fun. Karla, Phyllis, Marsha and Libby will plan activities and ask for ideas.

Marsha has been talking to the director of Intown Ministries, an interfaith group. He suggested that our congregation choose a social justice program to work on as a congregation.

We approved Wilj's and Sandy's proposal to put a little library in front of the sanctuary. This is a free book exchange.

The next Board meeting will be on April 1. ~

*I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community, and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. Life is no 'brief candle' to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for a moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations. ~ George Bernard Shaw*

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## ***Guild Reports***

### ***Program Guild***

*by Charlene Ball*

**In April, we will have a lineup of familiar speakers.** Rev. Duncan Teague will return on April 7 with a talk entitled "Mentor-ship: We Might Need a Dose of it." (A poem by Duncan is on the Back Page this month.) On April 14, our Fellowship Minister, Rev. Marsha Mitchiner, will bring us thoughts on "What Spring Brings." Rev. Janna Nelson will speak on April 21 on "Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most." And on April 28, Kim Palmer will return to speak on "An Unexpected Spiritual Journey."

Don't forget the Facilitators' Training workshop on Saturday, April 6, at Linda's home in Decatur.

The Program Guild consists of Patton White (chair), Charlene Ball, Linda Bell, and Bill Laney. If you have considered facilitating, or if you would like to suggest a speaker or musician, contact us: Patton: [patton@beacondance.org](mailto:patton@beacondance.org); Charlene: [mcharleneball@yahoo.com](mailto:mcharleneball@yahoo.com); Linda: [lbell@gsu.edu](mailto:lbell@gsu.edu); and Bill: [bill339la@yahoo.com](mailto:bill339la@yahoo.com). We welcome your suggestions and input. ~

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## ***Community News & Activities***

--**The Program Guild will hold a facilitators' training workshop** on Saturday, April 6, at the home of Linda Bell. If you're interested in being a facilitator, if you are a facilitator already and would like to share experiences and pick up pointers, this is for you. Contact Linda for directions: [lbell@gsu.edu](mailto:lbell@gsu.edu).

--**Book discussion of The New Jim Crow** by Michelle Alexander will be April 14 after the service downstairs, focusing on Chapter 2. Please bring snacks to share.

--**The Annual UUA Assembly for the Mid-South District** will be held in Atlanta, April 26-27, at UUCA with the theme "May You Live in Interesting Times." If you would like to attend the conference, you can register at <http://fd8.formdesk.com/swuuc1/MSDAA>. First E will be helping UUCA with the potluck Friday night, April 26. Volunteers will be needed.

--**First E's Annual Congregational Meeting** will be April 28 after the service. We will elect the new Board for 2013. We will also have a Q&A as part of the meeting, and Board and Guild members will be available to answer questions. Send questions to Libby at [libbyware@gmail.com](mailto:libbyware@gmail.com).

--**We will have a congregational retreat May 3-5, 2013**, at The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center in the North Carolina Blue Ridge Mountains. This retreat will be all about fun and fellowship with some educational sessions planned by congregational members. You can go online and register at [www.mountaincenters.org](http://www.mountaincenters.org). Click on the on-line registration link. If you would like to present a workshop or educational session or have ideas about activities, contact Libby Ware, Phyllis Thakis, Karla Crawford, or Rev. Marsha Mitchiner.

--**Wednesday Night Suppers/Potlucks** at First E start around 6:30-7:00, plus ukuleles and instruction.

--**UUA Spring Training Sessions** will be at Tumbling Waters Retreat Center in Clayton, GA, April 4-7. Information available at [uua.org/Southern Region](http://uua.org/Southern Region).

--**Quicksilver Country Dancers** monthly on Sunday afternoon April 7 at 1340 McConnell Drive, Decatur 1:30-2:00 Orientation, Dance 2:00-5:00. \$6 admission, 14 and under dance free.

--**Contact Robert Stewart** with your news and activities: [rstewart@toyodausa.com](mailto:rstewart@toyodausa.com). ~

# Finance Report:

## March 2013

### General Operating Account Thru Mar. 31

Total Income 14,025

Total Expenses (16,130)

2013 Cash Flow (2,105)

### Fund Types & Names Account Balances on March 31

< unaudited >

General Operating Account 454

Designated Operating Funds 7,504

Gay Dellinger Estate Gift 597

Handicap Access Ramp 1,345

Lanier Clance Lighting 1,044

Leadership Development 295

Community Garden (443)

Building & Grounds 259

Woodland Sanctuary 919

Minister's Discretionary 682

Original 1st E History 68

Labyrinth & Garden 256

Social Justice 960

Attic Insulation Fund 1,250

Children's Program 122

Music Fund 150

Pat Hewatt Revolving Loan Fund 5,063

Special Use Permit Loan Fund (\$4.5K) 1,875

Total First E Funds 14,897

Old Stone Church History Project 3,860

*Third Friday Film Series  
No Film in April  
due to Sweetwater Festival in Candler Park  
Film Series Resumes in May*

**Wednesday Night Suppers  
and  
Ukeleles!  
each Week  
6:30 to 8:00/8:30 pm  
in the Sanctuary**  
*If you would like to provide a meal  
or bring a covered dish,  
please contact Elaine or Wilj  
of the Membership Guild.  
Ukelele Practice After Supper-Bring your ukelele*

***If you would like to become a member or  
friend of First E, please fill out a pledge form  
located on the sanctuary literature rack or  
download the form from our website at  
<http://www.firstexistentialist.org> .***

### ***Interesting Times - continued from page 1***

transpiring, what action still needs to be taken and participate in activities designed to help congregational representatives imagine and feel the positive impact of the changes coming our way."

