

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 •

Existential Moment Coffeehouse July 2 & Great Existential Book & Bake Sale July 16

EXISTENTIAL MOMENT COFFEEHOUSE

SATURDAY, JULY 2 • 7:30 PM



IMPROVABLES IMPROV GROUP • KAREN G

THERESA DAVIS • AUBREY COX • MEG GIBBS

Don't miss the the Existential Moment Coffeehouse on July 2!

Enjoy music, food, spoken word and a silent auction, all benefitting the First Existentialist.

Come and support the First E! Doors open at 7:00 p.m. & show starts at 7:30 p.m.

Cost is \$5 and up sliding scale per adult.

First Existentialist Congregation
470 Candler Park Dr. • Across from the Park

404-378-5570
www.firstexistentialist.org

AVIVA • CRAIG RAFUSE



Gigantic Book & Bake Sale

Saturday, July 16, 9am – 2pm

at the First Existentialist Congregation

Books, audio books, CDs, cassettes, LPs, movies,
and homemade baked goods

Located at 470 Candler Park Drive, Atlanta, GA 30307
(Across from the Candler Park Golf Course)

404-378-5570 www.firstexistentialist.org

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**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

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Treasurer; Charlene
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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 of Directors

By D. Patton White, Board Chair

The Board of Directors met on Monday, June 13, at 6:30 p.m in the sanctuary. The board approved a request from Lorraine Fontana for her to cyber-attend the UU General Assembly. The Board also heard from Bill Laney that the Building and Grounds Guild is considering a type of refinishing of the floor of the sanctuary. The Board also approved a request from the Social Justice Guild to direct 15% of the proceeds from the upcoming yard sale fund raiser towards a scholarship for student at CUNY. The board also heard reports from Fellowship Minister Rev. Marsha Mitchiner and our administrative staff member Edith Covington. Edith reported that rentals continue to be strong. Other guilds and committees shared reports, highlights include a positive cash flow from finance, the upcoming fund raising events from Fund Raising, and regular meetings by the Program, Membership and Social Justice Guilds. The Board will meet on Monday, July 11, due to the first Monday being a holiday, July 4. The meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. All are welcome to attend. ~

Community News & Activities

--Saturday, July 2, First E presents a sizzling summer Coffeehouse/Variety Show with improv, comedy, spoken word, music, slam poetry, and more! See story on page 6.

--The Great Existentialist Book & Bake Sale will be on Saturday, July 16. To donate books, CDs, DVDs, vinyl, and games, see Libby or Charlene. To volunteer, see Marsha. Story on page 6.

--First E has our own 'Black Lives Matter' banner! Thanks to Andy Weiskoff, Bill Read, and Lorraine Fontana for gathering the money and getting the banner made and hung.

--Aviva has offered to lead singing/ teach us to sing, so if you're interested please let her know. A class will be scheduled soon, probably immediately after a COL.

--Anyone interested in an ongoing meditation group after Sunday services, please contact Andy at Andyweiskoff952@icloud.com.

News From First E Members and Friends

--We were delighted to welcome back visitor Susan, who has been friends with Linda Bell since Emory days.

--Mark's son Daniel was admitted to Mass General at 3 s.m. last week. Please keep Mark and his family in your positive meditations.

Community:

--Sister Harriet, a women's spirituality circle, meets on the second Sunday of every

Community News continued on page 6.

Guild Reports

Art Guild

By Charlene Ball

The Art Guild Members of the Art Guild are Glen Lopez, Chair; Charlene Ball; Elaine Gale; Patton White, and Kitty Wimbish. We will plan visual art exhibits and artistic performances throughout the year. We welcome feedback from members and friends. ~

Fundraising Guild

By Charlene Ball

The Fundraising Guild organizes fundraising activities throughout the year. In July we are sponsoring the July 2 Coffeehouse and the July 16 Great Existential Book and Bake Sale. Members of the Fundraising Guild are Libby Ware, Stell Simonton, and Charlene Ball. If you'd like to help with our fun-raising, please volunteer! ~

Membership Guild

By Charlene Ball

The Membership Guild at First E hosted a kiddush on June 19 to celebrate Father's Day and the Art Opening of Helen De Ramus' beautiful encaustic art pieces. Helen was on hand to talk more about her art and the history of the encaustic method. Quite a few people stayed to enjoy the food offerings and each others' company. We are always grateful to the Membership Guild members who donate so generously to the kiddush, giving us the opportunity to eat together and chat and get to know each other better.

