

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 •

Bill Read Recognition Day

June 3, 2012 dawned clear. The Existentialists woke, rose to face the day and made their way to the Sunday Celebration of life at First E. At the end of the service, a surprise awaited for all. But most surprised was William Embry—aka Bill— Read, sitting on the front row next to his wife and First E historian extraordinaire Edi Kelman. The congregation moved into the Rev. Lanier Clance Woodland Sanctuary along the path to the upper area where a beautiful handcrafted bird bath stood. At its base was a rock carved in Bill's honor.

It was BILL READ RECOGNITION DAY. As folks gathered around, a few words of gratitude were spoken by Rev. Marsha Mitchiner. Then Bill was given a container of water to christen the bird bath. After many hugs all the way around, folks moved back down to the side yard for a picnic/potluck sponsored by the Membership Guild. Yummy burgers and dogs were accompanied by dishes brought by attendees and enjoyed by members, friends and visitors alike. It was a great day of fellowship.

This celebration was our opportunity for First E to say thanks to Bill for the many years of service and stewardship he has so generously given. Ashlea Davis was the instigator who managed to get the Woodland Sanctuary cleaned up and had the gift in Bill's honor put in place while keeping it a secret from Bill; not an easy task since

he's there so much—working inside on finances and other business tasks or outside working on the grounds. Bill has been a pillar of our community in the true sense of the word. He has been a steady member and volunteer and he has always stepped up whenever we had a crisis. His calm demeanor and loving spirit are a gift to all who know him. We are particularly gifted by Bill's choice to call First E his community.



Thank you, Bill, for what you do but mostly for sharing yourself with us. —Marsha Mitchiner

Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth.
- Mohammad Ali

**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
Office Administrator:
Rick Westbrook,
office@firstexistentialist.org

Board of Directors:
Charlene Ball
Edith Covington,
Treasurer
Karla Crawford,
Recorder
Shannon Sanders
Phyllis Thakis
Victoria Trestrail
Libby Ware, Chair
Andy Weiskoff

Newsletter Editor:
Charlene Ball,
mcharleneball@yahoo.com

*I tore myself away from
the safe comfort of
certainties through my
love for the truth; and
truth rewarded me.*

- Simone deBeauvoir



Notes From the Board

By Libby Ware, Board Chair

Board Officers for the new term have been elected. Libby Ware is the Board Chair, Karla Crawford is the Recorder, and Edith Covington is the Treasurer.

A new committee has been formed—the Fundraising Committee. The members are Phyllis Thakis and Karla Crawford. The Committee will brainstorm on fundraising ideas since fundraising is one aspect of our finances that we can impact. If anyone would like to be on the committee, or has ideas for fundraising, please contact Phyllis and/or Karla. Board members have signed up as liaisons for the guilds so that each guild will have representation on the Board.

Please remember that the Board of Directors exists to represent the Congregation. If you have a concern, contact a member of the Board or come to the meeting which takes place downstairs at 7:00 on the first Tuesday of the month. The August meeting will be on August 7.

Membership Guild Report

We will be having a Membership Guild meeting at 10am on Sunday, July 15. Also on that day we will be having a Kiddush. All are invited to stay and socialize after the service. Please join us!

On June 3 during the service at First E we had a New Member Recognition and welcomed into our congregation Bill Cobham and Fred Conrad. Two other new members, Rosalind Mance and Rhonda Wildman, were unable to attend. We are excited to have them join us at First E. Also on that same day we hosted a very successful Cookout and Potluck after the service. About 50-60 people attended. There was lots of good food, conversation, and games. We look forward to the next gathering, probably when the weather cools.

Guild Reports continued on page 5

**Great Existentialist Book and Bake Sale
August 11-12**

The Annual Great Existentialist Book and Bake Sale happens August 11 at First E from 9:00-2:00. Please bring your books, LP's, CD's, DVD's, tapes, audio books, and baked goods. Volunteers are needed on Friday to set up, on Saturday to work at the sale, and on Sunday to box books and move to the sides. Contact Rev. Marsha Mitchiner to volunteer: revm@bellsouth.net. Contact Rick at First E to bring donated items: office@firstexistentialist.org. And don't forget to come and shop on August 11!

