

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 •

Surprise Sale of Lanier Clance's Scarves and Art at First Existentialist October 13-14

Lanier Clance has always believed in the uniqueness of each individual and the importance of finding one's own way of creative expression. When he founded the First Existentialist Congregation, he wanted to create a place where people could speak out, make art, and express their own unique vision. When he retired from the ministry, he embarked on a new career, that of visual artist and designer. Color fascinated him, and he began painting on canvas. Then he started to paint brilliant abstract designs on silk scarves.

On October 13 and 14, some of Lanier's friends surprised him by setting up a booth outside the First E building to sell his colorful scarves, hats, and paintings. Andra Gailis was the main organizer, assisted

by Rev. Marsha Mitchiner, First E members, and his family and closest friends. These pictures show

Lanier and friends (above) and some of Lanier's scarves (left). Through art, Lanier continues to express his own unique vision, and he continues to make the world beautiful. ~



Above, L to R: Nancy Zumoff, Rev. R. Lanier Clance, and Demmie Hicks. Left: Some of Lanier's scarves.



Religion isn't about believing things. It's about what you do. It's ethical alchemy. It's about behaving in a way that changes you, that gives you intimations of holiness and sacredness. - Karen Armstrong

**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:
Rick Westbrook,
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Board of Directors:
Charlene Ball
Edith Covington,
Treasurer
Karla Crawford,
Recorder
Ted Pettus
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*We are a philosophically based
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and founded on existentialist
and feminist principles.*



Notes From the Board

By Libby Ware, Board Chair

The First E Board met on October 2, 2012. Stephanie Murphy gave a report from the Our Whole Lives (OWL) training she recently participated in. OWL, a UUA program, is a series of sexuality education curricula for six age groups: grades K-1, grades 4-6, grades 7-9, grades 10-12, young adults (ages 18-35), and adults. Our Whole Lives helps participants make informed and responsible decisions about their sexual health and behavior. It equips participants with accurate, age-appropriate information in six subject areas. Stephanie, our child education specialist, is now a trained facilitator. The Board suggested that 1st E may join with other UU congregations for this program in order to have an adequate level of participation. The vote included encouragement to Stephanie to pursue the next logical steps in this process.

Ted Pettus discussed with Randy Pimsler the feasibility of First E applying for a special use permit and certificate of occupancy so that our building can be rented for child care/education/after school programs. Randy feels that we would not risk current rentals when applying for the permit and is willing to represent us and do all the legwork with the application and getting it through City Hall for a fee. We may need a teacher to be involved and Ted is going to contact Cheri, who had the after school program in our downstairs space until she ran into certification problems, to see if she is still interested in using the space once we get the appropriate permit and certificate of occupancy. The Board needs to know the level of Cheri's interest in the space before voting on the expense.

The next Board meeting will be on November 14 (since November 6 is Election Day) at 7:00 p.m. at First E. ~

Life in itself is neither good nor evil. It is the place of good and evil, according to what you make it. ~ Michel de Montaigne

Community News & Activities

--**The Social Justice Guild** plans, if there is interest, to hold a series of discussions about *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, by Michelle Alexander. This book has been selected as the UUA Common Read for 2012-2013. If you would like to read this book and attend a monthly discussion, contact mcharleneball@yahoo.com.

--A **work day** is announced by Building & Grounds on November 17 starting at 10:00 a.m. We will take down the light bars and place wooden supports for unistrut bars in the attic in preparation for having new track lighting installed.

--**Let's fill up the food barrel!** It's Thanksgiving Month, and the barrel is almost 1/3 full. So let's fill it to the brim and share. Thanks.

--**Charli Vogt's mother** died after a short, sharp downward spiral. Charli and partner Nell Rodgers will be in Michigan for a few days. Charli's father died in August, so she has been through a period of great loss. Please send her (and Nell) your loving thoughts and expressions of support.

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Guild Reports
Membership Guild
by Wilj Sturkey

The Membership Guild met on Oct. 21. Our next meeting will be Dec. 2. Oct. 28 was Dia de los Muertos. After the service, the Membership Guild invites all attendees to a Kiddush.

We have several projects under way. First, Wilj had been putting together an updated Birthday List comprised of First E Members and Friends, as the list being used now needs to be updated. However, since First E will have our Pledge Drive soon, and the Pledge Form asks for month and day of birth, we will wait and make our birthday list from the pledge forms. We want all Members and Friends to have their birthdays posted in the program each Sunday.

