

January-February 2012

# EXISTENTIALIST

A newsletter of the  
First Existentialist  
Congregation of  
Atlanta

An independent member of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Founded 1976  
470 Candler Park Dr. NE, Atlanta, Georgia, [www.firstexistentialist.org](http://www.firstexistentialist.org), 404-378-5570

## The Golden Rule

By Lorraine Fontana

I attended this past year's Unitarian-Universalist General Assembly (GA) along with Carol Sandiford. Karen Armstrong gave the Ware Lecture on the Ethics of Compassion, which is one of the highlights of every GA and such luminaries as Martin Luther King, Jr., Shirley Chisholm, Linus Pauling, Rollo May, Helen Caldicott, Julian Bond, Holly Near, Winona La Duke, Van Jones, and many others, have addressed the assembly. Karen Armstrong had won a 2008 TED Prize and used the money to create the on-line, collaborative creation of the Charter for Compassion with input from thousands of people from different faiths and speaking different languages (Hebrew, Arabic, English, Urdu, Spanish), and finally "put together" by activists and thinkers representing Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. Below, I share the text of the charter in its entirety. It is a document that transcends religious, ideological, and national differences. Supported by leading thinkers from many traditions, the Charter activates the Golden Rule around the world.

### Charter for Compassion

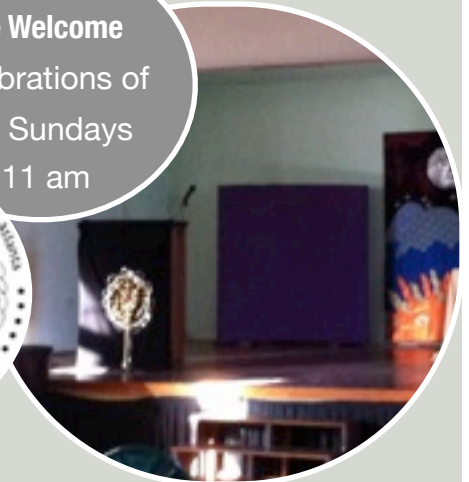
The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect.

It is also necessary in both public and private life to refrain consistently and empathically from inflicting pain. To act or speak violently out of spite, chauvinism, or self-interest, to impoverish, exploit or deny basic rights to anybody, and to incite hatred by denigrating others—even our enemies—is a denial of our common humanity. We acknowledge that we have failed to live compassionately and that some have even increased the sum of human misery in the name of religion.

We therefore call upon all men and women ~ to restore compassion to the centre of morality and religion ~ to return to the ancient principle that any interpretation of scripture that breeds violence, hatred or disdain is illegitimate ~ to ensure that youth are given accurate and respectful information about other traditions, religions and cultures ~ to encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity ~ to cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings—even those regarded as enemies.

We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.

All  
Are Welcome  
Celebrations of  
Life Sundays  
11 am



### Inside this issue...

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4. Minister's Corner
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## FIRST EXISTENTIALIST CONGREGATION

470 Candler Park Drive NE  
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(404) 378-5570

[www.firstexistentialist.org](http://www.firstexistentialist.org)  
[office@firstexistentialist.org](mailto:office@firstexistentialist.org)

### All Are Welcome

Join us in celebrating life on Sundays at 11 am. We also have Wednesday night dinners, a reading group, films and discussions every month on the third Friday, and Guilds who meet periodically. Please check our website or email the office to get involved and learn more. Childcare provided Sundays.

### Communications Volunteers

Shelby Smith, Newsletter Editor

Ashlea Davis, Logos and Design  
Dominic Thomas, Comm. Chair

Are you willing to help with the Web site or newsletter? Please email Dominic or Shelby to volunteer.

### First E Staff

Marsha Mitchiner, Fellowship Minister  
[revm@bellsouth.net](mailto:revm@bellsouth.net)  
Rick Westbrook, Administrator  
[office@firstexistentialist.org](mailto:office@firstexistentialist.org)

### Board of Directors

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### Board of Directors

## THE CHILDREN'S PROGRAM IS SPROUTING!

The Children's Program will be growing seedlings to be sold in the Spring as part of a fundraiser for program. Items planned include heirloom tomatoes, bellpeppers, basil and other plants. Excess plants after the sale will be planted in the First E garden plots. Please be on the lookout for new seedlings in the Sanctuary!

## Volunteer!

There are many ways to volunteer and help First E. We always need help with Opening / Closing the building before and after Sunday Celebrations of Life. Our Guilds and their Groups / Projects also welcome participation and new leaders. These guilds include: Art, Buildings & Grounds (History Project, Garden, and Woodland Sanctuary), Communications (Newsletter and Website), Congregational Care, Education (Child and Adult), Finance, Membership, Program, and Social Justice. Contact any Guild member, any Board member, or the office to connect and volunteer. [office@firstexistentialist.org](mailto:office@firstexistentialist.org)

### MID-SOUTH DISTRICT ANNUAL ASSEMBLY APRIL 20-21, 2012 HUNTSVILLE, AL

WILLIAM F. SCHULZ - KEYNOTE SPEAKER  
SOME PASSIONS NEVER DIE

William F. Schulz is the President and CEO of UUSC, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, a nonsectarian organization that advances human rights and social justice in the United States and around the world. Previously, he served for 12 years as executive director of Amnesty International USA, until spring of 2006. An ordained Unitarian Universalist minister, Schulz is a former president of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Contact Carleen Dowell, TEACH Trustee at [carleen.dowell@comcast](mailto:carleen.dowell@comcast) for further information.

