

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 •

"Underneath It All"

Art by Helen De Ramus

June 1 - 30, 2016



"Ride the Wave," by Helen De Ramus, encaustic painting with oil and wax. ~ story on page 6

**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; Stell Simonton,
Recorder; Mark White,
Treasurer; Charlene
Ball, Linda Bell, Saralyn
Chesnut, Bill Laney,
Mary Howard, Ted Pettus
Newsletter Editor:
Charlene Ball,
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 of Directors

By D. Patton White, Board Chair

The Board of Directors met on Monday, May 2 at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. The board welcomed the newest members to the board, Charlene Ball, Saralyn Chesnut, Mary Howard, and Ted Pettus. The board also thanked the outgoing board members for their years of service: Elaine Gale, Bill Read, and Cindy Lou Who. The board elected D. Patton White to continue as Chair, with Saralyn Chesnut serving as Vice Chair, Stell Simonton to continue as Recorder, with Mary Howard serving as minutes editor, and Mark White to serve as Treasurer. The Board charged the Visioning Steering Committee, formed at the Annual Meeting on April 24, with prioritizing the various goals that the Visioning Report outlined. The members of the Steering Committee include D. Patton White, Ted Pettus, Marsha Mitchiner, Nancy White, and Andy Weiskoff. Additional members that are focused specifically on the Youth initiative include Saralyn Chesnut, Carol Sandiford, Stell Simonton, and Cindy Lou Who. The Steering Committee will report back at the August Board Meeting. The board heard an update on the estate of Hank Pfadenhauer from Bill Read and Elaine Gale. The board heard reports from Edith Covington, our Office Administrator, and from the guilds and committees. The board will meet in June on June 13, and will meet in July on July 11. All are welcome to attend. ~

Community News & Activities

--"Underneath It All," an art exhibit of paintings by Helen DeRamus, will be on First E's walls First E's walls from June 1 until June 30. An opening party will be held on June 19 after the COL.~

--The Social Justice Guild will hold a discussion after the COL on June 19 of "The Case for Reparations," an article by Ta-Nehisi Coates in *The Atlantic*. Contact Lorraine at tana44@hotmail.com or do a search for the article by title. All are welcome to attend. ~

--Heartfulness Meditation will meet again on Sunday, June 5, downstairs at 1:00 p.m. First timers are welcome, sessions are free and all are invited. Please contact Andy or Judy Aehle for info or if you have any questions.

--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.

--A Yard Sale to benefit First E will happen on Saturday, June 25. Time to clean out no longer needed housewares, clothes, tools so they can become someone else's treasures! To donate or volunteer, see Stell Simonton or Saralyn Chesnut.

--Save the Date! On Saturday, July 2, First E presents a sizzling summer Coffeehouse/ Variety Show with improv, comedy, spoken word, music, slam poetry, and more! Stay tuned.

Community News continued on page 7.

Guild Reports

Art Guild

By Charlene Ball

The Art Guild is pleased to announce an art exhibit by Atlanta artist Helen DeRamus entitled "Underneath It All" will hang on First E's walls from June 1 until June 30. The opening reception will be on Sunday, June 19. The current exhibit, "Activism in Atlanta," a photography exhibit by Atlanta activist/photographers, will hang until May 31.

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 -- or "fun-raising" -- activities throughout the year. In June, we will have a yard sale on June 25 (see article on page 6). Then we will sponsor a Coffeehouse on July 2 with many of your favorite performers. On July 16 (early this year) will be the Great Existential Book and Bake Sale. It's not too early to contact us about donating books, CDs, DVDs, and even LPs!

