

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 •

Meet Edith Covington, New Office Manager at First E

Edith Covington is the new office manager at the First Existentialist Congregation. A member of First E since 2002, she brings to the job a varied background and skill set, including mental health program management, photography, and running her own computer business, working individually with seniors to help people gain confidence and learn to use computers.



Edith Covington

From 2005 to 2009, she managed a mental health program as part of DeKalb County’s Community Mental Health Services. She belongs to a birding group and is an enthusiastic photographer.

A member of First E since 2002, Edith has served on the Board for two 3-year stints.

Currently, she is on the

Finance Committee and the Ministerial Relations Guild.

“I have an abiding love for the Congregation,” she says. Edith’s hours are 3:00-5:00 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Fridays, or by appointment. She can be reached at office@firstexistentialist.org or 404-378-5570. ~

Dr. Mark White is New Board Member



Mark White and grandson Ryland

Mark White is First E's newest Board member, replacing Andy Weiskoff. Mark is husband of Dr. Shelly Ahmann and father of four children: Leila, 15; ZuZu, 12; Alex, 39; and Daniel, 37. Earlier this year Mark's son Alex and daughter-in-law Lauren had his first grand child, Ryland.

Mark is a physician-epidemiologist who retired two years ago from The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, where he was Director of the Division of International Health, and a Science Officer. He taught epidemiology for seven years in Manila, Philippines, and for two years in Kampala, Uganda, where he was also an Associate Professor at Makerere University School

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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

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 Pfenhauer
Mark White
Cindy Lou Who
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

By D. Patton White, Board Chair

The First E Board of Directors met on April 6th. Among the agenda items and decisions: Jean Heinrich spoke recommending an increase in Marsha's annual pay; we agreed that a lift for accessibility is prohibitively expensive and so we will re-focus our efforts on ramp options; we agreed that Bill Laney will research the cost and time line to install a door opening system for people with disabilities; we crafted the general outline of the Annual Meeting.

The Board was also involved in the Annual Meeting, held Sunday, April 12th. A new Board was elected, with most current board members returning, with Andy Weiskoff rolling off due to term limitations and Mark White joining the Board for the first time. Returning board members for the coming year include Elaine Gale, Bill Read, D. Patton White, Cindy Lou Who, Stell Simonton, Hank Pfenhauer, Linda Bell and Bill Laney.

~

Community News & Activities

--**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 more information.

--**The Bi-Racial History Project has a Challenge Grant for \$500**, so any donation you make will be matched. Please see Edi if you need any guidance on how to do it.

--**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 Fontana at tana44@hotmail.com.

--**Dr. Bombay's presents a monthly Indian dinner** on the last Monday of each month to help girls in Darjeeling, India, to remain in school. Reservations are required. The dinner is \$20. For tickets, visit TheLearningTea.com.

--**Lost-n-Found Thrift and Consignment Store**, 2585 Chantilly Drive, is open M-Sat 10-5; Sundays noon-6.

--**Submissions and news for the June Newsletter** are due to Charlene by Sunday, May 17. Send Board and Guild reports and news items to mcharleneball@yahoo.com.

--**Contact Robert Stewart** with your news and activities for his weekly e-newsletter: robertstewart369@gmail.com -- ****NOTE CHANGE IN EMAIL.** ~

Guild Reports

Program Guild *by Charlene Ball*

The Program Guild will meet on Tuesday, May 19, at 6:00 p.m. at First E in the Sanctuary upstairs. We invite members and friends to attend.

The Sunday Celebrations of Life for May will feature the following speakers and facilitators: May 3, Rev. Duncan Teague with Dr. Sharon Mathis facilitating; May 10, Rev. Kate Hauk, with Rev. Marsha Mitchiner facilitating; May 27, Rev. Marti Keller, with Saralyn Chesnut facilitating; May 24, Hank Pfadenhauer, with D. Patton White facilitating; and May 31, Barbara Van Helsdingen, with Libby Ware facilitating. ~

I

Membership Guild

The Membership Guild hosted a potluck on March 29 at Glen Lopez's art opening. The 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.

