

# The Existentialist

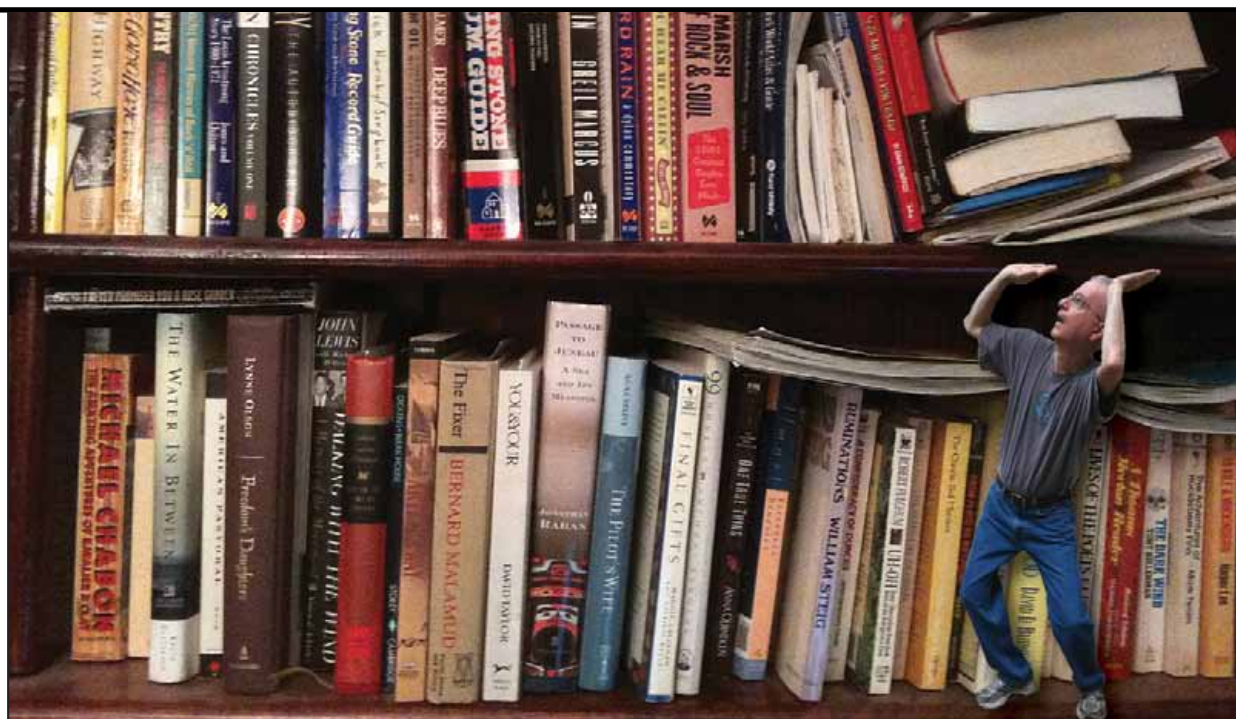
**Newsletter of the First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta**

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 •



## **Gigantic Book Sale**

**Saturday, August 15, 9am – 2pm**

**at the First Existentialist Congregation  
Books, audio books, CDs, cassettes, LPs, movies,  
and homemade baked goods**

*More on page 3.*

**First Existentialist  
Congregation of  
Atlanta**

470 Candler Park Drive,  
NE  
Atlanta, Georgia 30307  
404-378-5570  
[www.firstexistentialist.org](http://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](mailto:revm@bellsouth.net)  
Office Administrator:  
Edith Covington,  
[office@firstexistentialist.org](mailto:office@firstexistentialist.org)

Board of Directors:  
D. Patton White, Chair  
Bill Read, Treasurer  
Stell Simonton,  
Recorder  
Linda Bell  
Elaine Gale  
Bill Laney  
Hank Pfadenhaur  
Mark White  
Cindy Lou Who  
Newsletter Editor:  
Charlene Ball,  
[mcharleneball@yahoo.com](mailto:mcharleneball@yahoo.com)

We are a philosophically based  
spiritual community  
dedicated to  
human liberation  
and founded on existentialist  
and feminist principles.



