

# 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 •

## ~ DAY of the DEAD ~



*Catrina, a popular figure in Day of the Dead celebrations in Mexico. (Photo: Wikipedia.)*

***We will celebrate Day of the Dead (Dia de Muertos) this year on November 1. Marsha will speak on "Holding On, Carrying On." An altar will be set up for you to bring pictures of loved ones who have passed (including our 4 legged ones) and items that were special to them. There will also be a pot luck after the service, so bring a dish that they were known for or in some way reminds you of them. This is a day to celebrate the life of those who have left us in body but will always be with us in our memories and hearts. ~***

**First Existentialist  
Congregation of  
Atlanta**

470 Candler Park Drive,  
NE  
Atlanta, Georgia 30307  
404-378-5570  
[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

By D. Patton White, Board Chair

The Board of Directors met on Monday, October 5, at 7:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. The board took up the topic of membership for a more focused conversation on goals in the coming years. The board agreed that a reasonable goal would be to seek an increase in membership to between 75 and 100 members within three to five years. We will continue to refine the goal before presenting further possibilities to the congregation. Bill Laney shared an update on the next phase of the automatic door opener. He presented one bid, and will seek more and report back at the November meeting. Marsha reported on potential groups for our annual holiday giving initiative. Edith reported that our rentals remain strong, particularly our principal renter, Primavera pre-school. The Finance Committee reported that we are still in a strong financial position for the year. Patton shared that we are in need of more musicians for our pool of accompanists for Sunday Celebrations of Life (see special notice below). ~

## Musicians Wanted

**The First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta is seeking musicians to play on Sunday mornings. We are looking for musicians who can lead and accompany the congregation in four congregational songs as well as share a brief performance of another piece of music.**

**We pay a \$75 honorarium per Sunday. If you are interested in being included in the pool of musicians for our Sunday Celebrations of Life, held every Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., please email Program Guild Chair D. Patton White at [patton@beacondance.org](mailto:patton@beacondance.org) or call him at 404.441.9243.**

## Community News & Activities

--The Book Discussion Group meets on Sunday, November 15, after the COL. We will discuss Chapter 5 of *Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome* by Joy DeGruy. All are welcome.

--November 1 will be Day of the Dead, a popular holiday in Mexico and one that First E has long celebrated. Marsha Mitchiner will speak, and an altar will be set up for members to bring mementos, photographs, and even food to remember those who have passed on.

--November is Guild Month. Each Sunday, each active guild will make a brief presentation to the congregation during the COL.

--Saralyn is helping start a chapter in Atlanta of OLOC (Old Lesbians Organizing for Change). Minimum age is 50, so let her know if you're interested.

--Arlene is offering tutoring and would be happy to know of anyone whose kids need tutoring.

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# ***Guild Reports***

## ***Program Guild*** ***By Charlene Ball***

**The Program Guild held a facilitators' workshop on Sunday, October 25, after the COL service.** We discussed our experiences facilitating, and experienced facilitators shared ideas and tips. Charlene gave out copies of the "Facilitators' Guidelines" and other handouts. We discussed how different ones of us introduce the lighting of the candles by the children, welcoming newcomers, announcing birthdays and anniversaries, introducing silent meditation and the offering, and introducing the speaker.

We have five Sundays in November, and that means five Celebrations of Life. The programs range from November 1 with the annual Day of the Dead service to the Native American Giveaway on the 29th. We have a variety of speakers this month. On November 1, our own Rev. Marsha Mitchiner will facilitate and speak on the Day of the Dead. On November 8, Becky Rafter, Executive Director of Georgia WAND (Women's Action for New Directions) will speak. Rev. Marti Keller returns on November 15, and Rev. Angela Denise Davis returns on November 22. We round out the month with Dr. Sharon Mathis leading the annual Native American Giveaway on November 29.

November is Guild Month, and each Sunday, a different guild will make a short presentation about its plans for 2016. (See below for more information.)

