
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 •

~ Happy New Year ~

From All of Us

at the

First Existentialist

Congregation of Atlanta!

~

**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:
Edith Covington,
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

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spiritual community
dedicated to
human liberation
and founded on existentialist
and feminist principles.



Notes From the Board of Directors

By D. Patton White, Board Chair

The Board of Directors met on Monday, December 7, and enjoyed a celebratory meeting with refreshments brought by all. Discussed items included an informational presentation by Sharon Mathis on dealing with disruptions during the Celebrations of Life, an update on the automatic door opening device for our front door, an update on a new microphone for use by speakers, and another very positive financial report from treasurer Bill Read. The board will begin the process of recruiting three new board members to replace three board members who are rotating off in May, 2016. The next board meeting will be on Monday, January 11, at 7:00 p.m., due to out of town schedules for some board members. All are welcome to attend! ~

Musicians Wanted

The First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta is seeking musicians to play on Sunday mornings. We are looking for musicians who can lead and accompany the congregation in four congregational songs as well as share a brief performance of another piece of music. We pay a \$75 honorarium per Sunday. If you are interested in being included in the pool of musicians for our Sunday Celebrations of Life, held every Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., please email Program Guild Chair D. Patton White at patton@beacondance.org or call him at 404.441.9243.

Community News & Activities

--The Book Discussion Group will meet on Sunday, January 3, after the COL. We will discuss the last chapter of *Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome* by Joy DeGruy and decide what we will read next. All are welcome.

--OLOC Atlanta (Old Lesbians Organizing for Change) meets on the first Saturday of each month. Minimum age is 50. If you are interested, see Saralyn.

--Arlene would be happy to know of anyone whose kids need tutoring.

--ONGOING:

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

--Geek Chorus meets on Second Wednesdays.

COMMUNITY:

--Submissions and news for the February Newsletter are due to Charlene by Sunday, January 17. Send to mcharleneball@yahoo.com. Contact Robert Stewart with your news and activities for his weekly e-newsletter: robertstewart369@gmail.com. ~

Guild Reports

Program Guild ***By Charlene Ball***

The Program Guild has invited familiar and new speakers for January. On January 3, Franklin Abbott, a longtime friend of our Congregation, will speak. On January 10, First E member Elvie Balagot will speak. Rev. Angela Denise Davis will return on January 17, and Rev. Duncan Teague will speak on January 24. Rev. Marti Keller will speak on the fifth Sunday, January 31.

We will have a Facilitators Meeting on January 17 following the Celebration of Life to discuss how to deal with disruptions in the service. Any member may attend, even if you are not a facilitator.

Our members are Patton White (chair), Linda Bell, Charlene Ball, Saralyn Chesnut, Bill Laney, and Hank Pfadenhauer. Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, February 9, 2016, in the Sanctuary at 6:00 p.m. All members and friends are welcome to attend. ~

Membership Guild ***By Charlene Ball***

The Membership Guild explores ways to increase membership. 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 cincodemayo55@comcast.net or Elaine at ergale@hotmail.com. ~

Social Justice Guild ***By Linda Bell***

The Social Justice Guild members remain active in various social justice projects, including writing for the Social Justice Corner in *The First Existentialist Newsletter*, sponsoring the Book Discussion Group, and taking part in community social justice activities. ~

We are social creatures to the inmost centre of our being. The notion that one can begin anything at all from scratch, free from the past, or unindebted to others, could not conceivably be more wrong. ~ Karl Popper, philosopher

November 2015 Finance Report

<u>2015 Cash Flow</u>	<u>Operating</u>	<u>Designated</u>
Total Income	68,541	3,319
Total Expenses	(63,350)	(6,706)
Net thru November 30	5,191	(3,387)

Fund Types & Names Account Balances on November 30

<unaudited>

2015 General Operating Account 5,191

Designated Operating Funds **23,258**

Use Where Needed Fund	1,461
Sanctuary Accessibility	14,134
Leadership Development	750
Community Garden/Labyrinth	32
Building & Grounds	986
Woodland Sanctuary	1,343
Minister's Discretionary	1,105
Social Justice	1,250
Attic Insulation Fund	1,250
Children's Program	692
Music Fund	255

Pat Hewatt Revolving Loan Fund (\$8K) 7,816

Total First E Funds **36,265**

Old Stone Church History Project **1,736**

*We must be willing to let go of the life
we have planned, so as to have the life
that is waiting for us. ~ E. M. Forster,
novelist*

FUND OF THE MONTH CLUB

The Fund of the Month is the Building and Grounds Fund. Please write "Building and Grounds Fund" on your check. ~

2016 Members and Friends Update

Our 2016 Members and Friends Annual Campaign started at Thanksgiving, was in full swing during December, and is now wrapping up during January.