Members of the Fundraising Guild are Libby Ware, Stell Simonton, and Charlene Ball. If you'd like to help with our fundraising, please volunteer! ~

Membership Guild

By Charlene Ball

The Membership Guild consists of Elaine Gale and Wilj Sturkey, co-chairs; Sherry Durren; Mary Howard; Bill Laney; Carol Sandiford; and Robert Stewart. The Membership Guild organizes kiddushes (light snacks) and potlucks after the Celebrations of Life. We also organize the Sunday greeters, openers, and closers. 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 has planned a mix of old and new speakers for May. Rev. Duncan Teague, one of our regular speakers, brings us a message entitled "Since 1981" on June 5. On June 12, First E member Barbara Van Helsdingen will speak on "Learning from P.L.A.N.T." On June 19, Fathers' Day, Dr. Jon Herman will give a talk entitled "Daddies, Daughters, and Daoism." Robert Stewart will facilitate that day. And on June 26, Rev. Angela Denise Davis, another regular speaker, will bring the second of her 2-part series: "A Different World."

Our next meeting will be August 30 in the First E Sanctuary. We welcome members and friends to attend our meetings. 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. Contact him at patton@beacondance.org. Charlene organizes the facilitators. If you would like to facilitate, contact her at mcharleneball@yahoo.com. I'd like to give a shout-out to our facilitators, who donate so generously of their time and energy in hosting our Sunday Celebrations of Life. ~

Guild Reports continued on page 6.

April 2016 Finance Report

<u>2016 Cash Flow</u>	<u>Operating</u>	<u>Designated</u>
Total Income	23,389	10,036
<u>Total Expenses</u>	(23,760)	(2,395)
Net thru April 30	(371)	7,641

Fund Types & Names Account Balances on April 30

<unaudited>

2016 General Operating Account (371)

Designated Purpose Funds 38,349

Use Where Needed Fund	1,461
In Memory of Estelle Wychoff	10,000
Sanctuary Accessibility	14,500
Children's Program	692
Leadership Development	750
Community Garden Labryrinth	274
Building & Grounds	5,686
Woodland Sanctuary	1,343
Minister's Discretionary	1,010
Social Justice	1,129
Attic Insulation Fund	1,250
Music Fund	255

Pat Hewatt Revolving Loan Fund 8,068

Total First E Funds 46,046

Old Stone Church History Project 2,532

History Project Donor Challenge

Help support Early Edgewood-Candler Park BiRacial History. Friends of the Old Stone Church BiRacial History Project will match up to \$600 in donations to the History Project. Gifts are tax-deductible.

**Please write your check to:
BiRacial History Project/ First E
PO Box 5567, Atlanta GA 31107**

With Grateful Thanks.... Edi Kelman, History Project Manager

Donation In Memory of Estelle Wychoff

In February the Estate of Estelle Wychoff made a \$10,000 unrestricted donation to First Existentialist Congregation **In Memory of Estelle Wychoff**. Wow -- what a generous blessing on our Congregation! Per Executor, the use of this donation will be determined by the Board after due consideration of our Congregation's needs... so please contact a Board member if you have any ideas about how this donation might best benefit First E. Meanwhile, the donation has been deposited into First E's new Estelle Wychoff Memorial Fund.

--Bill Read, Finance Chair

*I like to pay taxes. With them, I buy
civilization.*

~ Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.

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

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. ~

Social Justice Corner

Visit a Mosque Day

By Libby Ware

Several First E members braved the snow on January 23 to go to Al-Farooq Masjid, the mosque on 14th Street, for "Visit a Mosque Day." After taking off our shoes we entered the worship area. Although Muslims sit on the floor, we were provided chairs. This day is held to educate non-Muslims on beliefs and practices of Islam. A member of the Speakers Bureau first provided information, then opened the floor to questions.

Al-Farooq is a Sunni Muslim mosque. Our teacher said he could go to any Sunni mosque and the beliefs would be similar to his home mosque.

The six major beliefs in Islam, as understood by Sunni Muslims, are:

1. belief in God;
2. belief in angels;
3. belief in God's prophets/messengers;
4. belief in God's revelations in the form of holy scriptures sent to prophets;
5. belief in an afterlife that follows the Day of Judgment on which people will be held accountable for their actions and compensated accordingly in the afterlife;
6. and belief in God's divine will and His knowledge of what happens in the world.