The next meeting of the Program Guild will be on November 3 in the Sanctuary at 6:00 p.m. All members and friends are welcome to attend. ~

## ***Membership Guild*** ***By Charlene Ball***

**The Membership 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. The Membership Guild is composed of Elaine Gale, Carol Sandiford, Hank Pfadenhauer, Robert Stewart, Bill Laney, Mary Howard, and Wilj Sturkey. The Openers are Elaine, Hank, Wilj, Stell Simonton, and Andy Weiskoff. If anyone would like to know more about the Membership Guild, participate in setting up a kiddush, opening, or greeting, contact Wilj at [cincodemayo55@comcast.net](mailto:cincodemayo55@comcast.net) or Elaine at [ergale@hotmail.com](mailto:ergale@hotmail.com). ~

## ***Social Justice Guild*** ***By Charlene Ball***

**The Social Justice Guild** is sponsoring the Book Discussion Group, which will meet on November 15 to discuss Chapter 5 of *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* by Dr. Joy De Gruye. We will meet downstairs after the COL. Members and friends are welcome to attend. ~

## ***November is Guild Month***

**November is Guild Month, and each of our active guilds will make a brief presentation during the COL. On November 1, the Finance Committee and the Fundraising Guild will present; on November 8, the Education and Communication/Newsletter Guilds will present; on November 15, we will hear from the Building and Grounds Guild and the Art Guild; on November 22, we will hear from the Program and Social Justice Guilds; and on November 29, we will hear from the Membership Guild. ~**



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# Social Justice Corner

## ***Update on Moral Monday Georgia – Forward Together!***

***By Lorraine Fontana***

As many of you know, First E is a partner in the Moral Monday coalition here in Georgia. MMGA has organized the last 2 years in Georgia to build a progressive movement in Georgia. Here is the latest information on a hoped for re-invigoration of the Movement from Francys Johnson, President of the NAACP Georgia, one of the two main convening/supporting national organizations which helped make MMGA possible (the other being the American Friends Service Committee):

"As President of the Georgia NAACP, I am proud of the work of the Moral Monday Coalition over the last 2 years. Together we raised important issues, moved the debate, and had more success than anyone ever thought we would. Now, this coalition is not perfect and has had its share of flaws. However, a debate over that record is not as important as MOVING FORWARD! As such, I write to urge those who have supported Moral Monday Georgia to stand with us again!

***Moral Monday Georgia is a multiracial, multi-issue coalition of citizens working for positive change for the public good.***

As the partnering organizations prepare for the 2016 Legislative Session; we all know there is much to be done on defense and offense at the Gold Dome. Extremists will put politics over people and attempt a re-do of RFRA (the so-called Religious Freedom Restoration Act). There will also be hateful attempts to roll back registration and voting laws along with immoral attacks on the elderly, students, immigrants, and working Georgians in the form of legislation that oppress for the benefit of the privileged few. Our agenda must include strong demands for the expansion of Medicaid; voting rights; and reforms to the justice system.

What is Moral Monday Georgia? Moral Monday Georgia is a multiracial, multi-issue coalition of citizens working for positive change for the public good. Modeled on the North Carolina NAACP's HKonJ/Forward Together Movement led by North Carolina NAACP's President Rev. Dr. William Barber; Moral Monday Georgia is broad based coalition of progressive organizations who have come together for such a time as this. For too long, many elected officials in Georgia have ignored the moral implications of their actions and inactions with respect to the neediest among us. Our coalition stands against all forms of discrimination and amplifies the voices and ideas of folks in marginalized circumstances.

What can we do? Together we are building the collective voice of the people to be heard over the voices of big business, corrupt money and repressive government by fighting for legislative and public policy issues to improve ordinary people's lives. In practice, we seek to contribute to the creation of a more just and peaceful society where dialogue, debate and discussion prevail, and will work to achieve consensus in our group without silencing minority voices.

What are the next steps? As a first step, Moral Monday Coalition partners are asked to nominate a representative to serve on Organizing Team charged with developing the 2016 MMGA working committees. Those committees will establish the legislative agenda (and all that entails) and the ways and means to accomplish the same.

