

# 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 •

## First E Members Hold Work Day to Prepare for New Lighting

**First E members** have begun a project to fix the lighting in the Sanctuary. In the fall, we talked with electricians about what it would take to improve the lighting. We decided that members will do much of the non-electrical work. Then we will take bids from electricians to do the rewiring.

As a first step, Bill Laney, who is spearheading the effort, and other members held a work day on Saturday, November 17, to take down the light bars in the sanctuary in preparation for having new lighting installed. They took out old track lighting and took lumber into the attic to be attached to the new unistrut (a bar from which new lights will hang). Jon Nye, Andy Weiskoff helped with the demolition, and Bill Laney and Bill Read carried new lumber up into the attic. "Adult supervision was provided by Marsha Mitchiner," says Andy.



*Bill Laney, Bill Read, and Robert Stewart (l-r) contemplate the attic. Photo by Andy Weiskoff.*

A second workday was held on December 8 to complete hanging the unistrut. When the project is complete, we will have beautiful lighting in the Sanctuary, making it possible for us once again to hang art on the walls. Stay tuned for progress reports! ~

**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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office@firstexistentialist.org

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

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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  
with additions by Charlene Ball*

**The First E Board** met on Tuesday, November 13 at 7:00 pm. Edi/th Kelman reported that the History Project materials currently in their office will be transferred sometime in 2013 to Mary Lin Elementary School so they will be more accessible to students, teachers, and researchers. She asked the Board if she could barter for the rent she's been paying for the office. The History Project's initial funding is dwindling down and the remaining funds will be needed for supplies. Other grants are for specific projects such as the bench and markers at important sites. What we get in return is the public relations that the History Project provides for the congregation. We voted unanimously to provide office space to the History Project from October, 2012 to October, 2013.

Ted Pettus presented Randy Pimsler's proposal to apply for a Special Use Permit which would permit an after school program to use the downstairs area. The application will include applying for a building permit and a variance and will cost \$3,580.00 plus application fees and other costs. The motion to accept Randy's proposal PASSED unanimously. Once we have an after school program we can recoup the costs within a year. The Finance Guild will discuss how to finance the project. One source of funding will be loans from individual members, some of whom have volunteered to lend funds.

Phyllis Thakis proposed that our retreat at The Mountain take place the weekend of May 3-5, 2013. We are currently asking members to indicate whether they are interested in going to the retreat so we can determine how much space we need to ask for. We need to sign the contract soon, so if you have not filled out a form indicating your interest, please do so. The forms are available in the sanctuary during Celebrations of Life and by attachment of Robert's e-mails.

Marsha Mitchener suggested a round table discussion with Board members, Guild chairs, and any interested members, regarding why we are losing members and not gaining new members, and how we can be more attractive and welcoming to new members. A COL on January 6 will address these issues with Marsha facilitating. Marsha will also speak on February 10 on this issue. The roundtable will be planned at a future date after a service to further delve into these issues.

Big Change—Andy Weiskoff asked if we could change our meeting date to the first Monday each month since there is a very noisy rental upstairs every Tuesday. We voted to change the meeting date to the first Monday each month.

The next Board meeting will be on Monday, December 3 at 7:00 p.m. at First E. (Note new day of meeting.) ~

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## ***Guild Reports***

### ***Membership Guild***

**The Membership Guild** has no report for December. ~

### ***Program Guild*** *by Charlene Ball*

**The Program Guild** has some great speakers for our Celebrations of Life in December. On December 3, Rev. Marti Keller will speak; her title is "Good Stuff." Lynn Tippetts will facilitate, and Alan Dynin will provide accompaniment. On December 9, Rev. Marsha Mitchiner will speak on "What Now?" Rev. Janna Nelson returns on Dec. 16 with "Primal Blessings of the Solstice," and Scott Hooker (who ought to be called "Reverend" in his own right!) will provide accompaniment and special music. On December 23, we have a new guest speaker, Mandisa Lateefah Thomas, whose topic is "14 to 34: My Journey Back to Atheism." D. Patton White will facilitate, and Richard Rifkin will play the piano. Finally, our speaker for December 30 is Mona Reeves, who returns to First E with a talk entitled "The Power of Purpose: Living Our Deepest Truths through Nia." Mona spoke to us last year about Kwanzaa, and her topic this time will develop the concept of "Nia," or "Purpose." (See page 7 for articles on guest speakers.)

The Program Guild consists of Patton White (chair), Charlene Ball, Linda Bell, and Bill Laney. We arrange for speakers, facilitators, and accompanists for our Sunday COLs. We need facilitators for Sunday COLs! If you are looking for a way to become more involved in First E, consider facilitating. It's simple; there are guidelines as well as other facilitators who will be happy to share information and tips. Contact a PG member: Patton White: [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) . ~

### ***Social Justice Guild***

**The Social Justice Guild** has no report for December. ~

### ***Building & Grounds***

**Building and Grounds** has no report for December. ~

## **Community News & Activities**

--**Our Children's Program** needs the following: a CD/tape player, paper money, glass or plastic cups (about 20) clay and playdough, a bracket for the padlock, and wipes and diapers.