## NEW GRANT AWARDED FROM CANDLER PARK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

The Candler Park Neighborhood Association has awarded First E a grant for \$4,000 to go towards our new accessible lift. Many thanks to CPNO for their support. Special thanks to Jon Nye for pursuing this grant. As part of the contingency to receive the grant, we must complete Phase II of our project by the end of this calendar year. The full cost for Phase II, which involves purchasing and installing the lift, is estimated at \$12,000. That leaves us \$8,000 more dollars to raise. Looking at the success we've had in the past few years at replacing our roof, with hard work and dedication, we can do it!



# FIRST E ANNOUNCEMENTS



## THIRD FRIDAY FILM SERIES

Doors open 7:00 pm – film starts 7:30 pm sharp; Popcorn & refreshments available; We welcome donations - \$1 to \$10; No one turned away.

**February 17: “A Jihad for Love” by Parvez Sharma (2007)** A documentary on gay, lesbian and transgender Muslims around the world

Stay to discuss the film – part of a series on LESBIAN, GAY, BI-SEXUAL & TRANSGENDER FOLKS.

## Board & Guild Meeting Dates

The **Board of Directors** will be meeting on Feb 7 from 7 pm to 9 pm at First E. The board meeting is open to all voting members of the congregation.

### Art

#### Building & Grounds

includes Garden, Sanctuary  
Stewards & Woodland Sanctuary

#### Communications

#### Congregational Care

#### Education (Youth and Adult)

#### Finance

**Membership:** March 25, 10 - 11 am

**Program:** Feb 6, 7 - 8 pm

#### Rental Oversight

**Social Justice:** Feb 5, after service

includes Bi-Racial History  
Project & Refugee Project

Meetings are typically held at First E, and your participation is welcome.

## Valentine’s Dance

First E will be holding a Valentine’s Dance on February 11 at 7 pm. Music will be arranged by Bunnie Bishop. Tickets are \$10, and include a drink.



## ANNUAL MEETING

APRIL 1, 2012  
AFTER SERVICE

Please join us for our annual meeting, which is held once per year and where the board of directors is elected.

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Remembering Antioch East's First Church Site 1877 - 1916  
with a Commemorative Granite Bench at 420 Oakdale Road



To acknowledge and honor the story of Antioch’s First Church site, the Old Stone Church History Project and a small group of Candler Park neighbors have created this tribute with the Commemorative Bench, and in late Spring, with the unveiling of a new Legacy Marker at the 420 Oakdale site.

# Minister's Corner

By Rev. Marsha Mitchiner

Many thanks to everyone who donated money, items and time to put together "survival kits" for distribution to homeless LGBT youth through Saint Lost and Found. Under the direction of Rick Westbrook and his "Sisters", St. L&F now has a home!! Located in West End near transportation and a variety of possible job opportunities, the 6 bedroom, 4 bath house can provide shelter for a month for the same price as what they had been spending for a week. In a conversation with Rick about the new space he said the kids are very excited to have a house--a real bedroom and bath plus a kitchen and common area to meet others and share.

Now that they have a house, their needs have shifted somewhat. Instead of survival kits, there is a need for : canned food, paper towels, toilet paper, laundry powder, body soap, shampoo, etc. And of course, they need money to pay for the house, utilities, Marta cards, etc.

There is also a volunteer opportunity: each Sunday, a group goes to the house and prepares a meal for themselves and the kids. They enjoy sharing the meal but also sharing of themselves. Through conversation with one another the kids get to see adults--straight, LGBT, black, white, male, female, etc-- that are caring examples of how adults can be and the possible future the kids can create for themselves.

Keep an eye out for joining a First E group picking a Sunday to participate in this great project.

## Thank You to Our Members/ Friends Who Continue to Volunteer

### THANKS to:

Wilj Sturkey for coordinating the Thanksgiving dinner and Karla Crawford for coordinating the Christmas dinner. Wilj also did the leg work to purchase a stove for the E kitchen and had it installed.

Victoria Trestrail for investigating items to use as 1st E gifts to new members, fundraisers and for the joy of us all. Watch for upcoming news on the first of the goodies.

Social Justice Guild for their 3rd Friday Film series that has informed and entertained. All are welcome to attend and provide input into the theme/choice of films.

Program Guild for providing speakers and musicians that present varied, interesting and stimulating COL services. Not exactly an easy task for an existentialist congregation.