New Board elections are in April... Please send in your 2016 pledge form by January 31 (so you can vote for the new Board).

The 2016 Pledge Form is available on the First E website and also on the Sanctuary literature rack. Or we can email a form to you.

Please pledge your 2016 support of First E as a Member or Friend.

Thank You... The 2015 Congregation

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>.

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

Social Justice Corner

Conscious Aging

By Dr. Saralyn Chesnut

I offered to write this article about being old because I am now old. It's called different things, of course; most of us don't call ourselves just plain "old." Instead, we say we're aging, or older, or elderly, or senior citizens, or sometimes a more dignified term, elders. In fact, when I joined an organization that requires its members to describe themselves as old, I found that it is difficult for me to do so, although in principle I not only accept but embrace the term.

It's easy to understand why, in our culture, we old people find it hard to claim and proclaim our oldness. We are not part of what the late poet Audre Lorde calls the "mythical norm...

white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financial-ly secure." The norm is mythical because the vast majority of us don't have all of those attributes, but it's still the standard against we're all measured. To

[E]veryone except a newborn baby is older than someone else.

be outside this norm is to be Other, and the traits that make us Other can (and will) be used against us. It may seem that terms like aging and older position us as more mainstream and thus closer to that mythical norm: after all, everyone is aging, and everyone except a newborn baby is older than someone else.

Ultimately, though, people like me can't deny that in our culture at large we are old, and will often be viewed as past our prime, old-fashioned, out of touch with current trends and clueless about new technologies, whether we are or not. That's why it may be important for us to call ourselves old: if we do, we can notice the messages about oldness that we've inevitably internalized over the course of our lives, and how we feel when we hear them in our own minds. To me, that's part of what the term "conscious aging"—a term I hear used more and more often these days—means. It means that I notice, without buying into, the feelings and thoughts that arise in my mind and body when I think of myself as old, when I look in the mirror and see an old woman, when the cashier at Kroger automatically gives me the Senior Discount on Wednesdays.

I also think of conscious aging as being no different from conscious, or mindful, living itself. It means being present as best we

When we live consciously or mindfully, we are all the same age.

can each moment, being mindful of what is going on around and within us as it is happening. It means noticing our thoughts and our feelings, both emotional and physical, in every moment as we go about our daily lives. When we do pay attention, we will notice

that our thoughts and feelings come and go. They are not permanent, they are not reality, and they are not us. They are thoughts and feelings, and they come and go.

When we live consciously or mindfully, we are all the same age. There is no difference between being young and being old. For all of us, nothing is permanent. Life itself is not permanent. Each breath is a new beginning, and the next breath is not guaranteed. In the end, all any of us has is the present moment. As the American Buddhist teacher Pema Chodron writes, "One can appreciate and celebrate each moment—there's nothing more sacred. There's nothing more vast or absolute. In fact, there's nothing more!" ~

Minister's Corner

By Rev. Marsha Mitchiner, First E Fellowship Minister

Caring Thoughts Go Out To:

- *Sharon Sanders, who is out of the hospital following a bout with pneumonia.*
- *Shirley Wren, whose father has been ill.*
- *Kitty Wimbish, who is recovering from surgery (but still danced her hula accompanied by others at the COL service 12/22).*
- *Mark White family, as they continue to help his son deal with a difficult illness.*
- *Mary Turnpaugh and family, as they experience the holidays (and every day) without Mary's son-in-law who died earlier this year.*
- *Nathaniel Jones, who is looking forward to transitioning to a group home soon.*

Congratulations to:

- *Ted Pettus, on the release of the album "The Odyssey of Cledus Jeremiah Jones." Limited copies available. See Ted to get your copy!*
- *Dr. Jean Heinrich, who has settled in to a new space and new job working with military personnel in Hawaii. Our loss is their gain.*

HOLIDAY GIVING SUCCESS

There were too many coats, jackets, sweaters, and more to count, but my car was loaded to the roof with your generous donations. The helpers at Lost and Found Youth were excited as we made trip after trip to bring everything into the building. Many thanks to each of you for caring and giving. ~

Compassion is not weakness and concern for the unfortunate is not socialism. ~ Hubert Humphrey, US Vice President