## Notes From the Board

By D. Patton White, Board Chair

The Board met on July 6 at 7:00 p.m. at the First E. Cindy Lou shared updates about additional sound enhancements for speakers (body-microphones). Bill Laney shared an update on installing an automatic door system at the front door to facilitate a portion of our accessibility plan. The group discussed some possibilities in the Board's upcoming annual retreat, which will be held on Saturday, August 29, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Marsha reported on several member-related deaths that have occurred in the past few weeks. The group also discussed the July 18 Coffeehouse fundraising event. Edith reported that we have a substantial number of rentals for our space, bringing in much-needed revenue. Bill Read reported that tree work had been conducted on a tree in the woodlands sanctuary. He also reported that the congregation's final cost for the upgrade on the community garden was \$486. Stell Simonton reported that the Bennett's Market fundraising event spearheaded by Victoria Trestrail brought in \$114.00. The next meeting will be held on Monday, August 3, at 7:00 p.m. All are welcome to attend! ~

## Community News & Activities

--The Book Discussion Group meets on Sunday, August 23, after the COL upstairs. We will discuss Chapter 2 of *Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome* by Joy DeGruy. All are welcome.

--The First E Annual Book & Bake Sale will take place on Saturday, August 15! Bring your donations of books and media to First E or see Libby or Charlene. To volunteer, see Marsha. And come on August 15 to buy books, CDs, and other media!

### ONGOING:

--Reis Birdwhistell's photography exhibit will remain on First E's walls through August.

--First E Liberation Ukulele Group meets 1st, 3rd, and 4th Wednesday evenings for fun, practice & community (at First E around 7:30 start time, including instruction available once monthly. All levels of expertise are welcome. Call Wilj at 404-626-4763 for information.

--Geek Chorus meets on Second Wednesdays. Bring your favorite beverage to share, love offering to First E for allowing us to use the space, and musical instruments to pluck, bang or strum.

--For updates about Moral Mondays in Georgia, please drop a note to Lorraine at [tana44@hotmail.com](mailto:tana44@hotmail.com).

--Lost-n-Found Thrift and Consignment Store, 2585 Chantilly Drive, is open M-Sat 10-5; Sundays noon-6. Lost-n-Found, which helps homeless GLBTQI youth, was founded by our former office administrator, Rick Westbrook.

--Submissions and news for the September Newsletter are due to Charlene by Sunday, August 16. Send to [mcharleneball@yahoo.com](mailto:mcharleneball@yahoo.com).

--Contact Robert Stewart with your news and activities for his weekly e-newsletter: [robertstewart369@gmail.com](mailto:robertstewart369@gmail.com). ~

---

## ***Guild Reports***

### ***Program Guild*** ***By Charlene Ball***

The Program Guild held its quarterly potluck on July 30 at Charlene's house. The members of the Program Guild were there as well as some Congregation members. We had a good discussion about Sunday Celebrations of Life while enjoying delicious dishes provided by the guests. We will hold our regular quarterly meeting on August 18 at 6:00 p.m. at First E to plan the Sunday Celebrations of Life (COLs) for October, November, and December. Members and friends are welcome to attend. ~

### ***Membership Guild*** ***By Charlene Ball***

**The Membership Guild continues to welcome new members** and newcomers, by providing greeters at each COL. The Guild also coordinates the openers, who open the building, start the coffee, turn on the lights and heat or air conditioning, and put out songbooks and tambourines. The Membership Guild is composed of Elaine Gale, Carol Sandiford, Hank Pfadenhauer, Robert Stewart, Bill Laney, Mary Howard, and Wilj Sturkey. The Openers are Elaine, Hank, Wilj, Stell Simonton, and Andy Weiskoff. If anyone would like to know more about the Membership Guild, participate in setting up a kiddush, opening, or greeting, contact Wilj at ***cincode-mayo55@comcast.net*** or Elaine at ***ergale@hotmail.com***. ~

