

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 •

FIRST E Halloween Dance

SAT. OCT. 27th, 8-11pm

DJ - *The Awesome Bunny Bishop*

Enjoy your favorite disco, country, rock and more

Dress up, Become - Donna Summer - John Travolta - Tammie

Wynette - John Lennon - Yoko Ono - pick your

favorite singer or come as yourself

Prizes for best

costumes

DANCE WILL BE
HELD AT THE
FIRST
EXISTENTIALIST
CONGREGATION
OF ATLANTA

470 CANDLER PARK
DRIVE, ATLANTA
30307 (near L5P)

TICKETS
\$10 at the door
(ticket includes 1
free drink)

EVERYONE
WELCOME



**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,
office@firstexistentialist.org

Board of Directors:
Charlene Ball
Edith Covington,
Treasurer
Karla Crawford,
Recorder
Shannon Sanders
Phyllis Thakis
Victoria Trestrail
Libby Ware, Chair
Andy Weiskoff

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 Libby Ware, Board Chair, with additions by Charlene Ball

The First E Board met on September 4. Bill Laney visited to explain what is happening with fixing the lighting in the sanctuary. Although we have received two electrician's estimates, Bill explained that their bids were based on "unknowns." That is, in bringing our system up to code, they were not sure all that would need to be done. Bill suggested that congregation members do some of the non-electrical work so that when we get bids again, all of the electricians will know exactly what needs to be done. It will take members a few weeks to take down the existing lighting bar and replace it with a unistrut on which we'll hang the lights. Bill is heading up the work effort - thank you, Bill.

Edith Covington, Treasurer, presented us with a proposal to purchase a software program, Churchtrac, a comprehensive program that can handle all of the accounting and pledge tracking functions, along with added reports, budgeting, membership tracking, user-defined fields, and even an integral congregational calendar. Necessary membership and tax-related letters can be generated and printed (or emailed, as appropriate), rendering the cut & paste letters of recent years finally obsolete. With an additional (proposed) data-sharing subscription, we can also set up for unlimited multiple on-or-off-site users to be able to log into an online server which would then access and update all of the other connected PCs as/when those sites next come online. Various screens and sections, such as Finance or Membership, can be set up for appropriate guild members to have passworded access to those areas to view records or run reports themselves. Edith has tested the program and wants to leave this program as her legacy since this is her last year on the board and her last year as treasurer. The Board approved the purchase of the program. If you'd like to check it out, you can go to www.churchtrac.com. You'll hear more about this program in the future once it's rolled out. Thanks to Edith for her hard work.

Also approved was a bid by Tony and Linda Scharko to cut up and carry away the large tree that fell in the Woodland Garden. The fence was damaged and once the tree is gone we will need to repair the fence.

The next Board meeting will be on October 2 at 7:00 p.m. at First E. ~

Third Friday Film Series

Presents

Black Power Mix Tape

Friday, October 19 at 7:30pm

Sliding Scale Donations Requested \$1-\$10.00

No one turned away

Popcorn & Refreshments

Discussion after the film

Guild Reports

Membership Guild

by Wilj Sturkey

September 30 is Founders Day at First E, and **the Membership Guild** is going to celebrate by having an outdoor potluck after the service, weather permitting. Everyone please bring a dish to share. We want EVERYONE to join us for a fun day of socializing. Marsha Mitchiner will be the keynote speaker that day.

The Membership Guild is planning a New Member Orientation, in conjunction with Marsha Mitchiner. The date will be announced soon.

Wilj and Elaine are in talks about having some First E merchandise made to sell to members. We are thinking of offering coffee cups, t-shirts, and maybe shopping bags and bumper stickers. ~

Program Guild

by Charlene Ball

The Program Guild announces that award-winning slam poet Theresa Davis will speak at First E on October 14 (see article on page 6). Also speaking in October will be Robin Stinson, long-time First E member. Rev. Janna Nelson will return on October 21 speaking on "The Courage to Teach." And our annual Day of the Dead service will feature member Karla Crawford as speaker. We will have the traditional altar where members may place photos or mementos of loved ones.

The next meeting of the Program Guild will be on October 23 at 7:00 p.m. at First E. Friends and members are welcome to attend.

The Program Guild is composed of Patton White, chair; Charlene Ball, Linda Bell, Bill Laney, and Victoria Trestrail. If you have feedback for us or information about available speakers or musicians, come to the meeting or see one of us at the service. We welcome your input. ~

Community News & Activities

--**Adam Shapiro**, longtime Atlanta community activist, died recently. Adam hosted radio shows on WRFG and was well-known in the disability rights and social justice communities. His activism, humor, and music will be missed.