We decided that the Greeter on Sunday will update Marsha M. about losses in the community in the event she was not present when the losses were announced. Wilj is having t-shirts and mugs made with a small First E labyrinth on the front and Andy W.'s clever slogan on the back. We decided that when we have a visitor new to First E, the Guild Member who is the Greeter that day will send a notecard to acknowledge the visit and welcome them. Elaine will have some new notecards printed from art work that is on hand of our Sanctuary. Carol has older postcards that we will also use with the same image. If we don't have a visitor's address, we will send an email. Elaine will meet with Marsha Mitchiner to discuss our upcoming New Member Orientation. ~

Program Guild
by Charlene Ball

The Program Guild met on October 23 to plan the Celebrations of Life in the first quarter of 2013.

The Program Guild consists of Patton White (chair), Charlene Ball, Linda Bell, Bill Laney, and Victoria Trestrail. If you have feedback for us or you can tell us about a great speaker or musician who might be available, let us know. We welcome your input. ~

Social Justice Guild
by Lorraine Fontana

The Social Justice Guild—active members Braden Baker, Charlene Ball, Linda Bell, Lorraine Fontana (Chair), Edith Kelman, Carol Sandiford, and Libby Ware—will continue to hold the Third Friday Film Series in 2013. We have been soliciting co-sponsorships from local community organizations, which we hope will increase our visibility in and connections to the wider Atlanta community. This past year co-sponsors have been the Atlanta Pride Committee, Southerners on New Ground, Women Healing Women, the Circle of Grace, and possibly Afrekete in November (the Spelman campus lesbian organization). At each event, we showed an excellent film and had lively and interesting post-film discussions. All that and we raised money for the SJG budget as well.

We continue to partner with Edi Kelman and the Old Stone Church/Early Edgewood-Candler Park History Project, helping when we can with events and projects. Recently, we opened the sanctuary for Rev. Searcey and another filming of Antioch East Baptist Church elders who had attended the Old Stone Church as children as they talked about that experience and connections many of them had with an historically all Black HS in Atlanta. When this new documentary is completed, we hope to share it with the First E community.

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Finance Report: September 2012

General Operating Account Thru Sept. 30

Total Income	46,103
Total Expenses	(46,856)
2012 Cash Flow (753)	

Fund Types & Names Account Balances on Sept. 30

< unaudited >

General Operating Account 466

Designated Operating Funds 8,534

Gay Dellinger Estate Gift	2,466
Handicap Access Ramp	940
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	826
Attic Insulation Fund	1,250
Music Fund	150
Children's Program	122

Savings: Pat Hewatt Revolving Loan Fund 5,063

Total First E Funds 14,063

Old Stone Church History Project

Bi-Racial History Account	2,283
Legacy Markers Account	731

Total History Project Funds 3,014

Happy Thanksgiving, Everyone!

Join us in the Sanctuary on November 22 at 3:00 pm. Bring your favorite Thanksgiving dish. Contact the Membership Guild for more information.

Third Friday Film Series
Presents
Pariah
Friday, November 16 at 7:30pm
Sliding Scale Donations Requested \$1-\$10.00
No one turned away
Popcorn & Refreshments
Discussion after the film

Guild Reports Continued from page 3

During our recent Founders Day Celebration of Life, we honored our congregational administrator, Rick Westbrook, by making him an honorary member of the SJG for his long-time ongoing social justice work in the LGBT community (e.g. the Atlanta Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence; Lost-N-Found Youth, and the East Point Possums). ~

Building & Grounds

by Bill Laney

Building and Grounds is currently working on improving the lighting in the Sanctuary. We will have a workday on Nov 17 starting at 10 am. We will take down the lights and track light bars and place 2 x 6 wooden supports in the attic for unistrut bars. On another work day, to be scheduled in late November or December, the unistrut will be mounted in the same location as the current light bar. After installing the unistrut, we will get quotes from electricians to install new track lighting, using the unistrut as a mounting support.

Since Dominic Thomas left, Building and Grounds does not have a chairperson. If any one is interested in working with Building and Grounds, please contact Jon Nye, Bill Read or Bill Laney. ~

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.

Social Justice Corner

Remembering Bayard Rustin - "Brother Outsider" of The Civil Rights Movement

By Libby Ware

Who was an early civil rights activist, who was jailed for pacifism during World War Two, who was arrested in the 1940's for refusing to leave a seat designated as for whites only, who converted Martin Luther King, Jr., to nonviolence, who was one of the major organizers of the 1963 March on Washington, but who is still not widely known as an important civil rights activist?



Bayard Rustin - Photographer unknown

Bayard Rustin, born in 1912, did all these things, and was openly gay. Brought up as a Quaker, he took the Quaker belief in nonviolence to heart, and was active in the Fellowship for Reconciliation, an interfaith peace organization. While in prison for refusing to be inducted into the armed services, Rustin fought for desegregation in the dining hall, repeatedly petitioned the warden for better living conditions, and organized other political prisoners. (I imagine they were relieved when he was released.) A. Philip Randolph, who had organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, was an ally of Bayard's and they organized the March on Washington Movement (1933-1947). There was no actual March in the 1940's since their demands of equal employment in the defense industry were met.