If anyone would like to know more about the Membership Guild, to participate in setting up a kiddush or opening or greeting, contact Wilj at cincodemayo55@comcast.net or Elaine at ergale@hotmail.com. ~

Social Justice Guild *By Linda A. Bell*

On April 17, the Social Justice Guild showed the film, *Anne Braden: Southern Patriot*. It was well-attended, and the discussion, led by Gary Washington, was lively and provocative. However, because of the problem of generally low attendance, with which we have coped from the beginning of the 3rd Friday Film Series, we have decided to call at least a temporary halt to the series. So that will be our last film for a while, an important film and good discussion to go out on.

We have made a bit on the showings and have given some to First E for the ramp/lift and for building upkeep. Previously, we contributed to the purchase of the speakers in the sanctuary as well as the screen from the film series proceeds.

Many of our members continue to be quite active in Moral Monday demonstrations and other social justice events; and in June, we will begin a new book discussion, this time on *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* by Joy DeGruy. ~

Mark White, Continued from Page 1

of Public Health. Mark always thought of himself as a novelist, but felt he needed a day job to support himself. Now, at 68 years old, he is passionately writing a novella about a defrocked detective and a humorous memoir about plagues and disasters he has known. So far, the heights of his career in the arts included a summer as a professional actor at the Cherry County Playhouse in Traverse City where he played the evil boy who tempts Pinocchio astray and the 26th sailor in *South Pacific*. The swan song of his brief ballet career was playing the role of Catallabut, the obnoxious old man who spoils Sleeping Beauty's 16th birthday in an updated version of *Sleeping Beauty* at the Ferst Auditorium at Georgia Tech. Joining the First E inspired him to read deeply about existentialism and ignited a continuing interest. ~

Summary of 2015 Financial Accounts for First Existentialist Congregation

<u>2015 Cash Flow</u>	<u>Operating</u>	<u>All Other</u>
Total Income	21,372	1,072
<u>Total Expenses</u>	(15,912)	(81)
Net thru March 31	5,460	991

Unaudited Data

Fund Types & Names Thru March 31 Account Balances

General Operating Funds

2015 Operating Account 5,460

Designated Operating Funds 27,686

Use Where Needed Fund	1,461
Sanctuary Accessibility	18,384
Leadership Development	750
Community Garden/Labyrinth	388
Building & Grounds	111
Woodland Sanctuary	1,669
Minister's Discretionary	912
Social Justice	1,544
Attic Insulation Fund	1,250
Children's Program	472
Music Fund	745

Pat Hewatt Revolving Loan Fund
(E owes it \$2K) 6,065

Total First E Funds
at BOND Credit Union 38,568

Old Stone Church History Project 1,693
Total at State Bank & Suntrust Bank

Total of All Accounts 40,904

FUND OF THE MONTH CLUB

The Fund of the Month is the Garden Labyrinth Fund. First E 's garden will be rebuilt on June 6 via a Deloitte community grant, but grant funds will only rebuild half of our garden plots. Please consider a special gift to Garden Labyrinth Fund so that E can rebuild all the garden plots now. Please write "Garden Labyrinth Fund" on your check. ~

First E Annual Meeting Minutes: Highlights ~ April 12, 2015

Board Chair Patton White called the meeting to order at 12:46 p.m. Twenty voting members were present, a quorum. Stell Simonton took minutes. Minutes from last year were unavailable. Andy Weiskoff is rotating off the board. Board members who will continue are Patton, Stell, Linda Bell, Bill Read, Bill Laney, Cindy Lou Who, and Elaine Gale. Mark White is the newest Board member. The slate of Board members was approved by a vote of 20 +.

Art Guild's chair Glen Lopez reported that a show of his work is coming up next Sunday. He has curated six to eight shows this past year. Bill Laney reported for the Building and Grounds Guild that the light bar was installed last year. Progress on the accessibility project (ramp/lift) had been slow as being ADA-compliant is difficult. Bill's immediate goal is to make the front door more accessible, then to make the building functionally accessible. \$18,000 to \$19,000 is set aside for the accessibility project and redoing the ramp will happen.