I welcome your comments, suggestions and ideals on moving Georgia Forward through the Moral Monday platform. Send them directly to me at [francysjohnson@naacpga.org](mailto:francysjohnson@naacpga.org)."

First E's Social Justice Guild will be discussing a response to Dr. Johnson's request for a rep to join him on a conference call to start this reorganization process. ~

# ***Speakers in November***

## ***November 1: Rev. Marsha Mitchiner on "Carry on the Good"***

**Growing up in middle Georgia, Marsha was an active member of her church,** along with the rest of her family. She became disillusioned in her teen years when the actions and answers to her questions posed to the minister and other denomination leadership/ followers were not in agreement with the Christian messages she had been taught. She left religious institutions but felt a need to find a community of individuals seeking answers without dogma. She immediately felt she had found her home when she came to First E in 1980. She became an active member, joined the Ministerial Training Program with Rev. Lanier Clance, and was ordained by First E in 1993. She served with Rev. Clance as Associate Minister until his retirement in 2000 and now serves as Fellowship Minister. Marsha believes in individual truth, responsibility, and the power of community. ~

## ***November 8: Becky Rafter on "Centering Spirituality and Community in the Quest for Justice for Shell Bluff and Beyond"***

**Becky Rafter is the Executive Director of Georgia Women's Action for New Directions (Georgia WAND),** a grassroots, women-led organization advancing racial, gender, environmental, and economic justice by ending militarism and systemic violence, especially in relation to the nuclear weapons and nuclear energy industries. Prior to joining WAND, Becky worked in social justice philanthropy at the Funding Exchange in New York City and the Fund for Southern Communities in Atlanta, where she organized donors and other foundations to invest more resources in the U.S. South. Earlier in her career, as Executive Director of NARAL Pro-Choice Georgia, she worked to advance a reproductive justice analysis in Georgia and in the national NARAL community. Groups she's affiliated with include NYC Participatory Budgeting Campaign's Research Board, the 2007 United States Social Forum – Local Host Fundraising Committee, Feminist Women's Health Center – past board member, LEAD Atlanta – c/o '06, Project South – Building a Movement Institute c/o '06, Universidades Sin Fronteras, Racial Justice Action Center – SNaP-Co, Showing Up for Racial Justice – Action Team, Georgia Peace and Justice Coalition – Steering Committee member, Moral Monday GA – past Steering Committee member, and Trans Housing Atlanta Project. Becky has an MPA in International Policy and Nonprofit Management from New York University's Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service and a BA in International Relations and Spanish from Agnes Scott College. ~

*Speakers in November ~ continued on page 8*

## ***Community News & Activities ~ continued from page***

**--Dr. Jean Heinrich has been offered a job in Hawaii counseling troops,** and will be leaving in 1-2 weeks for a period of 1-2 years. She's leading the Music at 1st E November 1, the last time for a long while. Doggone it! And Congratulations!

**--Nathaniel is now at Crestview Health and Rehab Facility,** 2800 Springdale Rd SW, Atlanta, GA 30315, Room 203. Visiting hours are 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Phone: (404) 616-8100. He doesn't have a phone in his room, so until he gets a cell phone there is no easy way to reach him. Here are two cell numbers he has used: 404-616-8319; 404-616-8320. To help or go see Nathaniel, see Lorraine.

### ***ONGOING:***

**--First E Liberation Ukulele Group** meets 1st, 3rd, and 4th Wednesday evenings. 7:30 start time. Instruction available once monthly. All levels of expertise are welcome. Call Wilj at 404-626-4763 for information.

**--Geek Chorus meets on Second Wednesdays.** Bring your favorite beverage to share, love offering to First E, and musical instruments to pluck, bang or strum.