--**Martha Renfroe-Gardner** has had surgery on her other knee. Please keep her and Sharon in your thoughts.

--**Laura Arnold** was ordained on November 25 at Kirkwood UCC. Starting January 1, she will be the pastor of Congregational UCC in Decorah, IA. Congratulations to Laura!

--**Georgia Women's Policy Institute** (GWPI) is accepting applications for 2013 from representatives of organizations and individuals who want to work on improving the safety and well-being of older women or women's health issues. If interested, contact Chris Carroll at [carrollcrs@yahoo.com](mailto:carrollcrs@yahoo.com).

*Continued on page 5*

# Finance Report: October 2012

## General Operating Account Thru Oct. 31

Total Income 49,349  
 Total Expenses (52,044)  
**2012 Cash Flow (2,695)**

*Third Friday Film Series  
 No Movie in December  
 Film Series Returns in January  
 Happy Holidays*

## Fund Types & Names Account Balances on Oct. 31

< unaudited >

**General Operating Account (1,830)**

**Designated Operating Funds 7,907**

Gay Dellinger Estate Gift 1,671  
 Handicap Access Ramp 1,045  
 Lanier Clance Lighting 1,044  
 Leadership Development 295  
 Community Garden (443)  
 Building & Grounds 259  
 Woodland Sanctuary 919  
 Minister's Discretionary 382  
 Original 1st E History 68  
 Labyrinth & Garden 256  
 Social Justice 889  
 Attic Insulation Fund 1,250  
 Music Fund 150  
 Children's Program 122

**Savings: Pat Hewatt Revolving Loan Fund 5,063**

**Total First E Funds 11,140**

## Old Stone Church History Project

Bi-Racial History Account 2,283  
 Legacy Markers Account 732

**Total History Project Funds 3,015**

## Birthdays in December

### First E Members:

Name	Birthdate
Lynn Tippetts	12/5
R. Lanier Clance	12/18
Phyllis Thakis	12/31

**Wednesday Night Suppers  
 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.*

*Life is difficult and complicated and  
 beyond anyone's total control, and  
 the humility to know that will en-  
 able you to survive its vicissitudes. J.K.  
 Rowling*

**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

# Social Justice Guild Co-sponsors Bayard Rustin Film at Auburn Avenue Research Library

In commemoration of Bayard Rustin's 100th birthday, the film biography *Brother Outsider* was shown at the Auburn Avenue Research Library on November 8. The Social Justice Guild, along with numerous community organizations, sponsored the event. After the film, Lorraine Fontana moderated a panel discussion about the historical and contemporary socio-political evolution of the African American LGBT community, and the ongoing struggle against homophobia and racism. Panelists included:

- Craig Washington - HIV/AIDS activist, co-organizer of the annual Bayard Rustin-Lorde Community Breakfast, former co-director of SONG and trainer for the National Coalition Builders Institute.
- Harlon Joye - labor, civil rights and progressive activist who worked with Bayard Rustin in NYC. He is one of the co-founders of WRFG and host of the long-running radio program, Fox's Minstrel Show.
- Lucas Johnson - serves on the National Council of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (USA), the International Committee of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, and the board of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. ~

### *Community News and Activities*

*continued from page 3*

--**Dickens' A Christmas Carol** will be presented in the Sanctuary on December 8 by JibJam Productions at 4:00 and 7:00 pm. For reservations, call 404-567-5906 or email [JibJam@JibJamProductions.com](mailto:JibJam@JibJamProductions.com). Admission is free, donations accepted.

--**Rev. Chris Glaser** has an article in the Huff Post. To read it, go to [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rev-chris-glaser/pushing-tiny-tim-over-fiscal-cliff\\_b\\_2252775.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rev-chris-glaser/pushing-tiny-tim-over-fiscal-cliff_b_2252775.html). Congratulations to Chris!

--**Victoria Trestrail** asks that we keep her and her sister in our thoughts as they continue the process of recovering from their mother's death.

--**Lisa Cottrell** has opened a private practice and is accepting new clients. She specializes in treating clients with depression, anxiety, trauma, PTSD, addiction recovery and relapse prevention, undergoing life transitions, especially those with a desire for personal and spiritual growth. She utilizes a variety of techniques including Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, Brain-spotting, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, Developmental Needs Meeting Strategy, Self-Love Therapy, Meditative Practices, Hypnotherapy, Positive Psychology, Body and Energy work. Contact Lisa at 404-931-3066.

--**Let's fill up the Food Barrel** for the holidays! Bring canned and packaged goods and nonperishables.

