

# 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 •

## **Glen Lopez** **Photographs the Local Scene**

*Story on page 7*



*"Rainday," by Glen Lopez. Courtesy of the photographer.*

**First Existentialist  
Congregation of  
Atlanta**

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Atlanta, Georgia 30307  
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[www.firstexistentialist.org](http://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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*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*

**The Board of Directors met on on Monday, October 3,** at 6:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. The board discussed the proposal made by Stell Simonton regarding a panel of youth, initiated by her daughter Anna, presenting a panel discussion as part of the November 20 Celebration of Life service. The board also considered a proposal from Lorraine Fontana regarding the potential assistance with neighborhood residents who may have financial burdens/barriers to remaining in their homes in the neighborhood as the ongoing gentrification of the community impacts their ability to remain. The board embraced the spirit of the proposal but felt that it would be an additional burden upon the congregation at this time, and encouraged her to connect with non-profit organizations that are already focused on these issues. The Guilds and Committees provided updates—we are still intending to improve the floor of the sanctuary; the art work of Teresa Crowder will be hanging in the sanctuary for the month of October and part of November; Andy Weiskoff replaced the sound amplifier/mixer; we are in a strong financial position at this time; the membership guild will hold several post-service kiddushes in October; rentals continue to be strong; and we discussed the need to replace Aurelia, who has been working with the children's program and who will be leaving Atlanta in early November. The next board meeting will be on Monday, November 7, at 6:00 p.m. in the First E. Sanctuary. All are welcome to attend! ~

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## *Community News & Activities*

--"Glen Lopez Photographs the Local Scene," photographs by First E member **Glen Lopez**, will go up on First E's walls on **November 19**. "Mixed Media," art by Teresa Crowder, will remain up until November 19.

--**Bill Read's** sister-in-law Laura Doster Chase died. Her memorial service was two Sundays ago. Her death was not unexpected but the timing had been uncertain. Please extend your sympathy and loving thoughts to Bill and his family.

--**Nancy White** is pleased to have a new-to-her car, to replace her beloved vehicle which was totaled 2 weeks ago. She's happy to have it and happy with it.

--**Harry Case**, a musician who had played at First E, has died. Harry was a wonderful musician and a friend and benefactor of the Congregation.

--**Happy Birthday to Reverend Marsha Mitchiner!**

--**Jeanne Stahl** had a death in her family.

--**Gareth Finley**, who moved back to South Carolina several years ago to care for her mother, lost her last week. Please extend your loving thoughts and sympathy to Gareth.

--**Stephanie's mom** has improved since starting to receive constant care with nutrition and medications, but she wants to go home to Michigan, which is not going to be possible. Please keep Stephanie, her mom, Brad, and Sasha in your thoughts.

*Continued on page 7.*

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## ***Guild Reports***

### ***Art Guild***

"Glen Lopez Photographs the Local Scene," new photographs by First E member Glen Lopez, will go up on First E's walls on November 19. "Mixed Media," art by Teresa Crowder, will come down on that date. The Guild arranges for exhibits of visual art on the walls of First E as well as other kinds of artistic expression throughout the year. Members of the Art Guild are Glen Lopez, Chair; Charlene Ball; Elaine Gale; Patton White, and Kitty Wimbish. We welcome feedback. ~

### ***Fundraising Guild***

The Fundraising Guild seeks volunteers for November's Fiddler's Green on November 19 at 8:00 p.m. at First E. If you would like to volunteer to help with concessions this month, contact Stell ([simontone@bellsouth.net](mailto:simontone@bellsouth.net)), Libby ([toadlibby@yahoo.com](mailto:toadlibby@yahoo.com)), or Charlene ([mcharleneball@yahoo.com](mailto:mcharleneball@yahoo.com)). For more information, contact Chris Moser at [chrismoser@bellsouth.net](mailto:chrismoser@bellsouth.net). ~