At our last meeting, the Guild talked about finding a project that would involve the greater community outside our congregation. We are brain-storming for an enterprise that would help others and acquaint them with our congregation. Some of our ideas mentioned so far include assisting elderly neighbors in Candler Park with needed home maintenance, offering a CPR class in our building, maybe helping refugees in Clarkston. Other ideas include having movie nights to introduce Candler Park neighbors to us and our building. Also, we could have a pancake breakfast. Another idea is to partner with the Candler Park Neighborhood Association somehow to get more visibility in the community. We welcome other suggestions from our congregation.

If you're interested in joining us, contact Wilj at cincodemayo55@comcast.net or Elaine at ergale@hotmail.com. ~

Program Guild

By Charlene Ball

The Program Guild secures speakers, facilitators, and musicians for Sunday Celebrations of Life. For July, we have five speakers on the five Sundays. On July 3, Dr. Saralyn Chesnut will be speaking on patriotism. On July 10, we will hear Rev. Duncan Teague. On July 17, Rev. Dean Rowley returns. On July 24, Rev. Angela Denise Davis will speak. And on July 31, Rev. Marti Keller will speak. Our facilitators this month will be Libby Ware, Barbara Van Helsdingen, Patton White, Dr. Sharon Mathis, and Rev. Marsha Mitchiner. Bringing us music will be Charli Vogt, William Chelton, David Tyberg, and Aviva and the Flying Penguins.

Our members are Patton White (chair), Linda Bell, Charlene Ball, and Saralyn Chesnut. Rev. Marsha Mitchiner also gives input. Patton organizes the musicians, so if you know of a musician you'd like to recommend, let Patton know. Con-

Guild Reports continued on page 6.

Social Justice Corner

This Time It Was Personal

By Libby Ware

This time it was personal. These are my people. My LGBTQ brothers and sisters. Those killed in Orlando were targeted because they were at a gay dance club on Latin Night. They were predominately gay, Puerto Rican (first, second, or third generation), and young.

I don't remember crying about the victims of most other mass shootings, but I cried several times about the victims in Orlando. The day I found out I was in shock. The second day, I cried several times when reading their stories. Two days later I went to a rally at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights. As the names and ages were called out, I was struck by how young they were.

This was the generation that was promised, "It gets better."

The It Gets Better campaign was developed by activist Dan Savage in 2010 in response to suicide among LGBTQ teenagers. Savage made a video about his life as a married gay man with an adopted son. While well-intentioned, let's not forget that Savage is a white middle

This was the generation that was promised, "It gets better."

class, middle-aged, man who, as a writer, is known publicly as an out proud gay man. Many countries, celebrities, politicians, and non-famous people made videos to convince LGBTQ teen-agers that their lives will get better. Unfortunately, some lives get worse before they get better. Or, many just get worse. Some teenagers who participated in "It Gets Better" videos themselves committed suicide. Other LGBTQ teens were thrown out of their homes and into the streets by family members,



Memorial for shooting victim outside Pulse nightclub, Orlando. Photograph by Libby Ware.

leading to several years of homelessness. Some were assaulted or murdered, especially transwomen of color who are killed at alarming rates. (Many crimes are not reported as hate crimes, so it is hard to get an accurate count.) Hate crimes don't stop just because the victim is no longer a teen.

Last week I was in Orlando for the American Library Association's meeting. While there, my wife, my brother, my mother, and I went to Pulse. There were still many flowers, candles, balloons, other tokens of sorrow, and a separate a memorial to each person killed. A silent crowd of people were paying their respects to the victims. Not all victims died, and many are still hospitalized. Throughout Orlando we saw signs saying "Orlando Strong." But we're not always strong. Sometimes we cry. ~

Guild Reports ~ Continued from Page 3

tact him at patton@beacondance.org. Charlene organizes the facilitators. If you would like to facilitate, contact her at mcharleneball@yahoo.com.

The next meeting of the Program Guild will be August 30 at 5:00 p.m. in the First E Sanctuary. All members and friends are welcome to attend our meetings. ~

Social Justice Guild ***By Linda Bell and Charlene Ball***

The Social Justice Guild meets every other month. Our next meeting will be August 7 downstairs after the COL service. 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. Guild members are Katrice Baker, Linda Bell, Saralyn Chesnut, Lorraine Fontana, Edi Kelman, and Libby Ware. We welcome new members. All members and friends are welcome to attend our meetings. ~

Community News & Activities Continued ***from Page 2***

month in the First E Sanctuary at 2:00 p.m. Rev. Angela Denise Davis leads the circle. ~

--**Submissions and news for the August newsletter** are due to Charlene by Sunday, May 15. Send to mcharleneball@yahoo.com.

--**Contact Robert Stewart** with your news and activities for his weekly e-newsletter: robertstewart369@gmail.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>.