--**Drop Robert a line** if you have information to share at [rstewart@toyodausa.com](mailto:rstewart@toyodausa.com). ~

Please 'like' us on Facebook! <https://www.facebook.com/groups/43340332955/>

# **December 2012 Sunday Celebrations of Life**

**December 2**      *Good Stuff*  
**Speaker:**      *Rev. Marti Keller*  
**Facilitator:**    *Lynn Tippets*  
**Accompanist:** *Alan Dynin*

**December 9**     *What Now?*  
**Speaker:**      *Rev. Marsha Mitchiner*  
**Facilitator:**    *TBA*  
**Accompanist:** *Richard Rifkin*

**December 16**    *Primal Blessings of the Solstice*  
**Speaker:**      *Janna Nelson*  
**Facilitator:**    *TBA*  
**Accompanist:** *Scott Hooker*

**December 23**    *14 to 34: My Journey Back to Atheism*  
**Speaker:**      *Mandisa Lateefah Thomas*  
**Facilitator:**    *D. Patton White*  
**Accompanist:** *Richard Rifkin*

**December 30**    *The Power of Purpose: Living Our Deepest Truths Through Nia*  
**Speaker:**      *Mona Reeves*  
**Facilitator:**    *Lorraine Fontana*  
**Accompanist:** *William "Bill" Chelton*

**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.**



## Rev. Marti Keller Speaks on "Great Stuff" December 3

Rev. Marti Keller  
Photographer unknown

**Rev. Marti Keller** is the second minister with the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta. A lifelong self-described Jewnitarian, she is the President

of Unitarian-Universalists for Jewish Awareness (UUJA) and an active member of the Society for Humanistic Judaism. Last year she was a facilitator this past year for the joint First E and UUCA field test of Building the World We Dream About, an anti-racist, welcoming curriculum. ~

## Mona Reeves Returns to First E with "The Power of Purpose: Living Our Deepest Truths Through Nia" for Kwanzaa on December 30

Mona Reeves is an artist of life. Since 1989, she has consciously been on a path of spiritual evolution and transformation. Her mission is to express herself creatively, live joyfully, live openly and deeply, and to inspire people to be who they really are – living manifestations of



Mona Reeves  
Photographer unknown

love, beauty, joy, and magnificence. She is especially drawn to supporting people in dissolving the barriers to freedom that arise from racism and repressed sexuality. Mona was part of the pilot program, Building the World We Dream About, a joint First E/UUCA project. She will be returning to First E to speak about Nia, one of the principles of Kwanzaa.

She is currently editing a book on reclaiming power through forgiveness. Whether serving as a professional artist's model, teacher, writer, or mother of five, Mona is always on the path of spiritual growth through the paths of love and mindful awareness. ~

*I want to look back and say that I was alive. That I didn't turn my back. That I tried. That I was happy. ~ Evelyn Waugh*

## Mandisa Thomas's Journey Back to Atheism

Mandisa Thomas, founder and current President of Black Nonbelievers, Inc., will speak at First E on December 23. Her talk is entitled "My Journey Back to Atheism."



Mandisa Thomas  
Photographer unknown

Although never formally indoctrinated into belief, Mandisa was heavily exposed to Christianity, Black Nationalism and a bit of Islam. As a child she loved reading, and enjoyed various tales of gods from different cultures, including Greek and Ghanaian. "Through reading these stories and being taught about other cultures at an early age, I quickly noticed that there were similarities and differences between those deities and the God of the Christian Bible. I couldn't help but wonder what made this God so special that he warrants such prevalence in today's society," she recalls.

Mandisa was featured in the April 30th issue of *JET Magazine*, has been a guest speaker with such organizations as the Secular Humanists of the Low Country, Humanists of Florida and American Atheists. She has been also been a guest on podcasts including: The Critical Eye, Ask an Atheist, and the Black Freethinkers Blogtalk Radio Show. In addition to her continuing work as an activist, she has expanded her professional horizons and created MLT's Elevation Station, an agency that offers booking, management and business writing services to independent musicians.

As President of Black Nonbelievers, Inc., Mandisa works to encourage more Blacks to come out and stand strong with their nonbelief in the face of such strong religious overtones. "The more we make our presence known, the better our chances of working together to turn around some of the disparities we face. We are NOT alone." ~



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*The miracle is not that oil lasts,  
But that our hope lasts, despite disappoint-  
ment.*

*The miracle is not that fire illumines,  
But that we grow brighter.*

*The miracle is not that people tell ancient  
stories,  
But that people dare to live their own sto-  
ries.*

*The miracle is not that tyranny is resisted,  
But that resistance recreates us into new  
beings.*

*The miracle is not that courage exists,  
But that courage does not, every time, have  
to ball itself into a fist.*

*by Rev. Mark Belletini*

*~ Have a Safe and Peaceful Holiday Season ~  
~ Best Wishes for the New Year ~*

*The First E Newsletter is published monthly. The deadline for submission of material for the January 2013 newsletter is December 9. 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.*