In 1942 he boarded a bus in Louisville, bound for Nashville, and sat in a whites-only seat. When the drivers asked him to move to the back, Rustin refused. Police boarded the bus and again asked him to move. A little white boy was sitting across the aisle from him. Rustin said "If I get up and move, this boy won't know that what you are doing is wrong." He was beaten and taken to the police station, but was released uncharged.

Rustin joined the Congress of Racial Equality's (CORE) plan to send eight white and eight black men into the Deep South in 1947 to test the Supreme Court ruling that declared segregation in interstate travel unconstitutional. The Journey of Reconciliation, as it became known, was to be a two week pilgrimage through Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky. Rustin was arrested three times in North Carolina and was sentenced to 30 days on the chain gang. After Rosa Parks's arrest in 1955, Rustin was asked to go to Montgomery to help organize the bus boycott. He worked with Martin Luther King, Jr., and introduced him to the Gandhian principles of nonviolence. The two men created the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).

When Rustin was arrested for homosexual activity in 1953, he was shunned by many in the civil rights movement. U.S. Representative Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., who was a member of the SCLC's board, forced Rustin's resignation from the SCLC in 1960 by threatening to discuss Rustin's morals charge in Congress. Although Rustin was open about his sexual orientation and his conviction was a matter of public record, the events had not been discussed widely outside the civil rights leadership.

Due to his grassroots organizing skills, A. Philip Randolph asked Rustin to help with the 1963 March on Washington, despite opposition from activists and conservatives. J. Edgar Hoover floated rumors that Rustin and King were lovers; Strom Thurmond denounced him as a communist, draft dodger, and homosexual on the senate floor; and NAACP chairman Roy Wilkins did not want Rustin to receive any public credit for his role in planning the march. Nevertheless, he did gain recognition, since Rustin and Randolph appeared on the cover of *Life* magazine as the leaders of the March. After the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, Rustin became more involved with the Democratic Party, the labor movement, and the Socialist Party. In his obituary in 1987, the *New York Times* reported, "Looking back at his career, Mr. Rustin, a Quaker, once wrote: 'The principal factors which influenced my life are 1) nonviolent tactics; 2) constitutional means; 3) democratic procedures; 4) respect for human personality; 5) a belief that all people are one.'"

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November 2012 Sunday Celebrations of Life

Guild Month: Special Guild Presentation each Sunday in November

November 4 ***Choosing Peace in Violent Times***

Speaker: ***Cindy Lou Who***

Facilitator: ***Marsha Mitchiner***

Accompanist: ***Richard Rifkin***

Presentation: ***Building & Grounds Guild***

November 11 ***Dancing with Spirit***

Speaker: ***Rachel Randall***

Facilitator: ***Libby Ware***

Accompanist: ***Alan Dynin***

Presentation: ***Program Guild***

November 18 ***Perfect isn't a Real Word, it's Made-up, Right?***

(Lessons in real and made-up living from second grade)

Speaker: ***Janna Nelson***

Facilitator: ***D. Patton White***

Accompanist: ***Scott Hooker***

Presentation ***Social Justice Guild***

November 25 ***Readings, Stories, and Reflections of the Season***

Speaker: ***Kate Hauk***

Facilitator: ***Charlene Ball***

Accompanist: ***William 'Bill' Chelton***

Presentation ***Membership Guild***

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.**

In celebration of the 100th anniversary of his birth, several events have been planned nationwide. A documentary about Rustin, *Brother Outsider*, will be shown at the Auburn Avenue Research Library on Saturday, November 10 at 1:00, followed by a panel discussion about Rustin's importance in the Civil Rights Movement, his intersectional analysis which made non-violent direct action a part of many national and international peace and justice movements, and what his life and accomplishments teach us for today's movements for social justice. The Social Justice Guild is one of the sponsors, along with several other organizations. ~

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> .

Community News and Activities *Continued from page 3*

--**John and Victoria Trestrail** had a great weekend recently. Owen's soccer team won their game in the morning, and John's hockey team won the championship in the evening. In addition, John and Victoria celebrated their 13th wedding anniversary. Congratulations to the Trestrails!

--**Lorraine Fontana** is taking a road trip to New England and will see at least two old friends. She also plans to collect oral recollections for LGBT histories.