Minister's Corner ***By Rev. Marsha Mitchiner***

LOVING THOUGHTS and CONCERNS

--**To Martha Renfroe Garner and Sharon Sanders**-- Martha is in PT and happy to report she is steadily getting stronger; Sharon continues to have breathing problems that limit her housekeeping and "playing in the dirt" but doesn't keep her from getting out and about. They welcome your thoughts, prayers and contacts.

--**To the victims, their families and friends, the LGBT community of Orlando** and everyone who is grieving over the violent act of terror at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando--our hearts are with you in sorrow and love just as our spirit and determination are strengthened to overcome bigotry and hate.

--**A sad farewell coupled with best wishes to Jan Lister** who has accepted a job that will take her out of Atlanta. We send with her our wishes for a smooth move, happiness in her new job/home and appreciation for the time she was a part of our community. We will miss you, Jan, and hope you will keep in touch.

--**Kudos to Ted Pettus and Aviva who performed their music at a special service** held at Emory U for the victims of the Orlando shooting. Word is that it was a wonderful service and Ted/Aviva's music was perfect.

Thanks to Stell Simonton and Saralyn Chestnut for coordinating the E Yard Sale and to all those who donated, volunteered and shopped. And a big shout out to the E Kids for their lemonade stand. ~

As a congregation, we pledge to strive: To develop compassion toward others, within the congregation and without; To recognize the humanity and dignity of those who disagree with us, always giving them the benefit of the doubt; To listen with open minds, to be respectful, and to keep channels of communication open, especially when we disagree.

*From The First Existentialist
Congregation's Commitment
Statement ~*

Existential Moment Coffeehouse July 2

The Existential Moment CoffEEhouse will happen on Saturday, July 2, at 7:30 p.m. at First E, 470 Candler Park Drive. Improv by the Improvables, music by Aubrey Cox, William Chelton, Craig Rafuse, and Aviva, plus slam poetry/spoken word by Karen G, Malika, Amy Weaver, and Theresa Davis! Also savory and sweet treats by Mary Turnpaugh (remember her treat boxes?) and Edi Kelman, in addition to your favorite beverages -- all for donations. ~

Great Existential Book & Bake Sale July 16

The Great Existential Book & Bake Sale will happen early this year -- on July 16. There's time to donate books, CDs, DVDs, even LPs, as well as puzzles and games (no toys or non-print-related items, please). We will have tons of books of all kinds for rock-bottom prices! Plus sweet treats by First E members (pie, cookies, banana bread!) See Marsha to volunteer. And, since Existentialists love books, be sure to be there on Saturday, July 16, to get the best bargains!~

Fathers' Day at First E.

I'm sorry for those who were unable to attend the COL on Fathers Day because I enjoyed it very much. Robert Stewart was his usual delightful self providing some interesting readings as he facilitated the service. David Tyberg led us in music that included "Teach Your Children" by Crosby, Stills, and Nash. David provided a sheet with the words, but it was obvious from the first note that our attendees knew it well. Dr. Jon Herman, Professor of Eastern Religion and Philosophy at Ga State U, spoke on "Daddies, Daughters, and Daoism". His family came with him-- wife, Ellen, and two daughters adopted from China, Molly who is an upcoming sophomore in college and Carly who is an upcoming freshman in high school. Although I know Jon and hear him talk about his family, I was drawn into his message by his humor, wit, and insight as he described his journey into fatherhood. In my conversation with them after the service, both daughters talked easily with me and others and expressed their surprise at some of the stories he relayed. The self-assured and positive manner of these women/adults-to-be gave me hope for the future. And to top off a great service, we had a kiddish to open the art show of Helen DeRamus, whose paintings adorn our sanctuary. All in all, I gave it an A+ day. *Marsha* ~

There will be no one like us when we are gone, but then there is no one like anyone else, ever. When people die, they cannot be replaced. They leave holes that cannot be filled, for it is the fate - the genetic and neural fate - of every human being to be a unique individual, to find his own path, to live his own life, to die his own death. ~ Oliver Sacks

Speakers in July

July 5: Dr. Saralyn Chesnut

Dr. Saralyn Chesnut, a member of First E, was the first Director of Emory's Office of LGBT Life, a position she held until she retired in 2008. She was also an Adjunct Assistant Professor in Emory's Graduate Institute of Liberal Arts from 1994-2010, and taught Women's Studies as well as the first courses in Lesbian and Gay Studies ever offered at Emory. She is active in SAGE Atlanta and in the newly formed LEAP (Lesbian Elders Action Project). She will speak on July 5 on "What Does Patriotism Mean Today?"