**--Submissions and news for the December Newsletter** are due to Charlene by Sunday, November 15. Send to [mcharleneball@yahoo.com](mailto:mcharleneball@yahoo.com). Contact Robert Stewart with your news and activities for his weekly e-newsletter: [robertstewart369@gmail.com](mailto:robertstewart369@gmail.com). ~

## ***When Here Was Everywhere ~ continued from Back Page***

Its “center is everywhere” and Its “circumference is nowhere,” alchemists proclaim, as they pursue ‘It’, which “is everywhere to be found,” and you must leave home to find It, yet the exact opposite is also true: “if you do not find It in your own house, you will find It nowhere.” We had that going on, too, with those who left home to find It “everywhere” meeting up with those who had found It in their “own house,” expressing through music, on a porch (persona), what’s kept private behind walls. Like John Lennon’s confession: “Although I laugh and I act like a clown/ Beneath this mask I am wearing a frown.”

He and his mates analyze the fool: He’s a real Nowhere Man sitting in his nowhere land / Making all his nowhere plans for nobody. Because he won’t listen, the guy Doesn’t have a point of view / Knows not where he’s going to, and hasn’t a clue of what he is missing. The Beatles (“We’re just four parts of the one,” Paul said), a mandala reorienting our dis-orientation, transform our lost condition. Among the most succinct is John’s challenge: “Why are you there when you’re everywhere? Right here (not to live in pain and fear)! Join the human race, recognize . . . Everyone you meet, so that we all shine on/Like the moon and the stars and the sun / On and on and on, on and on” (mantra of Quintessence).

Mimicking “if you do not find It in your own house, you will find It nowhere,” John sings, Nowhere you can be that isn’t where you’re meant to be, and Nothing you can do but you can learn how to be you. By way of cryptic negations, seekers can learn how to play the game, and suddenly break free of Nowhere Land. It’s easy, Lennon declares, for at that moment (alchemists discover), ‘It’ is like ‘Child’s Play,’ and All you need is love.

***At the top of our lungs, we sang “Instant Karma,”  
and I am still soaring with the harmonies . . .***

Inside Oakhurst, demarcated from Nowhere by its enchantment, we were “100% FREE” (as the program promised) for “ONE DAY ONLY” (a fleeting state of total Oneness).

On the spirit of place: A ‘hurst’ is a wooded area, and the hardwood of ‘Oak’ has long suggested sturdiness and durability. Like humans, trees stand, reaching for the sky and out in all directions of their environment. Their roots are hidden underground, nourished by the soil, just as the roots of our being (what Jung termed the collective unconscious) cannot be seen, but sprout into symbols, metaphors and emotions. Music deals with such “deep archetypal material,” Jung explained, and “represents the movement, development and transformations of motifs of the collective unconscious,” expressing “in sounds what fantasies and visions express in visual images.”

Let me celebrate some of my roots in this charmed vicinity. I have been playing music for 3 decades inside the Oakhurst home of Gayle Thompson and Bob Visentin, and our various bands have played at the Solarium and Kavarna, at an outdoor benefit held in the Village for businesses that burned, and at a club that’s long gone. Those participations, and our attendance of concerts, have helped us gauge the blooming zest in this precinct, but the grassroots of Porchfest were obviously, as they say, “on a whole ‘nutha level.”

Another local house where I used to play lots of music was ‘the Shanty’ that now belongs to Agnes Scott College. It was settled by The Last Great Jive Ass Jug Band (way back in the ‘70s), of which Rodger French and Toni Shifalo went on to form a clown act called Lenny and La Banana, as well as the DeLuxe Vaudeville Orchestra (which I sometimes played in). John Jacobs founded the E-Z Credit Orchestra with singer Berné Poliakoff, who went on to stir up Cowboy Envy, and Joe Shifalo became Pigiron (who invited me into his Back Bayou Band). Elise Witt thrived here for many years. Expand Band (that Bill Fleming and I formed with Rodger French) practiced in the living room. Everyone mentioned gave a ton of boost to Radio Free Georgia. And the parties were awesome.