Speakers in January

January 3: Franklin Abbott

Franklin Abbott, who will speak at First E on January 3 on "Letting Go," is a psychotherapist in private practice and a poet. He is Chairperson of the Atlanta Queer Literary Festival. He is the author of *Pink Zinnia: Poems and Stories* (2009), *Mortal Love: Selected Poems 1971-1998* (1999), *Boyhood: Growing Up Male* (1998), and other books. ~



Franklin Abbott

January 10: Elvie Balagot

Elvie Balagot, a First E member, is the founder and current chairwoman of the **Suzanne Lee Prince Foundation**, a 100% volunteer non-profit organization with the primary mission of advancing awareness of vulvar cancer. The ultimate vision of SLPF is rooted in the belief that knowledge is an important key which empowers us to take control of our own health and well-being. Elvie will speak on January 10 on the topic "Viva la Vulva!" ~

January 17: Rev. Angela Denise Davis



Rev. Angela Denise Davis

Rev. Angela Denise Davis, a frequent speaker at First E, is an **ordained minister and a certified rehabilitation counselor**. A graduate of Clark Atlanta University, she holds graduate degrees from Vanderbilt University Divinity School and Georgia State University. She worked as the admissions director at Vanderbilt University Divinity School and the continuing education director at American Baptist College in Nashville, Tennessee. She works at the Career Development Services Manager at the Center for the Visually Impaired. She is also an artist, and has been a freelance graphic designer for over 20 years. She currently sits on the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), and serves as vice-president. She facilitates a spiritual collective, Sister Harriet, which she started in 2010. She lives with her partner, Mary Anne Adams, and their canine child, Kasi (pronounced "Cassie") in East Point, GA. Angela will speak on January 17 on "Getting Here." ~

Speakers in January ~ Continued

January 24: Rev. Duncan Teague

Rev. Duncan Teague is an ordained Unitarian Universalist (UU) Minister and a longtime friend of and speaker at First E. He was a part of the Interim Ministry Team serving the First Existentialist Congregation as a Lay Minister, serving with Rev. Marsha Mitchiner and Rev. Janna Nelson upon the retirement of Rev. Lanier Clance. He has been a pulpit guest at many of the Unitarian Universalist congregations, as well as other churches and synagogues.

Duncan has more than twenty years of work in HIV/AIDS advocacy, prevention, education and research and is a recognized leader in the GLBTQ community. He contributed to the book ***Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South*** by E. Patrick Johnson, and he was featured in the reader's theatre production and the full staged adaptations of the book. He was the senior member of the ADODI Muse: A Gay Negro Ensemble. He is happily married to his husband, David Thurman.



Duncan will speak on January 24 on "What Grows in Winter?" ~

January 31: Rev. Marti Keller



Rev. Marti Keller has been working as a parish, community and teaching UU minister in the Mid-South for 16 years and now serves as the affiliated minister with the national UU Women's Federation. Locally, she is a board member for the Faith Alliance of Metro Atlanta (FAMA), which is the umbrella organization for the Compassionate Cities initiative in this area, as well as a member of the recently constituted Compassionate Decatur committee.

Marti will speak on January 31 on "An El Niño Year."

For more background on Rev. Marti Keller, go to www.revmartikeller.com.

January 2016 Sunday Celebrations of Life

- January 3** ***Letting Go***
Speaker: Franklin Abbott
Facilitator: Libby Ware
Accompanist: Aviva and the Flying Penguins
- January 10** ***Viva la Vulva!***
Speaker: Elvie Balagot
Facilitator: Dr. Charlene Ball
Accompanist: Alan Dynin
- January 17** ***Getting Here***
Speaker: Rev. Angela Denise Davis
Facilitator: Lorraine Fontana
Accompanist: William "Bill" Chelton
- January 24** ***What Grows in Winter?***
Speaker: Rev. Duncan Teague
Facilitator: Cindy Lou Who
Accompanist: Aviva and the Flying Penguins
- January 31** ***An El Nino Year***
Speaker: Rev. Marti Keller
Facilitator: D. Patton White
Accompanist: Charli Vogt

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The Back Page

Members and Friends Speak



From “September 1, 1939”

By W. H. Auden

All I have is a voice

To undo the folded lie,

The romantic lie in the brain

Of the sensual man-in-the-street

And the lie of Authority

Whose buildings grope the sky:

There is no such thing as the State

And no one exists alone;

Hunger allows no choice

To the citizen or the police;

We must love one another or die.

*Quoted by Murphy Brown in **Hospitality**, November-December 2015*

The Existentialist is published monthly. Deadline for the February 2016 newsletter is January 17. Send your articles and announcements to mcharleneball@yahoo.com. The editor reserves the right to edit or refuse any material submitted.