### ***Membership Guild***

The Membership Guild organizes kiddushes and potlucks and arranges for Sunday greeters. Members include Carol Sandiford, Elaine Gale, Robert Stewart, Wilj Sturkey, Bill Laney, Mary Howard, Joseph Verdell, and Bekka. If you're interested in joining Membership or being a greeter, us, contact Mary Howard at [iamarymae@yahoo.com](mailto:iamarymae@yahoo.com). ~

### ***Program Guild***

The Program Guild secures speakers, facilitators, and musicians for Sunday Celebrations of Life. Our members are Patton White (chair), Linda Bell, Charlene Ball, and Saralyn Chesnut. Rev. Marsha Mitchiner also gives input. If you would like to recommend a speaker, you can contact any member of the Program Guild. If you would like to recommend a musician, contact Patton [patton@beacondance.org](mailto:patton@beacondance.org). If you would like to facilitate, contact Charlene at [mcharleneball@yahoo.com](mailto:mcharleneball@yahoo.com). The next meeting of the Program Guild will be November 15 at 6:00 p.m. in the First E Sanctuary. All members and friends are welcome to attend our meetings. ~

### ***Social Justice Guild***

The Social Justice Guild meets bi-monthly, so our next meeting will be on Sunday, December 4 downstairs after the COL service. SJG members write or secure articles for the Social Justice Corner in this newsletter, sponsor a book discussion group, and take part in community social justice activities. Members are Katrice Baker, Linda Bell, Saralyn Chesnut, Lorraine Fontana, Edi Kelman, and Libby Ware. We welcome new members, and all are welcome to attend our meetings. ~~

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## ***FIDDLER'S GREEN SCHEDULE***

***November-December 2016***

***Nov. 19, '16      Benson & Leinweber, Knightsong***  
***Dec. 17, '16      TBA, The Lost Boys***

***All Fiddler's Green concerts will be at First Existentialist. Shows start at 8:00 p.m. If you would like to volunteer to help with concessions, contact a member of the Fundraising Guild: Stell ([simontone@bellsouth.net](mailto:simontone@bellsouth.net)), Libby ([toadlibby@yahoo.com](mailto:toadlibby@yahoo.com)), or Charlene ([mcharleneball@yahoo.com](mailto:mcharleneball@yahoo.com)). ~***



# Social Justice Corner

## ***Indigenous Groups Are Way Ahead Of Everyone Else At Protecting Forests, and they are turning the Dakota Access protests into a worldwide environmental movement.***

*By Alexander Sammon*

**By the time three federal government agencies issued their joint statement halting construction of the Dakota Access pipeline on September 9**, there were some 5,000 protesters on site in Cannon Ball, North Dakota challenging the project. The groups spread out over a massive campsite on the Standing Rock Sioux reservation, where the tribe says the proposed construction of the pipeline threatens their water source and sacred lands.

After hearing about the Standing Rock resistance, Native groups from all over the world came to stand in solidarity with the Sioux, traveling from Canada, Mexico, Brazil, and the Ecuadorian Amazon. The thousands of demonstrators represented some 280 different indigenous tribes, by far the largest Native American protest in recent memory and perhaps one of the largest ever recorded. The project's construction permits are being reconsidered for violation under the National Environmental Policy Act, a process that will run through November 21. But no matter what happens with the pipeline, many of these demonstrators see the events at Standing Rock as a springboard for a larger indigenous solidarity movement. It's not simply an issue of indigenous land rights—many groups who showed up at Standing Rock are hoping to mount a larger unified effort to combat climate change. According to Leo Cerda, Ecuador field coordinator of the group Amazon Watch and member of the Kichwa tribe, the plight of indigenous land rights in the face of corporate resource extraction is a global phenomenon. Cerda, who hails from the Ecuadorian Amazon, traveled with a group of four all the way to North Dakota to show solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux. "The indigenous struggle against governments and corporations is the same all over the world," Cerda told Mother Jones. "We have been among the only people doing anything to stop climate change," he added.