**Third Friday Film
Series**

Presents

For Colored Girls

(Who Have Considered Suicide

When the Rainbow is Enuf)

Friday, August 17

at 7:30pm

Sliding Scale Donations Re-
quested \$1-\$10.00

No one turned away

Popcorn & Refreshments

Discussion after the film led by
our co-sponsor

Women Healing Women
<http://www.surviving2thrive.org/>

org/

In Remembrance of Two Antioch Elders

by Edith Kelman, History Project Manager

For more than six years, the Old Stone Church BiRacial History Project has had the privilege to engage in research with Elders of Antioch East Baptist Church. We are grateful for the generous participation given by Mother Mattie Carey Howard (89) and Ms. Margaret Edith Latimore (84). Auntie and niece, these two brave and vital women both passed on in June 2012.

Ms. Latimore was honored at our 2011 "Church in the Park" event as the first African American woman golfer to desegregate the Candler Park Golf Course. Mother Howard was involved throughout, from the History Project's first event at First E, the 'Welcome Return Luncheon' in November 2006.

These women believed in the educational importance of sharing their stories, photographs, experiences and reflections—for their church and families' understanding, and for the larger community's awareness. Their humanity and courage have enriched the quality of this collaboration and its historical impact on greater Atlanta. The friendship of these wise women is a treasured gift.



*Ms. Margaret E. Latimore,
5/8/1928 - 6/22/2012. photo
by Lillie Love, StoryCorp ATL
2/2010*

Community News & Activities

--**Our garden** is bearing, and folks are gathering for **Wednesday Night Suppers/ Potlucks** at First E around 6:30 or 7:00. It's a refreshing and relaxing time for all.

--**The Atlanta Community Food Bank Collection Barrel** is back in the Sanctuary. If you bring a donation, we will get it to them.

--**Victoria Trestrail's mother** has died. She attended the potluck at the dedication of Bill Read's birdbath and talked with many of us. There will be a memorial service in South Carolina on July 28. Please send love and support to Victoria, John, and their family.

--**Rev. James Nelson, Rev. Janna Nelson's father**, has died. He was a Baptist missionary on the Navaho reservation in New Mexico. He spoke at First E when Janna was ordained, and many of us remember meeting him and witnessing his love and support of Janna's very different ministry. Scott says that although they disagreed about articles of belief, Rev. Nelson also did so with humor, love, curiosity, and integrity. Our love and support go out to Janna, Scott, and their family.

--**A fundraiser for Craig Rafuse** will be held on September 8, time TBA, at 7 Stages Theatre, featuring music from Elise Witt, Kodak Harrison, and others. Craig, a well-known local musician, friend of First E, and occasional guest artist at our services, is dealing with cancer and has no health insurance. Details will follow.

--**Robin Stinson** is in financial trouble and is in danger of losing her home. If you can help, please contact her at melanierobinstinson@yahoo.com. She sends heartfelt thanks to those who have already responded to her request.

--**Charlene Ball** has an efficiency apartment in her home available August 1. \$600.00/month includes utilities except phone, cable, and internet. Contact Charlene at 404-627-8424.

--**Charlene's current tenant** seeks a space-sharing arrangement in exchange for cooking, cleaning, and contribution to utilities. Contact June' at akazia@mindspring.com.

--**Cate Morrill**, First E Member and Certified T'ai Chi and Qi Gong Instructor, announces a series of classes for patients before, during or post treatment and/or caregivers, at no cost to participants, at Cancer Wellness at Piedmont Hospital. For information, contact Cate at 404-525-6466 or cate@shouldersdown.com.

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>.

Finance Report--for January-June 2012

At start of 2012, First E's general operating account was \$2,420 in the black. At June 30 E's operating account balance was \$535 in the red. This is a major negative shift.

On the positive side, E is doing well at holding operating expenses down; expenses over first six months this year are about \$200 per month less than last year. This is a significant positive shift.

But back on the negative side, operating income so far this year (from pledges, gifts, rentals, and fund-raising) also is less than last year – more than \$400 per month. This more than offsets our lower operating expenses.

The net result is that First E's 2012 cash flow is currently running in the red by over \$200 each month.

This trend must be reversed so that our Existential Congregation can continue to "be here now" –and later too. Meanwhile, here is an update on all First E accounts.