One last personal note: I am a carpenter who has worked inside quite a few homes in Oakhurst, including the one where the late Sally Wylde (founder of The Wylde Center garden) lived, and her husband Britt Dean (who performed with Band of Desperate Men last Sunday) still does. 35 years ago, I improved the house of Lanier and Pauline Clance where The First Existentialist Congregation was meeting. Just a month ago, I performed in their band for a Founder’s Service commemorating Lanier, who had led his flock to a Candler Park building made of Stone Mountain granite. At the top of our lungs, we sang “Instant Karma,” and I am still soaring with the harmonies of we all shine on, charged further by John Lennon’s 75th birthday, nine days previous to Porchfest. Meanwhile, in my day job, I’d been working for and befriending Eddie Minjarez, an Oakhurst resident whose business is Guitar Decatur, across from Decatur High School, where students master their instruments towards that threshold where work becomes play (It’s easy).

Deep roots of communion and community like these, in and among our adjacent abodes, are, I’m sure, everywhere. The groundswell of enthusiasm here for Oakhurst Porchfest, connected through social media as well as word of mouth, casts a glorious example. My and many hats are off to the wisdom and efforts of organizers, generosity of musicians and homeowners, and appreciation of neighbors / visitors who circulated. ~

*Craig Rafuse, October 2015*

## **Speakers in November ~ Continued from Page 6**

### **November 15: Rev. Marti Keller on "She's Beautiful When She's Angry"**

Women and girls are getting some screen and TV viewing time this fall as the movie Suffragettes- far from a mild look at British suffrage crusaders-- and Super Girl, a new female super hero- make their debuts. Let's explore the possibilities of anger as a tool in the struggle for human worth and dignity.

Rev.Keller is entering her third year as the first affiliated minister with the UU Women's Federation, whose mission it is to seek justice for women and girls and promote their spiritual growth. Prior to that she had served as president of UUWF and chair of its Margaret Fuller Awards panel on religious feminisms. She spent 20 years working for organizations focused on the status of women and reproductive justice prior to entering the UU ministry. She is also a poet/essayist published by feminist presses. She is currently on the advisory council of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. Rev. Marti Keller will bring us her thoughts about anger, especially as it relates to women's struggles for their rights, on November 15. ~



*Rev. Marti Keller, photo courtesy of Rev. Keller*



*Rev. Angela D. Davis, photo courtesy of Rev. Davis*

### **November 22: Rev. Angela Denise Davis on "Building/ Being Communities of Belonging"**

**Rev. Angela Denise Davis, who will speak on November 22** on the topic, "Building/ Being Communities of Belonging," is a certified rehabilitation counselor and an ordained minister. She is a graduate of Clark Atlanta University and has earned two graduate degrees: a master of divinity degree from Vanderbilt University Divinity School, and a master of science in rehabilitation counseling from Georgia State University. Prior to entering the field of vocational rehabilitation, she worked in the area of educational administration as the admissions director at Vanderbilt University Divinity School and the continuing education director at American Baptist College in Nashville, Tennessee.

Her vocational waters flow in two rivers. As an ordained minister, she facilitates a spiritual collective, Sister Harriet, which she started in 2010. As a certified rehabilitation counselor, she helps blind and vision impaired individuals navigate their career path as the Career Development Services Manager at the Center for the Visually Impaired (CVI).

Angela is also an artist, and believes in the power of art to help individuals find spiritual and vocational direction. She has been a freelance graphic designer for over 20 years. She is committed to a life of civic engagement for social justice. She currently sits on the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), and serves as vice-president.

She lives with her partner, Mary Anne Adams, and their canine child, Kasi (pronounced "Cassie") in East Point, GA. ~



# **November 2015 Sunday Celebrations of Life**

**November 1** *"Day of the Dead Celebration: Carry On The Good"*  
*Speaker and Facilitator: Rev. Marsha Mitchiner*  
*Accompanist: Dr. Jean Heinrich*  
*Finance and Fundraising Guilds*

**November 8** *"Centering Spirituality and Community in the  
Quest for Justice for Shell Bluff and Beyond"*  
*Speaker: Becky Rafter, Executive Director of GA WAND*  
*Facilitator: Libby Ware*  
*Accompanist: Aviva and the Flying Penguins*  
*Education and Communication/Newsletter Guilds*