Muslims believe that Jesus was one of the prophets and was born to the Virgin Mary through an act of God. In the Qur'an, Jesus is revered, as a great prophet who performed miracles such as healing the sick, and as a messenger who received revelation from God, but that he was, like all the other prophets, a human being.

When asked why in this mosque women are separated from men, he said that it is an issue of modesty. Since everyone sits on the floor, men could be distracted by seeing a woman in the act of sitting down in front of them. He said many verses in the Qur'an support the equality of men and women.

[Some Muslims believe that because of the high moral standards he advocated, the Buddha may be one of the unknown prophets

He responded to a question about Buddhism by saying that some Muslims believe that because of the high moral standards he advocated, the Buddha may be one of the unknown prophets which according to the Qur'an, were assigned for every nation. The same may be true of founders or major leaders in other religious traditions.

The difference between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims began as a difference of opinion as to who succeeded Mohamed. Shi'as believed that succession for a spiritual and political leader was only by descendants of the Prophet Mohammed. Sunnis believed that they were able to choose the person who they thought were free to choose the most qualified person.

After the program, we were invited to a delicious buffet. The front desk provided pamphlets that addressed many topics about Islam. ~

Artist Helen DeRamus

I am a painter and photographer. My primary mediums are encaustic and oil paint. Work on paper, using India ink and graphite are a major part of my practice. Drawings lead me to the development of ideas, and though the drawings may stand alone, they also lead to larger work in encaustic and oil.

My paintings are about all the visual scraps, translucent bits and pieces, and the neuronal fragments found in the layers of memory. Using the landscape as a metaphor, the paintings are excavated from my personal memories.



Helen DeRamus.
Photo courtesy of Ms. DeRamus.

Throughout the United States and Canada, I have paintings, prints, photographs, and works on paper included in corporate, public, and private collections including Jacksonville State University;

My paintings are about all the visual scraps, translucent bits and pieces, and the neuronal fragments found in the layers of memory.

Ventyx Corporation; Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta, Georgia; Perimeter College; North Georgia College and State University; The ART Station; the Ben Hill-Fitzgerald County Library; the

Women's Center at Kennestone Hospital; the Atlanta Women's Foundation in Atlanta, Georgia; and Livingston College at Rutgers University in New Jersey. I am represented in Georgia by dk Gallery in Marietta. ~

Helen DeRamus's art exhibit "Underneath It All" will be displayed on the Sanctuary walls of First Existentialist from June 1 until June 30.

Guild Reports ~ Continued from page 3

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

The Social Justice Guild meets every other month. Our next meeting will be June 5 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. On June 19, we will hold a discussion of an article by Ta Nahisi Coates, "In Support of Reparations." Guild members are Katrice Baker, Linda Bell, Saralyn Chesnut, Lorraine Fontana, Edi Kelman, Jan Lister, and Libby Ware. All are welcome to attend. ~

First E Yard Sale June 25

Now's the time to get rid of those things around the house that you don't use or need anymore: donate them to First E for a big yard sale on Saturday, June 25, starting at 8 a.m. at First E.

So that things will go as smoothly as possible, we ask that you do the following:

--Price each item and attach the price, whether it's with a sticker, a piece of tape, or whatever.

--Bring the items to First E, preferably early Saturday morning. Volunteers will be available to receive them beginning at 8 AM. If you can't bring them on Saturday morning, you can bring them between 3 and 6 PM on Friday.

Please volunteer to help make this sale a success. We'll need volunteers on Friday afternoon, and in shifts from 7:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. on Saturday. To volunteer, please contact Stell Simonton or Saralyn Chesnut.

Community News & Activities ~ continued from page 2

--The Great Existentialist Book & Bake Sale will be on Saturday, July 16 (early this year). To donate books, CDs, DVDs, vinyl, and games, see Libby or Charlene.

News From First E Members and Friends

--Congratulations to Robert and Carol on their 33rd wedding anniversary, and to Scott Hooker and Rev. Janna Nelson on their anniversary! Both were married by Rev Lanier Clance. (Great to have Scott in town!)