--**Drop Robert a line** if you have information to share at rstewart@toyodausa.com. ~

Birthdays in November

Name	Birthdate
Lisa Cottrell	11/11
Karla Crawford	11/23
Dean Rowley	11/30
John Trestrail	11/12

We are a philosophically-based, spiritual community dedicated to human liberation and founded on existentialist and feminist principles.

Rachel Randall and Dancing with Spirit" November 11

Rachel Randall will speak at First E on November 11. Her title will be "Dancing with Spirit." She will talk about spiritual lessons from dance, dance as a metaphor for a spiritual journey, and having an embodied sense of oneself in the world.

Rachel is a provisional Elder in the United Methodist Church, a native of rural North Carolina, and a graduate of the NC School of Science and Mathematics, Guilford College, and Candler School of Theology. During those years she was also blessed to be able to study in Ghana and the UK. She then spent two years in chaplain training at Grady Hospital and AMC, and now has happily settled into the role of Bereavement and Volunteer Coordinator (and sometimes chaplain) at Harbor Grace Hospice.

A geek who loves Rubik's Cubes, anime, and role-playing, she wonders about the dynamics of faith and identity in role-playing games. She gets to free her soul in social dancing through waltzing, contra dancing, blues, and swing--and she's always up for a good polka. She met her British Buddhist husband while swing dancing in Atlanta, and he's her favorite theological partner. Together, they live in Chamblee and spend oodles of time crafting toys for children's church at Northwoods UMC. ~

We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world. Rooted in a principled determination to transcend selfishness, compassion can break down political, dogmatic, ideological and religious boundaries. Born of our deep interdependence, compassion is essential to human relationships and to a fulfilled humanity. It is the path to enlightenment, and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.
- Karen Armstrong

The Back Page - First E Members Speak Out

By Charlene Ball

In trying to write about why I call myself an atheist, I want to clear up a few things. First, many people assume that if you're an atheist, you believe in no ethics or morals. "If God doesn't exist, everything is permitted," a character of Dostoyevsky's said.

Now this is not me by a long shot. I certainly believe in ethics. "How can you," someone might ask, "if you don't believe in a God who gives rewards and punishments?" But do people who believe in God do the right things only because they want rewards or fear punishments? I don't think so. Most people who do good things genuinely want to help someone, or they want to live in a community where people think of others, not just themselves. I've often said I wished I did believe in the arc of the universe tending toward justice, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., did. Or in karma, as my partner does. But if something like that is true, I believe it is something we are responsible for making happen, not something that is built into the structure of things.

Second, some people assume atheists are so rational that we have no use for mystery, poetry, metaphor, or what can't be explained, that we think science has all the answers, that we look down our noses at messy emotions, vague intuitions, irrational loyalties, or mystical spirituality. We are thought to believe that nothing has value unless it can be proved by hard facts or logical arguments.

Again, that's not true for me. True, I like logic, and I hold facts to be important. I believe that there is such a thing as truth, even if we can't grasp it. Yet I also believe in mystery, in things that can't be explained. I value feelings, affection, loyalty, friendship, love—often in spite of reason.

Third, atheists are often assumed to be angry—at religion or at religious people, especially their relatives. And frequently they are—with good reason. Many people raised in Christian families in the South revolted against racist, sexist, unjust beliefs and attitudes that they felt were not only wrong but deeply repugnant to their sense of right and justice. Some felt forced to attend church services. Others withdrew because of the hellfire and damnation preached in many Southern churches.

Again, these reasons for becoming a nonbeliever were not mine. I didn't believe Christianity itself was to blame for the meanness and prejudice of some of its practitioners. I actually enjoyed church—the singing, the readings, the sense of community. I still enjoy it. I never took hellfire seriously.

By saying that I am an atheist, I mean that I don't believe in a conscious, aware, thinking, directing, non-physical being who created everything and is aware of us, known as "God." True, many others don't believe in such a being either. They speak of God as universal love, nature, energy, or life force. Some see no conflict with being Christians and saying this.

But I want to be honest. If I claimed to be a Christian, many people would assume I believed in the being just described. I would escape the opprobrium and disapproval that many people in our society express for atheists. I could shelter under the wide umbrella that covers believers and take on their protective coloring.

So I name myself as an atheist. I don't believe in God—or Goddess. I believe we probably don't survive after death, but I don't know. I do know that I am alive now, that I act in freedom and define myself by how I act. I believe that with freedom comes responsibility, and that we are responsible for others, for we live in community, not alone.

The First E Newsletter is published monthly. The deadline for submission of material for the December newsletter is November 11. Send your articles and announcements to mcharleneball@yahoo.com. The editor reserves the right to edit or refuse any material submitted.



I believe meaning isn't to be found outside us, that we create meaning. And I am grateful to First E for providing a place where people can talk, think, ponder, reflect on what we believe and how we live our beliefs. ~