**November 15** *"She's Beautiful When She's Angry"*  
*Speaker: Rev. Marti Keller*  
*Facilitator: Lynn Tippetts*  
*Accompanist: Alan Dynin*  
*Building & Grounds and Art Guilds*

**November 22** *"Building/Being Communities of Belonging"*  
*Speaker: Rev. Angela Denise Davis*  
*Facilitator: Dr. Charlene Ball*  
*Accompanist: Aviva and The Flying Penguins*  
*Program and Social Justice Guilds*

**November 29** *"Native American Giveaway"*  
*Speaker: Dr. Sharon Mathis*  
*Facilitator: D. Patton White*  
*Accompanist: William "Bill" Chelton*  
*Membership Guild*

# The Back Page

## Members and Friends Speak

### When Here Was Everywhere

By Craig Rafuse



Something extraordinary happened in Decatur, Georgia, on October 18. It was called “Oakhurst Porchfest,” and promised “130+ musical performances on porches and lawns” throughout the neighborhood. I myself had fun, letting it rip with the Owls for a gung-ho audience, some of them dear friends, others taking a chance on what the program labeled “Our take on bebop jazz,” and the rest pausing to listen as they strolled the street. Mutual “give it up” energy pulsed and, from all reports, permeated the event’s entire landscape.

Afterwards, back home, a marvelous glow lingered upon me, beyond words. By morning, however, meaningfulness about the experience dawned, worth sharing with you, I hope.

Busy, and out of town the week before, I hadn’t tuned into the Porchfest promotion, other than to notice emails from my band mates, tickled by the swelling number of participants. When I got there to set up my gear and waded into the brochure, OMG! The enormity of it hit me. Here was a Square Mile map of streets, with Dots indicating who was playing where, and the color inside each Dot corresponding to a code that said when. Someone had bothered to schedule the talent such that, in each of the Four (hour-long) Time Slots, the Whole District teemed with sound, but nobody competed with each other. Bravo!

On the reverse side, color-coded lists gave addresses and band names (Melissa the Loud, Hot Tamale Ringwald, and Weapons of Brass Destruction, for example), plus often amusing blurbs about what to expect: “Laid back in the city and uppity in the country”/“Songs about . . . things we’ve yet to ask forgiveness for”/“Earth’s first genetically modified punk rock band”/“Deals mankind a mighty blow”/“You’re gonna love this dramatic underachiever”/“Mike: ‘We sound like Bob Dylan.’ Megan: ‘Honey, we don’t sound anything like Bob Dylan.’” I’m still chuckling.

It was a perfect autumn afternoon. Cool enough to encourage sweaters and leggings, yet the Sun’s slanted rays lit our sparkle, along with the red and golden leaves. When the last sets ended, and Shadows were growing long, as the brochure suggested, we all headed “to the Village” (at the center of the map) for “a high energy performance by Black Sheep Ensemble, a brass and percussion street band” (including members of the Owls and other pals), bringing us all together in “Harmony Park.” The kid in every adult was absolutely glued to the joyful noise and the belly dancers (oo-la-la!) balancing sabers on their heads. Quivering, screaming girls and boys couldn’t get close enough. Sales of trombones and harem costumes will likely take off as a result.

It has occurred to me that the design of this festival established a mandala, as defined by Carl Jung: a Circle divided into Four sections by axes crossing at the Center (or contain-ing a Square). The Square Mile of the map with “the Village” smack dab at the Center (on a North-South fold of the page where a main East-West thoroughfare crosses), and division of the entertainment into Four “all around Oakhurst” periods, qualify.

Completion of the Four produces a Quintessence situated at the Center of the Circle, Jung discovered in his studies of many traditions, and we had that “sum greater than the parts,” All together now (as The Beatles put it) in a 5th hour at the heart of this delightful realm.

*Continued on page 7*

*The Existentialist is published monthly. Deadline for the December 2015 newsletter is November 15. 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.*