Tribal members from the Ecuadorian Amazon in Cannon Ball, North Dakota Ayşe Gürsöz/Amazon Watch

In Bolivia and Brazil, non-indigenous lands were deforested at nearly three times the rate of their indigenous counterparts. A new study by the World Resources Institute, a resource management NGO, lends credence to that claim. Analyzing deforestation rates in Amazonian regions of Bolivia, Brazil, and Colombia over the course of 12 years, the WRI found that legally recognized indigenous forestlands experienced significantly lower rates of forest loss. In Bolivia and Brazil, non-indigenous lands were deforested at nearly three times the rate of their indigenous counterparts; in Colombia, the rate was double. The study also found that indigenous forestlands in these three countries would provide between \$25 and \$34 billion in carbon sequestration over the next 20 years. The report urged for indigenously-held forest stands to become a central tenet of climate change mitigation strategies, a course of action conspicuously absent from Bolivia, Brazil, and Colombia's Nationally Determined Contributions to the UN's new climate deal.

*Continued on page 7.*

# **Minister's Corner**

## **By Rev. Marsha Mitchiner**

### ***Loving Thoughts and Congratulations Go Out To:***

**\*Glen Lopez who was in the hospital recently** but has recovered and is back home. You'll see him and Rufus cruising the neighborhood in his new wheels!

**\*Robin Stinson and Kevin James who married on October 15** -- a date chosen in part because it was the date in history marking the Supreme Court decision making it illegal to deny marriage between races.

### ***MANY THANKS***

**As in any organization, there are many tasks** that are done behind the scenes. Often, there's a small number of people that do much of that work yet are not recognized and thanked, in part, because they do it so well we tend to not notice the effort that goes into it. And we come to assume that "they" will take care of it. It's risky to name those dedicated volunteers because inevitably someone is left off. I'm going to take that chance because it's important to make the effort so you can see their names and express your appreciation for all they do for our community, our family of choice.

**\*\*The Membership Guild: Wilj Sturkey, Elaine Gale, Carol Sandiford, Mary Howard, Saralyn Chestnut, Joseph Verdell, Bekka, and Robert Stewart.** They organize/set up/clean up every kiddish and potluck (No, Virginia. There is no kitchen fairy.); take turns as Greeter at every Celebration of Life service; connect with new comers after every service and follow up with those who provide their name/contact information; participate in discussion/planning/implementing ways to keep us informed and connected to each other. Robert sends a weekly email to the E list about the coming Sunday and other news. And more!

**\*\*The Building and Grounds Crew: Bill Read and Bill Laney.** This Dynamic Duo have been taking care of our wonderful building with TLC and a lot of personal time. Bill R is something of an unofficial caretaker--coming by to check on things. Bill L is our go to guy for researching, planning and implementing special projects like the sanctuary lighting and floor.

**\*\*Andy Weiskof: our man of sound and design.** Andy helps our aging sound system not squeak and moan, recently provided a new amplifier and hooked up the wireless mic. He designed the promotional "slogans" that are printed on bright colored cards

and used for handouts. PLUS, he has designed the logo for most of our E Tees, including the famous "We're looking for a few good . . . ."

**\*\*Ashlea Davis: Head Keeper of the Rev. Lanier Clance Woodland Sanctuary.** Ashlea is dedicated to continuing the dream of Pat Hewatt to create and maintain our Woodland Sanctuary in honor/memory of Founding Minister, Rev. Lanier Clance. She is steadfast in protecting the physical space and its spiritual purpose. ~

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### ***Community News & Activities***

***Continued from page 2***

--**Stell Simonton's** mother's twin sister died last week.

--**Lorraine's cousin Diane Passo** lost her husband last week. She lost her brother last year. Please keep her and the family in your healing thoughts.

--**Phyllis Thakis' granddaughter Kyra** is going through a really hard time right now.

--**Mark White's younger son Daniel**, who suffered a psychotic break while in Japan, has improved. Please keep him and their family in your loving thoughts.