### ***Social Justice Guild*** ***By Charlene Ball***

**The Social Justice Guild will meet** on August 2. Lorraine will chair, Libby will take the minutes, and Carol will provide food (unless we decide to go to Bennett's again.) ~

## ***Great Existential Book and Bake Sale on August 15!***

**It's time again for the Great Existential Book and Bake Sale!** Books galore, CDs, DVDs, and more media! And did we say BOOKS! Also, we'll have delicious baked goods -- cookies, banana bread, pie, and other treats -- for sale. The sale itself is Saturday, August 15, from 9:00 a.m. til 2:00 p.m. Setup day is Friday, August 14. On Friday, after 2:00 p.m., we will need LOTS of people to unbox, sort books and set up for sale. If you would like to volunteer for either Friday or Saturday or both, contact **Marsha** at ***revm@bellsouth.net***. Here are the slots to sign up for:

#### **Saturday 8/15**

- 8:00-9:00 Make coffee and set table to sell goodies, drinks-2 volunteers
- 9:00-11:00 Sell goodies--2 volunteers
- 11:00-1:00 Sell goodies--2 volunteers
- 1:00-2:30 Sell goodies and take down table-2 volunteers
- 2:00-until Move tables to wall of sanctuary, consolidate books, clean up-unlimited volunteers--the more we have, the quicker this will go

#### **Sunday 8/16**

- 12:30 Buy, Buy, Buy discounted books left from sale
- 1:00 unlimited volunteers needed to box books/move to back of room

This is a fun event and important fundraiser for us so please come out and help however you can. *Marsha, Libby, and Charlene* ~

# June 2015 Finance Report

## **FUND OF THE MONTH CLUB**

*The Fund of the Month is the Garden Fund.  
Please write "Garden Fund" on your check.*

~

<u>2015 Cash Flow</u>	<u>Operating</u>	<u>Designated</u>
Total Income	38,658	2,071
<u>Total Expenses</u>	(30,796)	(2,201)
Net thru June 30	7,862	(130)

### Fund Types & Names   Account Balances on June 30

<unaudited>

2015 General Operating Account                      7,862

Designated Operating Funds                      26,565

Use Where Needed Fund	1,461
Sanctuary Accessibility	18,384
Leadership Development	750
Community Garden/Labyrinth	(68)
Building & Grounds	261
Woodland Sanctuary	1,343
Minister's Discretionary	987
Social Justice	1,470
Attic Insulation Fund	1,250
Children's Program	472
Music Fund	255

Pat Hewatt Revolving Loan Fund (\$8K)   6,566

Total First E Funds                      40,993

Old Stone Church History Project           1,536

*I believe the greatest gift I can  
conceive of having from anyone  
is to be seen, heard, understood,  
and touched by them. The great-  
est gift I can give is to see, hear,  
understand, and touch another  
person. ~ Virginia Satir, psycho-  
therapist and author*

**Guns are not allowed on the property  
belonging to the First Existentialist  
Congregation  
of Atlanta.**

**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>.**

---

# Social Justice Corner

## ***Just What Are the Qualifications for President of the US?***

***By Linda A. Bell and Lorraine Fontana***

**While we constantly hear children being told that they can become anything they wish** in this society, a look at history and even at some of the aspects of recent presidential campaign strongly suggests that this is just another of our comforting myths, perhaps with even less plausibility than that perpetrated by the Horatio Alger story. Admittedly, the Constitution of the US lists only the following qualifications that a president must initially meet:

Article II, Section 1:

No person except a natural born citizen, or a citizen of the United States, at the time of the adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the office of President; neither shall any person be eligible to that office who shall not have attained to the age of thirty-five years, and been fourteen years a resident within the United States.

Besides those age and citizenship requirements, only one other exists in the Constitution, and that is the term-limit amendment :

Amendment XXII, Section 1 - ratified February 27, 1951:

No person shall be elected to the office of the President more than twice, and no person who has held the office of President, or acted as President, for more than two years of a term to which some other person was elected President shall be elected to the office of the President more than once.