July 10: Rev. Duncan Teague

Rev. Duncan Teague, an ordained Unitarian Universalist (UU) Minister and a longtime friend of and speaker at First E, will speak on July 10. 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 is happily married to his husband, David Thurman. ~

July 17: Rev. Dean Rowley

Rev. Dean Rowley is a long-time member of the First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta. He will speak on July 17 on "Existential Ethics: Will or Will Not." ~

June 24: Rev. Angela Denise Davis

Rev. Angela Denise Davis will speak on July 24 on the topic "Hope." Angela is a regular speaker at First E. She is a certified rehabilitation counselor, a freelance graphic designer, and an ordained minister, and she facilitates a spiritual collective, Sister Harriet, started in 2010. A graduate of Clark Atlanta University, she holds a master of divinity from Vanderbilt University Divinity School and a master of science in rehabilitation counseling from Georgia State University. She lives in East Point with her partner Mary Anne Adams and their canine child Kasi. ~

July 31: Rev. Marti Keller: "The Other Z Word"

The subject of this talk will not be zombies, or their ubiquitous presence in Georgia. However, Zombie culture and preparedness gives you a strong hint about this possible pandemic. I will link the Z word to my favorite F word, which is not freaks or an expletive. Why and how are they related? And why is this a huge justice issue? Hint: the guest preacher is the daughter of a deceased eminent researcher on mosquito born diseases.

Rev. Marti Keller has been in ministry in the South for 18 years, having previously served congregations in Georgia and Mississippi. She is the minister with the Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation, for whom she follows a range of gender justice issues, blogs for the UU movement as a whole, and heads up the New Prophetic Sisterhood of women-identified clergy.

Prior to being ordained, she worked as a journalist, columnist and editor, specializing in cultural reporting. She also worked as a public policy director and executive of several social change organizations focused on women and children. ~

July 2016 Sunday Celebrations of Life

- July 3** ***What Does Patriotism Mean Today?***
Speaker: Dr. Saralyn Chesnut
Facilitator: Libby Ware
Accompanist: Charli Vogt
- July 10** ***TBA***
Speaker: Rev. Duncan Teague
Facilitator: Barbara Van Helsdingen
Accompanist: William Chelton
- July 17** ***Existential Ethics: Will or Will Not***
Speaker: Rev. Dean Rowley
Facilitator: D. Patton White
Accompanist: David Tyberg
- July 24** ***Hope***
Speaker: Rev. Angela Denise Davis
Facilitator: Dr. Sharon Mathis
Accompanist: Aviva and the Flying Penguins
- July 31** ***The Other Z Word***
Speaker: Rev. Marti Keller
Facilitator: Rev. Marsha Mitchiner
Accompanist: David Tyberg
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The Back Page

Reflections on Orlando

By Rev. Marsha Mitchiner

The tragedy in Orlando is still a fresh wound to the LGBT community and all who care about equality, nonviolence, and a loving society. It was difficult to see and hear the grief and pain of people talking about the victims and of the survivors as they related their hours of horror waiting to die or be saved. It was unbelievable to see and hear religious and political leaders as well as everyday people spewing words of hate, bigotry and intolerance.



But the healing began immediately in many ways as people took care of those hurt, consoled those in shock and grief, and looked for ways to help. Individuals, communities, organizations, and companies offered condolences and assistance of all kinds. There was an outpouring of compassion by people of virtually every faith/belief/political ideology/gender/ethnicity/color/. People came from many miles to lay flowers; in cities around the country and the world they gathered for memorials and donated money.

My initial feelings of grief and anger were reflected in my first post which read in part "My thoughts and heart are with the LGBT community in Orlando, the friends and the families of the senseless violence fueled by hate... How

Let us not look for blame but solutions.

Let us not live out of fear but caring.

can we be surprised by such acts when there are political and religious leaders in our country who actively create an "us vs them" mentality? Imagine the potential ISIS headlines/sound bites based on recent political comments."

But my second post two days later is the one I want to hold in my heart and share: "Let us not look for blame but solutions. Let us not live out of fear but caring. Let us join together to form a bond of understanding and respect that replaces the division of ignorance and bigotry. May we come together in our grief as a coalition of people that reflect every spectrum of the rainbow to create a world worthy of passing along to our children." Lofty words with a big agenda. But heart by heart, mind by mind, this can be our reality. Small acts of kindness and intentional acts to confront, inform, and open people's eyes/hearts/minds can and will make a difference.

I encourage you to wear your First E Teeshirt --someone reading our "We're looking for..." statement may have their spirit lifted or their beliefs challenged. Each of us can be an instrument of healing.

Let it be so. ~ Marsha

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