--**Aurelia will be leaving** for Nola the last week in November. She has some time available to work during the next few weeks if anyone in the Congregation needs cleaning, pet sitting, child-care, etc. Email her at [Kendra.kime@gmail.com](mailto:Kendra.kime@gmail.com).

--**For T-shirts to celebrate our 40th year**, please contact Marsha.

--**The 'Exposed Festival' of contemporary Israeli dance** continues at Emory and 7 Stages. For more information visit [exposedfestival.org](http://exposedfestival.org).

--**Lost-N-Found Youth will be having a Casino Night December 3, 7-10PM.** Check their web-site or Facebook page for more info.

**WRFG's annual fundraising event and silent auction is December 11.** Anna Simonton, who grew up in this congregation, is now a WRFG Board Member and is seeking donations to the silent auction, goods, services, etc. See Stell for more information.

--**If you have news of interest to the Congregation**, please drop me a note to [robertstewart359@gmail.com](mailto:robertstewart359@gmail.com).

--**Submissions and news for the December newsletter** are due to Charlene by Sunday, November 20. Send to [mcharleneball@yahoo.com](mailto:mcharleneball@yahoo.com). ~

# ***Glen Lopez Photographs the Local Scene***



**Glen Lopez, Atlanta photographer and longtime First E member,** is a familiar sight in Candler Park, Lake Claire, and Little 5 Points as he travels in his wheelchair accompanied by Rufus, his canine companion. Camera in hand, Glen has recorded the street life in this area for decades. A retrospective of his work with some new photographs, will go up on the walls of First E on November 19. ~

*Glen Lopez and Rufus outside First E. Photo by Charlene Ball.*

*I cannot endure to waste anything as precious as autumn sunshine by staying in the house. So I spend almost all the daylight hours in the open air. ~ Nathaniel Hawthorne*

## ***Indigenous Groups Are Way Ahead Of Everyone Else At Protecting Forests*** ***Continued from page 5***

Still, indigenous land protectors are not waiting around for legislative assistance. Instead, they are putting to use protest methods practiced at Standing Rock. Last Wednesday, CONFENIAE, a regional organization of 1,500 indigenous communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon, was surrounded and forcibly evacuated by 200 police and riot cops in relation to its role in blocking 29 proposed oil plots. According to Cerda, members of Amazon Watch are using police relation tactics learned in North Dakota to hold their ground and establish their rights. "We were surprised that the same sorts of rights violations by police happen in the so-called free world," he said of his time in North Dakota. Currently, Cerda's group is creating a camp of its own to protest land expropriation in the name of increased oil extraction in Ecuador.

The six-week governmental review process that will determine the fate of the Dakota Access Pipeline is slated to begin on October 11. Though there have been no early indications as to how that process might turn out, one thing is certain: indigenous groups worldwide will be watching. ~

*Alexander Sammon is a Ben Bagdikian editorial fellow at Mother Jones stationed in San Francisco. He has previously worked at the New York Times. Reach him at [asammon@motherjones.com](mailto:asammon@motherjones.com), Twitterize him @alex\_sammon.*

*This article first appeared in **Mother Jones** on October 10, 2016, and appears here by permission of the author. Here is the link: <http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2016/10/how-dakota-access-pipeline-protests-launched-global-movement>. Accessed November 3, 2016. Thanks to Carol Sandiford for contacting the author and requesting the article. ~*

# ***Speakers in November***

## ***November 6: Franklin Abbott***

**Franklin Abbott Franklin Abbott** is a psychotherapist in private practice in Atlanta. He is Chairperson of the Queer Literary Festival, a poet, and the author of several books. He will speak on "Uncertainty and Anxiety" on November 6. ~

## ***November 13: Rev. Duncan Teague***

**Rev. Duncan Teague's** topic on November 13 is "Authentic Gratitude." Rev. Teague is an ordained Unitarian Universalist (UU) minister and has spoken at First E numerous times. 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. ~