Bill Read, First E Treasurer, reported that finances are in great shape. About 100 people support First E as members and friends. Individual giving is the primary source of income, and rental income has risen since Primavera began renting space.

Robert Stewart of the Membership Guild said the Guild has a greater each Sunday and sponsors a kiddish or potluck once a month. It also contacts people who visit us. Three new

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

Social Justice Corner

R.I.P. Shannon Clark, Antioch East Member and Volunteer with History Project

By Edith Kelman

Ms. Shannon Lois Clark, age 23, died on April 7, several days after a severe head-on collision on the highway. Shannon, a fourth generation member of the Antioch East Baptist Church, had been helping the BiRacial History Project with oral history research into her family's connection with the Candler Park Legacy Site of Hooper Street, today Hooper Ave. Representatives of First Existentialist and the History Project attended the visitation at South DeKalb Chapel on April 14. Others have sent condolence cards to Shannon's family.

Shannon worked with the BiRacial History Project in 2015, focusing on a Hooper Street Family Reunion, where her grandmother Miriam Wise Clark (also a History Project friend) and great grandmother, Lois Wise, had lived for a time. Shannon had recently graduated from the University of Georgia with a degree in biochemical engineering and was spending several months with family while applying to do graduate work.

The History Project was so pleased to have caught her interest to work with us these few months. Shannon radiated with a youthful beauty, intelligence, modesty and respectful manner. It was a delight to be in her presence. She inspired my hopes for the future. Her light will continue to inspire the History Project. Shannon is loved and missed by many. ~



Ms. Shannon Clark

Book Discussion Group Begins in June

A Book Discussion Group will begin this summer, coordinated by the SJG. Any First E member/friend is welcome to join us. *Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome* by Joy DeGruy was chosen as the first book. Lorraine Fontana will see if Charis will order copies of the book for all who need one, possibly giving us a discount for ordering a certain number. Those interested in ordering a copy should let Lorraine know as soon as possible. The Group will begin on Sunday, June 28 following the COL service. Participants will decide at the first gathering how often they want to meet and will select future dates. Please let one of the members of the SJG know if you want to be part of this group: Braden Baker, Linda Bell, Lorraine Fontana, Edith Kelman, Carol Sandiford, or Libby Ware. Once a list of participants is made, all will be notified about the reading assignment for the first meeting. Come join us! ~

Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. ~ Rachel Carson

Minister's Corner

by Rev. Marsha Mitchiner with additions by Charlene Ball

Caring Thoughts and Concern Go Out to:

--**Victoria Bennett** is recovering "on schedule" from knee surgery. She's back at work and invites everyone to come by Bennett's Market to say hi and enjoy some coffee or really good food. Owen has had some problems because of the pollen but is doing ok.

--**Martha Renfroe Garner** continues to heal from her broken leg and is looking forward to getting out more. Sharon recently retired from teaching. The cats love having both at home!

--**Andy Weiskoff** reported that his mom Estelle is having cancer treatments and they make her very tired. Please keep Estelle, Andy and their family in your loving thoughts.

--**Nathaniel Jones Update:** Marsha has good news. She spoke with a social worker who says Nate is better and has been declared competent. She is working to get him on probation for his offense and set up with an ongoing case manager who would have regular contact with him to make sure he is taking his meds. She is also working with the VA to get him into day program. Marsha is on the list of people who can visit him. She is arranging to visit him by Skype and also to go to the jail to visit him. Hopefully we'll all get to see him in person before too long.

--**The Antioch East Baptist Church family** had a homecoming this past week for **Shannon Clark, daughter of Deacon Alvin and Sister Ramona Clark**, who died following an auto accident in which Sister Ramona was also injured. Keep the the Smith family and Antioch congregation in your thoughts.