However, if one examines history, one finds strong suggestions that other requirements have been guiding voter behavior over the years and working quite effectively as gatekeepers. First, until President Obama was elected, as we know, no person of color had ever been elected to the position; and racism has plagued his candidacy and presidency from the very beginning. And, of course, no woman has been elected, although a surprisingly large number have run (some before suffrage was granted to women) and several have even been placed in nomination at Republican and Democratic conventions.

In addition, there has never been a gay President--or, at least, one who acknowledged being gay. Interestingly, James Buchanan was the subject of rumors throughout his presidency, mainly because of his relationship with William Rufus King. While still in Congress, Buchanan began a lifelong relationship with King, and they lived together for 15 years prior to Buchanan's presidency. Their intense friendship earned them the nicknames "Miss Nancy and Aunt Fancy" and even "Buchanan and his wife" in various political circles, which included Andrew Jackson.

Despite the Supreme Court's recent marriage equality ruling, homophobia remains alive and well today and is probably the subtext of journalists' references to Republican candidate Lindsay Graham's unmarried state and of questions concerning how he would cope with not having a "first lady." Perhaps aware that Buchanan's niece served as his first lady, Graham responded to a questioner by saying that he had a niece who would probably be willing to serve in that capacity if needed.

History indicates other possibilities of hidden but nonetheless quite real restrictions on who might become a serious candidate for president. While there are numerous Catholics in Congress and among the justices on the Supreme Court, only one has thus far ever become president. Readers who are old enough will remember the concerns expressed about whether John F. Kennedy as a Catholic could be sufficiently independent of a "foreign power," i.e., the Pope. Perhaps coincidentally, Kennedy was also the president with the highest net worth. Although nine presidents are said to have had less than \$1 million, no president has been poor.

In terms of religious restrictions, there have been no Jews, Mormons, or Muslims in the office or, for that matter, Hindus or Buddhists. Need we mention that once history moved past the founders and certainly into recent times, belief in God and constant affirmation of such belief seem to have become increasingly prevalent and, we suspect, mandatory? A sizeable percentage of people have even answered recent pollsters' questions with disbelief that an atheist can be moral.

Although many presidents have had disabilities, most were of the sort that could be hidden to a large extent from voters, such as hearing, learning, and mental problems. Even James Madison's epilepsy may not have been widely known. Only one president, Franklin D. Roosevelt, has been physically disabled, and his disability was carefully kept from the public, and that was at a time when the press colluded with elected officials to keep from the public information deemed private, including philandering.

*Continued on page 6.*

# **Minister's Corner**

**by Rev. Marsha Mitchiner**

## ***Love and Caring Thoughts go out to:***

**Lorraine Fontana in the loss of her dear friend, Sally Gabb**, who died following a long, difficult struggle. Keep Beth, Sally's wife, and the many other friends of this couple in your hearts. Lorraine is taking a picture she drew of Sally to the memorial service in Rhode Island to give to Beth.

**Glen Lopez who is recovering from surgery.** He enjoys company so please call or write him at Shepard Spine Center, 2020 Peachtree Rd, Atlanta, GA 30319. Set up a time with Glen to go visit, too.

**Nathaniel Jones who has been detained since January.** I hope to make contact with his Social Worker to find out his status. He is missed.

**Continue to hold in your heart and extend support to those who have lost loved ones recently and those who are remembering loved ones whose passing still feel fresh.**

## ***NOTE OF THANKS***

**Carol Harter** sent a note thanking the First E family for the use of the sanctuary for the memorial service for her partner, **Elaine Hall**, and "for being here for me."