Our friends at UUCA, led by Rev. Marti Keller, are providing the potluck dinner on Friday and they've invited us to help out both with cooking and setting up, etc. Marsha Mitchiner will be coordinating the volunteers for this dinner. Even if you can't attend the conference, this is a good opportunity to help out, be involved, and get to know some fellow Unitarians in fellowship.

To register go to: <http://fd8.formdesk.com/swuuc1/MSDAA> ~

***Please 'like' us on Facebook!  
[https://www.facebook.com/  
groups/43340332955/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/43340332955/)***

*Community cannot long feed on itself,  
it can only flourish with the coming  
of others from beyond: their unknown  
and undiscovered sisters and brothers.  
- Howard Thurman*

# Social Justice Corner

## ***Ageism/ Ableism: What Do Old and Disabled People Have in Common?*** by Eleanor Smith

We've probably all experienced how the **-ism words** such as classism, racism, and sexism can be misused to beat each other over the head. But we've also experienced these words being used productively to understand systemic forces and bring about positive change. When the word "homophobia" came into the culture in the 1970's, it helped move the focus from deviant individuals who needed to be cured to a destructive social structure that needed to be confronted. The same is true of the word "ableism," which refers to oppression and negative attitudes toward people with disabilities, be they children, middle-aged or old. I hope people will increasingly notice when ableism is occurring and name it as such.

Many non-disabled people develop disabilities as they age. In 2002 it was estimated that 18% of the total U.S. population had some type of disability; among those aged 65 or older, 52% had a disability. Yet old people and their organizations and younger disabled people and their organizations often work separately and are unaware of each others' work, even though many of the same issues affect both groups.

Not only the issues, but also the roots of ableism and ageism are remarkably the same. Oppressions operate in similar ways, and ageism and ableism are even more closely intertwined than most oppressions. For instance, both older people and disabled people are often devalued because our bodies or minds deviate from the norm by being—or are perceived as being—weaker and less functional. The physical attributes of both old people and people with disabilities of all ages are considered by many to be ugly or grotesque. So we all need to be liberated to see old or disabled bodies as beautiful in their own way.

*Like other people, old people and disabled people want to be seen and treated as individuals.*

A second similarity is that old people and disabled people are not as likely as others to be exploited through unfair labor practices such as speeded up work, grueling physical work, or inhumanely long hours. True, many in both groups work at paying jobs, and many more would if given an opportunity. Nevertheless, many lack the capacity to work in the manner required to produce a profit. For some, just maintaining themselves physically can take nearly all their time and energy. In fact, many people who are disabled or old or both cost the system money and are therefore at risk of being cast aside. So we all need to be liberated to believe that people are worthy of love and support apart from their economic value.

Ableism and ageism are forces that keep old people and disabled people from working together. Because of strong negative social messages such as those discussed above, it is not surprising that old people and young disabled people are not immune from prejudice against each other. Younger disabled people will hold ageist views inculcated by the culture unless they work to notice and challenge their ageism. I acknowledge that in my own youth I was ageist. Old people were mostly just not there for me; I tended to look right through them. Likewise, old people often hold ableist views unless they work to see and dislodge their ableism.

Like other people, old people and disabled people want to be seen and treated as individuals. A 20-year-old disabled person does not want people to mindlessly assume that she shares the memories, interests or preferences stereotypically ascribed to old people. An old person who is not disabled does not want us to mindlessly assume that he is disabled or frail if he is not, hard of hearing if she is not, and so on.

However, there are different ways to say "I'm disabled but not old" or "I'm old but not disabled." One way, through tone and content, conveys the positive attitude of insisting on being seen as one's unique self. "Hey, I'm old but I do happen to have any disabilities. Please don't treat me as if I did." The other way—through tone or content—conveys an ableist, demeaning attitude: "I'm old, but I'm not one of those pitiful disabled people."