--**Catherine Han Montoya**, a beloved LGBT activist, who lived with her wife, Meredith, on Shadowridge Drive in East Atlanta, was killed in her home on April 14. Cathy was a tireless champion for immigrant rights, for AAPI women's rights, for racial and LGBTQ justice. A *YouCaring.com* fundraising site has been set up to raise \$50,000. Funds will go towards helping with funeral costs and to supporting Cathy's deepest loves: her family and the movement.

--**Cecilia Mitchell**, a long-time resident of Candler Park, died Sunday, April 26. She was a member of ALFA (Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance), a psychotherapist, and a lover of the outdoors. Her many friends will miss her. ~

Annual Meeting Minutes ~ Continued from page 2

members joined recently. The Guild has put ads in local papers and created informational postcards. Edith Covington, new Office Manager, is creating a new directory.

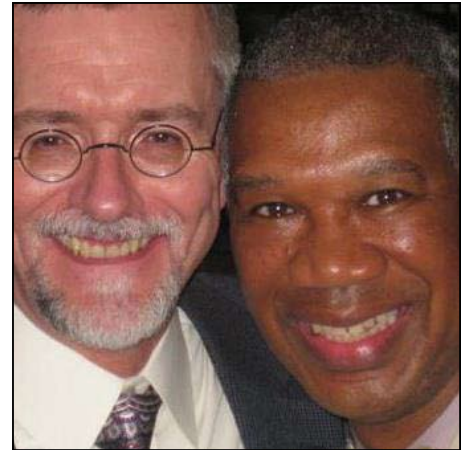
Patton reported that the Program Guild meets quarterly to plan Sunday COLs. This year the Guild has initiated quarterly visioning potluck dinners for brainstorming. Members and friends are welcome to attend. Jean Heinrich reported for the Ministerial Relations Committee. It was created by the board to be a liaison with the minister. Marsha, Shelley Ahmann, Edith, and Jean are members.

Stell reported for the Fundraising Guild that in 2015, a coffeehouse raised \$1,356, a yard sale raised \$1,080, the annual book sale raised \$961, a plant sale raised \$815, and the storytelling event raised \$840. Also a benefit concert by Scott and Janna brought in \$410. Charlene reported for the Communication Guild. She handles the monthly newsletter, Andy does publicity for events, Ashlea Davis creates flyers and brochures, and Robert sends out a weekly email ahead of the Sunday service. Cindy Lou said a social media coordinator might be useful for outreach to younger people. Libby said the board may need to talk with Edith, who is knowledgeable about websites, about improvements to the First E website. Linda Bell said that the Social Justice Guild has been active in supporting social justice activities. The Third Friday film Series is being suspended indefinitely. The Guild plans a book discussion group to begin in June. Linda and Marsha suggested that it would be a good idea for First E to have designated representatives at various social justice and other events in the city. Marsha and Linda will create a proposal for the Board. The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m. ~

Speakers in May

Rev. Duncan Teague on May 3

Rev. Duncan Teague will speak on May 3. His topic is "I Do, I Don't, I Do Not Know." Duncan is a long-time friend of First E and a frequent speaker at COLs. An ordained Unitarian Universalist (UU) Minister, he served as a lay minister with Rev. Marsha Mitchiner and Rev. Janna Nelson upon the retirement of Rev. Lanier Clance. He 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. ~



*Rev. Duncan Teague, on right,
with David Thurman.*

Rev. Kate Hauk on May 10



Rev. Kate Hauk is an ordained U.C.C. (Congregational) minister of 27 years. She has lived in Atlanta for 22 years and has two children: Alexis, a recent creative writing graduate of Emory, and Thomas, a sweet, Buddhist-gourmet chef with many future aspirations. He would have been 20 on July 18th. Kate has been a storyteller and a writer/editor (mostly personal essays) since winning the essay contest at Camp Allegheny at fifteen. She has worked in a variety of churches—U.C.C, Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta, The Friends School of Atlanta, and is now a part time interim minister at Oakhurst Baptist Church, a liberal congregation. ~

Rev. Kate Hauk

Rev. Marti Keller on May 17

A small book by a Japanese cleaning consultant called *Spare Buttons: Your Possessions Want to Help You* became a three million copy international bestseller. Its premise is that our possessions help us learn what we can do without, gain confidence, identify what is really precious, and spark joy. Come on May 17 and learn what all the fuss is about-- is it simply another how to spring clean book, or a profound Zen lesson?