--Whit Connah, husband of Barbara Panter (of the Rosin Sisters, who have played music at First E) has cancer. Please keep them in your positive thoughts and meditations.

--Ted Pettus had his CD release party on Friday, May 20, and celebrated with a big party at Front Page News, along with bassist extraordinaire Andy Weiskoff. Ted's mother Patsy came in from Richmond for the celebration, and Ted thanks all the folks at 1st E who came out and supported his gig. Congratulations Ted!

--Jeff Crompton, who has played with Scott Hooker and Janna Nelson in their band Standard Deviation, gave a concert Saturday, May 21, at First E. Joining Jeff were an array of jazz musicians playing mainly Jeff's compositions. Special guest Scott Hooker, visiting from Albuquerque, also sat in. The crowd enjoyed some great, mind-expanding original jazz and delicious refreshments.

--Itai Jeffries, a sociologist and Native American activist who has spoken at First E about his tribe, its history and present, has developed leukemia, but is still fighting. Lorraine requests loving thoughts in support.

Community:

--Sister Harriet, a women's spirituality circle, meets on the second Sunday of every month in the First E Sanctuary at 2:00 p.m. Rev. Angela Denise Davis leads the circle. ~

--Submissions and news for the June 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. ~

Speakers in June

June 5: 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 June 5 on "Since 1981." 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. ~

June 12: Barbara Van Helsdingen

Barbara Van Helsdingen has been a lifelong resident of the Niagara Region in Canada. Born in Niagara Falls, she graduated from Brock University with B.A. and B.Ed. degrees. She has taught in Northern Quebec in the Arctic Circle and in a small Inuit village of Kangirsuk on the Ungava Peninsula. She is an amateur photographer, and writes poetry and stories. She was raised Catholic but has searched many different faiths through the years with an open heart. She has now settled in the Atlanta area with her wife Lynn. Barbara will speak on June 12 on the topic "Learning from P.L.A.N.T. What Roots You? (Peace, Life, Awe, Nourish, Truth)." ~

June 19: Dr. Jon Herman

Dr. Jon Herman is an associate professor of religious studies at Georgia State University, where he teaches classes in Asian religion, comparative mysticism, and critical theory in the study of religion. He is the author of *Taoism for Dummies*, and has been credited with coining the term "popular Western Taoism."

Jon's wife Ellen is the coordinator of Threshold Ministry, an organization providing assistance to the homeless and those suffering other effects of poverty. Jon and Ellen are the parents of two teenage girls, both adopted from China. ~

June 26: Rev. Angela Denise Davis

Rev. Angela Denise Davis will bring us the second part of "A Different World" on June 26. 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. ~

I know what I have given you. I do not know what you have received.
~ Antonio Porchia

June 2016 Sunday Celebrations of Life

- June 5** ***Since 1981***
Speaker: Rev. Duncan Teague
Facilitator: Rev. Marsha Mitchiner
Accompanist: Aviva and the Flying Penguins
- June 12** ***Leaning from P.L.A.N.T. What Roots You?***
(Peace, Life, Awe, Nourish, Truth)
Speaker: Barbara Van Helsdingen
Facilitator: Charlene Ball
Accompanist: William Chelton
- June 19** ***Fathers' Day: Daddies, Daughters, and Daoism***
Speaker: Dr. Jon Herman
Facilitator: Robert Stewart
Accompanist: David Tyberg
- June 26** ***A Different World, Part 2***
Speaker: Rev. Angela Denise Davis
Facilitator: Barbara Van Helsdingen
Accompanist: Alan Dynin

*If you have knowledge, let others light their candles in it. ~
Margaret Fuller, author*

The Back Page

More Art by Helen DeRamus



Above: "Fragile III," mixed media; right: "Journey," encaustic. Photographs courtesy of Helen DeRamus.



The Existentialist is published monthly. Deadline for the July 2016 newsletter is June 19. Send your articles and announcements to mcharleneball@yahoo.com. The editor reserves the right to edit or refuse any material submitted.