Building and Grounds for the work thus far on: the ramp that has a new landing area; installation of a new heat/air unit for the downstairs; colored lighting toward the stage for special events; a multitude of unseen/behind the scenes improvements.

Ministerial Relations Committee members Edith Covington, Ashlea Davis, and Shelly Ahman, who have met with our Fellowship Minister, Rev. Marsha Mitchiner, and the First E Board of Directors to develop a ministerial contract for 2012.

## Loving Thoughts

Sharon Mathis, whose father, Rex, passed in early January.

Robert Stewart's mother who is home recovering from a fracture in her neck and his father who has returned home and is slowly recovering from a stroke.

Lorraine Fontana whose cousin Melanie Legendre died following a long battle with cancer. Also keep her spouse, Sue, in your thoughts.

Jean (Wild Jean) Hughes who is dealing with several health issues. This is not how she expected to begin her retirement so it's a double negative.

Mary Turnpaugh's mother who was in a car accident and her father who has alzheimers.



Rev. Mitchiner explains the connections between quantum physics and existentialism.

## Minister Contact

Would you like to learn more about First Existentialist? looking for a wedding officiant? need to talk over a congregational or personal issue? I am available to meet at First E or an outside location to answer your questions, discuss issues or be a good listener. You can contact me through the office at 404-378-5570 or e-mail me at [revm@bellsouth.net](mailto:revm@bellsouth.net).

# 12 Symptoms of Inner Peace ~ Saskia Davis

1. An increasing tendency to let things happen rather than make them happen.
2. An unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment.
3. A loss of interest in interpreting the actions of others.
4. A loss of interest in judging other people.
5. A loss of interest in judging self.
6. A loss of interest in conflict.
7. A loss of the ability to worry.
8. Frequent, overwhelming episodes of appreciation.
9. Contented feelings of connectedness with others and nature.
10. Frequent bouts of smiling.
11. A tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than on fears based on past experiences.
12. An increased susceptibility to the love extended by others as well as the uncontrollable urge to extend it.

Thanks for submitting,  
Bill Read!

2012 Membership Drive!  
Please Join or Renew Now!

Every year we affirm our connection to First E by renewing our pledges. Please fill out the form on page 6 & mail it or submit it with the offering during a Celebration of Life. You can also visit our website, [www.firstexistentialist.org](http://www.firstexistentialist.org).

We are a conscious choice community. We provide a warm welcome for those seeking community, a secure sanctuary for those seeking safe harbor, and acceptance of individual beliefs for those seeking spiritual growth.

## Editorial Policy

The First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta newsletter ("The Existentialist") is a free outreach and community news service provided by volunteers. We intend to publish monthly, but due to volunteer limitations, the newsletter is sometimes as infrequent as quarterly. All efforts are made to assure the factual accuracy within each issue published, but The First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta cannot be held responsible for changes, omissions or errors. Articles / letters are published for educational purposes and do not necessarily reflect the views of the organization nor its members. The contents of the newsletter are available for reprint and reuse under the Creative Commons license so long as they are not modified nor used for commercial gain and proper attribution is included.

To submit something for the newsletter, email it or print it and hand it to Shelby Smith newsletter editor. [sas\\_25@hotmail.com](mailto:sas_25@hotmail.com).

# CELEBRATIONS OF LIFE

## JANUARY

- 1 New Year Traditions, Open Mic  
Moderator and Facilitator: Shelby Smith  
Accompanist: William "Bill" Chelton
- 8 Thoughts in January  
Speaker: Kate Hauk  
Facilitator: Rev. Marsha Mitchiner  
Accompanist: Sue Wilkinson
- 15 Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration:  
Rising and Falling All These Years  
Speaker: Rev. Janna Nelson  
Facilitator: Ted Pettus  
Accompanist: Scott Hooker
- 22 Hearing Silence  
Speaker: Sharon Mathis  
Facilitator: Bill Laney  
Accompanist: Sue Wilkinson
- 29 Quantum Physics of Existentialism  
Speaker: Rev. Marsha Mitchiner  
Facilitator: D. Patton White  
Accompanist: Charli Vogt

## FEBRUARY

- February 5 Lost and Found  
Speaker: Michael Thurmond  
Facilitator: Victoria Trestrail  
Accompanist: William "Bill" Chelton
- February 12 Finding One's Place in the Cosmos  
Speaker: Clay Shotwell  
Facilitator: Charlene Ball  
Accompanist: Janet Metzger  
Special Music: Phyllis Free
- February 19 Necessary Reminders  
Speaker: Rev. Janna Nelson  
Facilitator: Cindy Lou Who  
Accompanist: Scott Hooker
- February 26 Back to Basics: Existentialism 101  
Speaker: Jean Henrich  
Facilitator: D. Patton White  
Accompanist: Charli Vogt

*Due to the early lead time for publication of the newsletter, this listing may not be complete. Please visit [firstexistentialist.org](http://firstexistentialist.org) for the most up-to-date listings of Celebrations of Life. You can find them on the home page near the bottom of the page.*

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