**Wednesday Night
Suppers each Week
6:30 to 8:00/8:30 pm
in the Sanctuary**

Welcome, Everyone!
*If you would like to provide
a meal or bring a covered
dish, please contact Elaine
or Wilj of the Membership
Guild.*

Birthdays in August

Name	Birthdate
Linda Bell	8/6
Edward Pettus	8/11
Bill Read	8/11
Linda Yates	8/13
Janna Nelson	8/19
Carol Sandiford	8/30



Summary of 2012 Financial Accounts for First Existentialist Congregation

Fund Types & Name	6/30/2012 Account Balances < unaudited >
General Operating Funds	
2012 Operating Account	(535)
Designated Operating Funds	
Gay Dellinger Estate Gift	2,466
Handicap Access Ramp	920
Lanier Clance Lighting	1,044
Leadership Development	570
Community Garden	(442)
Building & Grounds	259
Woodland Sanctuary	1,069
Minister's Discretionary	432
Original 1st E History	68
Labyrinth & Garden	255
Social Justice	797
Attic Insulation Fund	1,250
Children's Program	122
Music Fund	150
Savings: Pat Hewatt Revolving Loan Fund	5,062
Total @ BOND Credit Union	13,488
Old Stone Church History Project	
Bi-Racial History Accounts: 2009	2,204
Legacy Markers Account: 2009-10	1,430
Old Stone Church BiRacial History: 2010-11	0
Total @ State Bank & SunTrust Bank	3,634
Total of All Accounts	17,122

--Bill Read, Finance Guild



Report from the Program Guild

By Charlene Ball

The Program Guild plans Sunday Celebrations of Life at First E. We met for our quarterly meeting on May 22, 2012, to outline the upcoming three months and assign each member to contact a speaker or speakers. Our chair, Patton White, contacts accompanists and providers of special music, as well as other guest artists. Recently we have secured some great speakers, including Mona Reeves, who spoke on our "Juneteenth" celebration on June 24, and Althea Sumpter, who spoke on July 1 about the Gullah-Geechee culture of the Sea Islands. In August, Rev. Laura Arnold will talk about her experiences as a chaplain and give information about Georgia medical directives. We are pleased to announce that Jay Bookman, columnist for the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, will speak on August 26. In addition, Rev. Janna Nelson speaks each month along with amazing pianist Scott Hooker. Rev. Kate Hauk speaks every other month and will speak in August. Rev. Marsha Mitchiner, our Fellowship Minister, speaks every two months and facilitates every two months. In August, we'll hear William "Bill" Chelton, Charli Vogt, Karen Esterl, and Alan Dynin providing accompaniment and special music.

If you would like to join the Program Guild or if you would like to put us in contact with speakers or musicians you'd like to hear, contact us at Sunday services or by email: Patton White, chair (patton@beacondance.org); Charlene Ball (mcharleneball@yahoo.com); Linda Bell; Bill Laney; and Victoria Trestrail.

Social Justice Corner

Role of the Tea Party, Politics, and Racism, by Lorraine Fontana

Leonard Zeskind, author and human rights activist, spoke on March 23, 2012, at the SisterSong Motherhouse in West End. Zeskind has written on racism, anti-Semitism, and the white supremacist movement for over 30 years. His latest book (2009) is *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream*. Here are some notes from his talk.

White supremacist violence did not increase after the election of Barack Obama. Levels were lower than in 1987. White supremacists were more disoriented than angered by his election.

The Tea Party movement has about 350,000 core members and about 2-3,000,000 active sympathizers, but about 18-25% of the population are supporters.

The Tea Party has 5 national networks. 1) Freedomworks split off from the Koch Brothers-sponsored ALEC (American Legislative Exchange Council). 2) Tea Party Nation was created by former Tennessee

assistant district attorney Judson Phillips in 2009 and is the next largest and the most right-wing as regards social issues. 3) The 1776 Tea Party is the smallest, but has grown steadily. The Minutemen of California, co-founded by Jim Gilchrist in 2004, a private militia monitoring the U.S.-Mexican border, has merged with this group. ResistNet, now Patriot Action Network, is similar to Posse Comitatus, a far right social movement that opposes the US government and believes in localism. Members are mostly Christian and pro-gun. 5) Tea Party Patriots started small but grew to the largest numbers. They are the best organized at state and local levels. The TP PAC is the Tea Party Express. The TP Congressional Caucus, led by Michelle Bachman, has 52 members.

While support for the TP has declined, the core groups have stayed the same or grown. Their biggest political success is the number of members elected to state legislatures, especially in 2010. Exit polls showed that 40% of voters said they were TP supporters. *Continued on page 6*

Zeskind says that TP members are mainly middle and upper middle class. It's not really a working class movement although the media often portrays it as such. Our media--right, left, and mainstream--also paints the TP as losing steam or winding down, but this is not true for actual membership.