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## **Guest Speaker Profile: Kim Palmer on April 14**

**Kim Palmer** is a third-year seminary student at Candler School of Theology, part of Emory University here in Atlanta. Ms. Palmer is seeking ordination as a Unitarian Universalist minister and is pursuing a vocational call to hospital chaplaincy. This new direction comes after earning a BS in chemical engineering and enjoying a successful, 20-year career in environmental consulting. Ms. Palmer is a non-theist who, after spending 30 years unchurched, finds liberal religion to be a comfortable setting in which to affirm both reason and spirit. ~

## **Annual Meeting to be held on April 28**

**We will have our annual congregational meeting on April 28, 2013**, after the service to share information and elect the Board of Directors for the 2013-2014 term (May to May). This is *your* annual meeting; and in the spirit of transparency, the Board and guilds would like to answer your questions. What do you want to know about? Eg., What is the board working on? What are guilds planning? What about the garden? What is the status of the ramp fund? What does belonging to the Unitarian Universalist Association do for us? What is the UUA GIFT program, and how does it affect First E? Send any questions to Libby Ware at [libbyware@gmail.com](mailto:libbyware@gmail.com), and we will answer at the meeting. ~

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### ***Ageism/Ableism - continued from page 5***

Both old and disabled people share at least 7 major issues: 1) the need for abundant, accessible public transportation; 2) the option to live in the community rather than being forced into institutions for lack of publicly supported assistance at home; 3) the assumption that we are sensual, sexual beings rather than the assumption that we are not; 4) sufficient economic support to live a decent life even if we are not able to work at paid jobs; 4) all new houses built with a basic, affordable level of disability access so that people of any age who develop disabilities are not cut off from social life and civic participation in the homes of friends and neighbors and so that we can remain in our own home if disability occurs; 5) access to information for the hearing or visually impaired; for example, interpreters

## **Congregational Retreat at The Mountain**

**We will have a congregational retreat on May 3-5, 2013**, at The Mountain Retreat and Learning Center, the UUA retreat in the North Carolina Blue Ridge mountains. This retreat will be all about fun and fellowship with some educational sessions planned by congregational members. You can go online and register at this website: [www.mountaincenters.org](http://www.mountaincenters.org), and click on the on-line registration link. If you would like to present a workshop or educational session or have ideas about activities, please contact Libby Ware, Phyllis Thakis, Karla Crawford or Marsha Mitchener.

The Mountain is a beautiful site with a lodge and cabins, walking trails, a labyrinth, convention center and dining hall with delicious meals. Bring games, craft supplies, writing supplies, puzzles, and any ideas of fun and fellowship. ~

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for hearing impaired people and Web access for people who are blind; 6) and, most important, access to life itself, not being encouraged to die and not being killed before our time.

Old people and younger disabled people and our allies will profit greatly from forming alliances, working together we will double our strength. ~

*Three national organizations useful for older people and younger disabled people working together on mutual issues:*

--[www.adapt.org](http://www.adapt.org). *Mission: To create policies that rebalance the institutional bias that allocates a high percent of public funds to nursing homes and only a small percent to assist people to remain in their own home if they prefer to do so.*

--[www.concretechange.org](http://www.concretechange.org). *Mission: To change current home construction practices, which create steps at all entrances and narrow interior doors, so that virtually all new homes offer a basic level of access: at least one step-free entrance and adequately wide interior doors.*

--[www.notdeadyet.org](http://www.notdeadyet.org). *Mission: To protect disabled and older people from assisted suicide, lethal medical neglect, involuntary withdrawal of life-sustaining medical care, encouragement to die and 'compassionate' murder. (Note: Not Dead Yet is not a right-leaning organization; its leaders and participants tend to be politically progressive.) ~*

*Eleanor Smith is a longtime disability activist who founded Concrete Change, a disability rights organization. This talk was presented on January 24 at the Annual Conference of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in Atlanta, January 24-29, 2013. Eleanor Smith lives in Decatur and can be contacted at [eleanors@mindspring.com](mailto:eleanors@mindspring.com).*

# April 2013 Sunday Celebrations of Life

*April 7*      *Mentor-ship: We Might Need a Dose of It*  
*Speaker: Duncan Teague*  
*Facilitator: Cindy Lou Who*  
*Accompanist: Richard Rifkin*

*April 14*      *Ah, Spring in Atlanta Brings....*  
*Speaker: Rev. Marsha Mitchiner*  
*Facilitator: D. Patton White*  
*Accompanist: Charli Vogt*

*April 21*      *Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most*  
*Speaker: Rev. Janna Nelson*  
*Facilitator: Bill Laney*  
*Accompanist: Scott Hooker*

*April 28*      *An Unexpected Spiritual Journey*  
*Speaker: Rev. Kim Palmer*  
*Facilitator: Charlene Ball*  
*Accompanist: Alan Dynin*  
*Annual Congregational Meeting to Follow*

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*The heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life. ~ Justice Anthony Kennedy, in majority opinion of Laurence vs. Texas, 2003*

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Please consider  
a special donation to the Ramp/Lift Fund.  
We are over halfway to our fundraising goal!  
Many thank-you's to the Chalice Lighters, CPNO, and First E  
Members and Friends for your support.

# **The Back Page**

## **Members and Friends Speak Out**



## *Interrupted Prayers*

*by Duncan E. Teague*

*Transformation and Forgiveness*

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*Must be the beautiful, mean twin sisters  
Out to break us open starting with our heart  
So they can love us, more.*

*Their father must be God, their mother Love.  
Their Momma must be God, their Daddy, Love.*

*on this day when equality must happen again.*

*The First E Newsletter is published monthly. Deadline for  
May 2013 newsletter is April 14. Send your articles and  
announcements to [mcharleneball@yahoo.com](mailto:mcharleneball@yahoo.com). The editor  
reserves the right to edit or refuse any material submitted.*