## ***November 20: Contemporary Social Movements in Atlanta: Young Activists Share Their Work***

The First Existentialist Congregation will host a **panel discussion by young activists** whose work has ignited and expanded social movements in Atlanta in recent years. Movements for racial justice, immigrant rights, queer liberation, economic justice and feminism are among those represented. The panel will be moderated by **Anna Simonton**, an independent journalist and Movement Media Fellow at Project South. ~

## ***November 27: Dr. Sharon Mathis***

Dr. Sharon Mathis is a psychologist; playwright and solo performer; and founding member of the Congregation. Her most recent play *The Liars' Child* won an Ethel Woolson Award for best plays of 2013, and her solo show *He/She and Me* was produced in New Orleans, San Francisco, and New York. She will speak on November 27 about "Giving Away Our Thanks" as part of our annual Native American Giveaway. ~

*Don't be seduced into thinking that that which does not make a profit is without value. ~  
Arthur Miller, playwright and essayist*



# **November 2016 Sunday Celebrations of Life**

***Guild Month: Special Guild presentation on each Sunday in November***

***November 6    Uncertainty and Anxiety***

***Speaker: Franklin Abbott***

***Facilitator: Dr. Sharon Mathis***

***Accompanist: Aviva and the Flying Penguins***

***Communication/ Newsletter Guild and Membership Guild***

***November 13    Authentic Gratitude***

***Speaker: Rev. Duncan Teague***

***Facilitator: Rev. Marsha Mitchiner***

***Accompanist: Antonio Williams***

***Building & Grounds and Art Guilds***

***November 20    Contemporary Social Movements in Atlanta:***

***Young Activists Share Their Work***

***Speaker: Anna Simonton and Others***

***Facilitator: Robert Stewart***

***Accompanist: William Chelton***

***Finance Committee and Fundraising Guild***

***November 27    Giving Away Our Thanks***

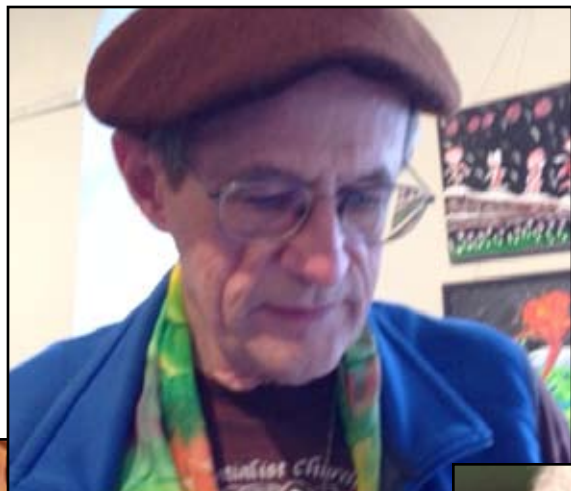
***Speaker: Dr. Sharon Mathis***

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

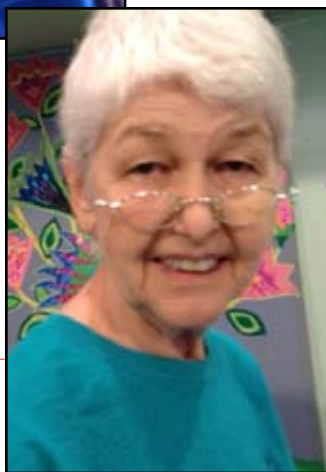
***Accompanist: David Tyberg***

***Program and Social Justice Guilds***

# The Back Page



*A few photos from Founders Day 2016.. Top left: Bill Read; middle, left to right: Betsy Henderson, Ashlea Davis; Bottom, left to right: Bill Chelton, Craig Rafuse, Linda Bell. Photographs by Charlene Ball.*



*The Existentialist is published monthly. Deadline for the December 2016 newsletter is November 20. Send your articles and announcements to [mcharleneball@yahoo.com](mailto:mcharleneball@yahoo.com). The editor reserves the right to edit or refuse any material submitted.*