## ***THANK YOU and YOU and YOU and YOU....***

One of the pitfalls of thanking people is overlooking someone which is particularly easy as we (as in me) get older. But here goes..... Many thanks to **Stell Simonton** for developing, contacting performers, and working many roles at the **Existential Coffeehouse**. To **Libby Ware and Charlene Ball** for purchasing beverages, paper plates, etc. Also **Elaine Gale** for organizing the silent auction, and **Carol Sandiford** for much help before, during and after the event. **Mary Turnpaugh and Karla Crawford** for lots of very yummy goodies. **Cindy Lou Who, Arlene Arp, Joseph Verdell, Kitty Wimbish, Hank Pfadenhauer, Saralyn Chesnut**, et al. There were others who brought goodies and helped, so check elsewhere in the newsletter for additional names/info. I have no idea who brought in the many auction items, but their generosity added that much more to the fun and success of this night. And a BIG thanks go out to the performers who shared their talents: **Aviva, Aubrey Cox, Jeff Crompton, Phyllis Free, Scott Hooker, Alice Lovelace, Anne Michelle Lynch, Janet Metzger, Janna Nelson, Obediah, Sheila Pattee, Ted Pettus, Craig Rafuse, Gail Reeder, and Margo Smith.**

This was a successful adventure into fund raising in a way that exemplified the best of community cooperation. So again, Thank YOU, and YOU and YOU..... **Marsha ~**

---

## ***Just What Are the Qualifications for President? ~ Continued from page 5***

Finally, primarily because of the Red scare and its lingering traces, a Communist would probably be dismissed as beyond the pale; and many journalists are still questioning whether even a socialist can be elected, regardless of the enormous crowds one such candidate is attracting. With Pope Francis and others now acknowledging the devastation caused by capitalism, perhaps we should avoid suggesting that an unquestioning commitment to it is still among the many unspoken requirements.

Thus, history may continue to paint a rather different picture of the limitless possibilities open to our citizens. Perhaps things are changing a bit, but the current campaign indicates that money is escalating in importance. It remains to be seen, however, whether a wealthy candidate using his own money can successfully compete against other candidates lavishly funded by those with even more wealth. And, of course, thus far we can see little reason to believe that anti-Semitism, homophobia, Islamophobia, racism, and sexism will not continue to play significant roles in our elections. ~

# ~ Existential Moment Coffeehouse ~ July 18, 2015



*Clockwise from left: Anne Michelle Lynch reads from her short fiction; Alice Lovelace performs spoken word; First E audience listens; Aviva and the Flying Penguins perform original music.*



# Speakers in August

## **Going Somewhere, Going Nowhere** **By Rev. Marti Keller**

Summers are most typically the time when we spend some time traveling -- or dreaming about it. We will explore the tradition of pilgrimage, a journey or search of moral or spiritual significance. Typically it is a visit to a shrine or other location of importance to a person's beliefs and faith. It might be a trip to the Holy Land, to Greece, to Mecca-- or in the case of photographer Annie Leibowitz: Concord, Massachusetts, Graceland in Memphis, and the Ghost Ranch in New Mexico. Or simply staying still.

Rev. Marti Keller, who will speak on August 2, has been a parish and beyond congregational UU minister for the past 16 years. In these roles she has traveled extensively, including in this past year an extended stay in San Miguel de Allende in Mexico, and this month Dublin, Ireland. She comes from a traveling family, which has allowed her to claim visits to 49 out of 50 states ( with Alaska to go) and nearly 30 countries.

She also likes to be home. ~

## **Open Mic at the First E: What I did on My Summer Vacation (or Existential Thoughts and Observations about Your Summer Experiences)**

**By D. Patton White**

On Sunday, August 30, we will celebrate a very special service, facilitated by D. Patton White. We will present an "open mic" service, and we hope that you will have something to share! What interesting or exciting things have you experienced this Summer that may have impacted you in a soulful way? Do you know of a poem that might convey these feelings? Have you created a piece of visual art inspired by your Summer activities? Do you know a song that communicates your Summer experience? Have you written in your journal about your Summer activities? We want this day to feel like a party, so refreshments will be shared throughout the service. If you would like to contribute a goodie or two, please do so! ~

## **The Joy of Living** **By Rev. Kim Palmer**

Rev. Kim Palmer, who will speak to us on August 9 on "The Joy of Living," joined a Unitarian Universalist congregation in 2004, perhaps sparking a mid-life evaluation of the value and impact of her life. Her mother's death and a months-long period of caring for her in a nursing home illuminated an unexpected call to ministry, to serve the sick and dying. She earned a Master of Divinity from Candler School of Theology at Emory University and in November was ordained as a Unitarian Universalist Minister. She is pursuing a vocational call to chaplaincy in a hospital or end-of-life setting. ~