In addition to the TP's usual issues--taxes, the deficit, anti-government program--they want to repeal the 17th Amendment (direct election of U.S. senators), giving the power to appoint state senators to the state legislatures. They also want to undo the 14th Amendment's birthright citizenship clause. Why? Because racial animus is a strong motive. The TP's main goal is to "de-elect Barack Obama." They fear that our country will no longer be majority white in a couple of generations.

One strategy is to claim that white folks are now oppressed. (I'd also add the claim that Christians are being oppressed and stripped of their religious freedom--a big issue in the legal realm nowadays.) Many Nativist/anti-immigrant leaders are involved in the TP. The TP-elected Republicans in 2010 who enacted new voting laws in the name of stopping voter fraud have disproportionately disenfranchised people of color and students who voted for Obama in 2008.

Zeskind says if the Republicans take the White House it will be seen as a sign that the left-progressive movement has declined and will lead to more racist violence, as happened after the U.S. Supreme Court handed down Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896 (upholding the constitutionality of state laws requiring racial segregation in public facilities under the doctrine of separate but equal).

The message I received was--don't believe Obama will be easily re-elected. Get involved in voter registration drives, help folks get the kind of voter IDs they'll need to vote in Georgia (that law has already been upheld as constitutional), and VOTE in November.

Georgia's Advanced Directive for Health Care

by Rev. Laura Arnold

On August 12, I will be speaking about my experiences working as a chaplain—the good, the bad, and the crazy—and especially the importance of having conversations around healthcare decision making before there is a crisis. These are conversations that none of us want to have, but that ALL of us need to have.

After the service, I will do a quick overview of Georgia's advanced directive for health care, the document that grants power to someone to make your medical decisions should you be unable to and the power for visitation rights, and I will be available for questions or assistance in filling them out. If you have not yet filled out such legal documentation, please plan to stay after the service for more information. This is especially important for same sex couples and people who do not want their legal next of kin making their medical decisions.

A copy of the forms are available at <http://www.emory-healthcare.org/patient-relations/pdfs/georgia-advance-directive2007.pdf>

"Existence precedes essence" means that what I do, how I spend my energy and time, how I move in the world, is who I am. And my experience is that this way of being is made more vibrant and rich when it is done in community with others who are also committed to conscious living. There is healing and joy, comfort, and release when we live out loud with each other.

- Rev. Janna Nelson

August 2012 Sunday Celebrations of Life

August 5 ***Is It Hot Or Is It Just Me?***
Speaker: ***Marsha Mitchiner***
Facilitator: ***D. Patton White***
Accompanist: ***William "Bill" Chelton***

August 12 ***Chaplain Diaries: Conversations You Can't Not Have***
Speaker: ***Rev. Laura Arnold***
Facilitator: ***Rhonda Wildmon***
Accompanist: ***Karen Esterl***

August 19 ***Messy Work***
Speaker: ***Rev. Janna Nelson***
Facilitator: ***Mark White***
Accompanist: ***Scott Hooker***

August 26 ***Looking Forward to the Election of 2012***
Speaker: ***Jay Bookman***
Facilitator: ***Lorraine Fontana***
Accompanist: ***Alan Dynin***

Guest Speaker Biography: Jay Bookman

Jay Bookman is a political columnist and blogger for The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. He has won two national awards for outstanding editorial writing, the National Headliner Award and the Scripps-Howard National Journalism Award.

In addition, his work on environmental issues has been recognized with the Aldo Leopold Award, granted by the Wilderness Society, and the American Conservation Award, by the National Wildlife Federation. He is an eight-time winner of the Best of Cox Newspapers Awards for columns and editorials.

In 2008, he became the only two-time winner of the \$75,000 Eugene Pulliam Fellowship for editorial writing, sponsored by the Society of Professional Journalists.

Bookman is a graduate of Pennsylvania State University with degrees in history and journalism. He has lived in Atlanta since 1990, and previously worked for newspapers in Washington state, Nevada and Massachusetts. He is married with two daughters. His first book, "Caught in the Current," was published by St. Martin's Press in July, 2004. It did not make any best-seller lists.

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Defending the truth is not something one does out of a sense of duty or to allay guilt complexes, but is a reward in itself.

- Simone deBeauvoir

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