Rev. Marti Keller is a regular speaker at first E and is now in her 18th year as a Unitarian Universalist minister, serving in both congregations and community settings. She is also a former cultural reporter, an advocate for women and children, and a published poet. She did a stint as an undergraduate student cleaning professor's houses in the Los Angeles area. ~



Rev. Marti Keller

Speakers in May *Continued from page 7*

Hank Pfadenhauer on May 24

Hank Pfadenhauer became a member of First E in 1981. He is an Army veteran and considers Memorial Day to be one of the most important and most overlooked days of the year.

Anyone who has lost a loved one in service to their country is invited to share their loss with the congregation, and to bring a picture if they have one. ~

Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other's eyes for an instant? ~ Henry David Thoreau



Hank Pfadenhauer

Barbara Van-Helsdingen on May 31



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 BA and Bed degrees. Barbara accepted her current position as a teacher with the Kativik School Board in Northern Quebec in the Arctic Circle, and has worked for eight years in the small Inuit village of Kangirsuk on the Ungava Peninsula. She is happy to share her northern stories and passion for the Inuit Culture, mythology, and art. She is an amateur photographer who has captured many northern delights. Barbara also writes poetry and stories of her time living in the Arctic. She had the opportunity to share and witness Inuit Spirituality while in the Arctic. To the Inuit (and Barbara), all life is unique and sacred. Life is the greater life of Nature.

Barbara was raised Catholic but has searched many different faiths through the years with an open heart. She has now found her heart settling in the greater Atlanta area with new friends and her partner Lynn. She feels a great hospitality and openness at the First Existentialist Congregation and is happy to share her smile, hugs, and talk with everyone. With luck she will be a member who attends more frequently. Barbara will be able to share some of the art

and photos after the service. Come and share some of her Northern Adventures through stories, art discussion, poetry, and photography. ~

May 2015 Sunday Celebrations of Life

- May 3** *I Do, I Don't, I Am Not Sure*
Speaker: Rev. Duncan Teague
Facilitator: Dr. Sharon Mathis
Accompanist: Aviva and the Flying Penguins
- May 10** *Readings, Stories and Reflections of the Season*
Speaker: Rev. Kate Hawk
Facilitator: Rev. Marsha Mitchiner
Accompanist: Alan Dynin
- May 17** *Spare Buttons: Your Possessions Want to Help You*
Speaker: Rev. Marti Keller
Facilitator: Saralyn Chesnut
Accompanist: William "Bill" Chelton
- May 24** *Memorial Day: Remembering Those Who Gave Their
Lives For Us*
Speaker: Hank Pfadenhauer
Facilitator: D. Patton White
Accompanist: Dr. Jean Heinrich
- May 31** *Poetry of the Land*
Speaker: Barbara Van Helsdingen
Facilitator: Libby Ware
Accompanist: Aviva and the Flying Penguins

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principles.*

The Back Page

Members and Friends Speak Out



SPRING CLOUDS

By Braden Baker

*Yesterday the sky grew soupy in the midst of balm
But throughout the day it remained calm.*

At the end of my shift

I felt the drift

Of dreary grayness of puffed-up cloud forms

That rose up to rejuvenate the worms.

Through the giant glass window pane

I felt my sinuses drain

Of the icky yellow and green of rebirth

That gave way to soft raindrop mirth.

So what virtues must we cling

To this thing we call Spring?

It is breathing in new life

And exhaling polluted clouds of strife...

And saunter in fresh clouds from clean waters;

That's one thing that really matters.

The Existentialist is published monthly. Deadline for the June 2015 newsletter is May 17. Send your articles and announcements to mcharleneball@yahoo.com. The editor reserves the right to edit or refuse any material submitted.