## **Dance Like You Mean It** **By Rev. Duncan Teague**

This Sunday will be the birthday of the pop icon, Madonna (Madonna Ciccone), born in 1958. She is an actress, singer, recording and music video artist. Does her life have something to teach us about living this life to it's fullest? The late, great, Johnny Carson said of her off camera after her inaugural *Tonight Show* 1987 rendition of "Like a Virgin": "There goes another flash in the pan." He may have been wrong. ~

## **Stell Simonton Around India**

Stell Simonton first attended the First Existentialist in the mid 1980s. She will speak to us on August 23, with Ted Pettus, on "Around India." They both have spent time in India during the past year, and they are going to share their experiences.

Stell is a board member and leads the Fund-raising Guild. Last year, she funded a trip to India through Kickstarter, with extensive support from members of the First E. She accompanied volunteers with a local project supporting scholarships for young women in India, operated through Dr. Bombay's Underwater Tea Party. She wrote two articles about the project for the *Christian Science Monitor*. She is a free-lance journalist who formerly worked for the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. She is married to Wade Marbaugh and has two daughters, Anna and Olivia. ~



# **August 2015 Sunday Celebrations of Life**

- August 2**      ***Going Somewhere, Going Nowhere***  
***Speaker: Rev. Marti Keller***  
***Facilitator: Rev. Marsha Mitchiner***  
***Accompanist: William "Bill" Chelton***
- August 9**      ***The Joy of Living***  
***Speaker: Rev. Kim Palmer***  
***Facilitator: Libby Ware***  
***Accompanist: Dr. Jean Heinrich***
- August 16**      ***Dance Like You Mean It***  
***Speaker: Rev. Duncan Teague***  
***Facilitator: Dr. Saralyn Chesnut***  
***Accompanist: Aviva and the Flying Penguins***
- August 23**      ***Around India***  
***Speakers: Stell Simonton and Ted Pettus***  
***Facilitator: Ted Pettus***  
***Accompanist: Charli Vogt***
- August 30**      ***Open Mic at the First E: What I Did on my Summer Vacation (or Existential Thoughts and Observations about Your Summer Experiences)***  
***Facilitator: D. Patton White***  
***Accompanist: Alan Dynin***

*We are a philosophically-based, spiritual community  
dedicated to human liberation and founded on existentialist and feminist  
principles.*

# The Back Page

## Members and Friends Speak Out

### A Eulogy for a Chicken: Farewell Sugar...

By *Cheri Smithson* (adapted from a piece on Facebook by *Nancy West*)

At first glance, I thought she was taking one of her leisurely dust baths in the coop, with her gorgeous foot feathers fanned in every direction. But when the other hens sounded out my usual morning greeting, Sugar remained silent and frozen in place, I then knew something was amiss. She had never missed an opportunity to talk to me until this moment.... I peered closer and knew she was gone.

Having tended to her needs and watching her grow and develop from a two day old “chicklet” to a mature hen during these past three years, I can attest to Sugar not only being beautiful – she possessed character, as well. Sugar's every waking moment was devoted to scratching and pecking with total abandon. When her opportunities seemed to diminish, she would push through all fences in search of the most promising grubs and worms elsewhere. Sugar was the hen who most yearned for her freedom, forcing us to track her down, hourly, all around the building's perimeter in an attempt to keep her safe. We are so happy First E allowed her to live a quality life. . . she was loved, she was free-ranging, and she had an audience. How many chickens on this planet can say that?



*Sugar the Chicken. Photograph by Cheri Smithson.*

This morning we dug a hole in the garden flower bed and set her in the ground. Yes, she may have been “just a chicken,” but we will miss her all the same. R.I.P. Sugar. ~

*Cheri Smithson has run an afterschool art program and a summer art camp at First E for several years.*

*The only time we have is now.*

**The Existentialist** is published monthly. Deadline for the September 2015 newsletter is August 16. 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.