--"**Painting for Fun**" Art Show opened September 28 and will run until November 3. Fourteen art students of Ashlea Davis, many First E members or friends, are exhibiting their work in the sanctuary through October.

--**Cate Morrill announces classes in "Training in Happiness"** by Kadampa Meditation Center Mondays from 6:30-8:00 in Cate Morrill's Rising Phoenix T'ai Chi Studio in the Little Five Points Community Center. Classes are \$10 each, \$25 for three. Contact Cate@shouldersdown.com.

--**Cate Morrill is offering a new Tai Chi class for women** on Thursday mornings at 10:00 am. Contact Cate at Cate@shouldersdown.com for details.

--**The Atlanta Society of Friends (Quakers)** invite you to a series of Sunday afternoon discussions during "Quaker Quest," an exploration of Quaker faith and spirituality. For more information, visit www.quakerquest.org.

--"**Transgender Identity & Inclusion**" workshop webinar on Wednesday, October 17, 7:00-8:15 pm ET. To register, go to http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/1272/p/salsa/web/common/public/signup?signup_page_KEY=7080

--**Halloween Dance** at First E on October 27 from 8:00 to 11:00 pm, featuring DJ Bunny Bishop (information on front page of newsletter). Come as your favorite singer or performer, or just as yourself. Everyone is welcome.

--**Rock to Stop Walmart**, Saturday, September 29, 8:00-midnight, at Beacon Hill Arts Center, 410 W. Trinity Place, Decatur 30030 (front of building, enter from W. Trinity Place). \$22 in advance, \$25 at door includes 1 free beverage. Featuring Scott

Finance Report: August 2012

General Operating Account Thru August 30

Total Income	41,255
Total Expenses	(41,786)
2012 Cash Flow	(531)

Fund Types & Names Account Balances on August 30

< unaudited >

General Operating Account	203
Designated Operating Funds	8,964
Gay Dellinger Estate Gift	2,466
Handicap Access Ramp	935
Lanier Clance Lighting	1,044
Leadership Development	570
Community Garden	(443)
Building & Grounds	259
Woodland Sanctuary	1,069
Minister's Discretionary	382
Original 1st E History	68
Labyrinth & Garden	256
Social Justice	836
Attic Insulation Fund	1,250
Music Fund	150
Children's Program	122

Savings: Pat Hewatt Revolving Loan Fund 5,063

Total First E Funds 14,230

Old Stone Church History Project

Bi-Racial History Account	2,209
Legacy Markers Account	1,131

Total History Project Funds 3,340

Community News and Activities Continued from page 3

Hooker and Janna Nelson, Mudcat, Aviva & the Flying Penguins, Theresa Davis, and more.

--A memorial service was held for **Kate Swiatek**, former member of First E. Kate will be remembered for many things, primarily for her work with animals.

--A memorial service was held for **Shirley Brown** on September 29 at Georgia Mountains Unitarian Universalist Church. Shirley was a member of the Atlanta Feminist Women's Chorus and a friend to many First E members.

--A second benefit for **Craig Rafuse** will be held at the Land Trust on October 13. Contact Cate Morrill at Cate@shoulders-down.com for details.

--**Beacon Dance will present Closing the Space** on Friday and Saturday, October 26-27 at 8:00 PM in the Beacon Hill Arts Center, 410 W. Trinity Place, in downtown Decatur. Part celebration and part requiem, Closing the Space will be an interactive event with performance, visual art and libations, and opportunity for all to share memories of the 25 years that the center has housed Beacon Dance. The performances are free and open to the public.

--**Rev. Kate Hauk offers classes in Restorative Yoga** at Decatur Healing Arts, 619 East College Ave., Decatur, Oct. 11-Dec. 20 (no class Nov. 22). This is a restorative yoga class for all levels offering breathing, movement, and meditation with poetic imagery, designed to usher in an early sense of Sabbath rest, integration of mind and body and a gentle renewal of energy. \$15 drop-in and class cards welcome. 404-378-6288.

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

Wednesday Night Suppers each Week 6:30 to 8:00/8:30 pm in the Sanctuary

Welcome, Everyone!
If you would like to provide a meal or bring a covered dish, please contact Elaine or Wilj of the Membership Guild.

Birthdays in October

Name	Birthdate
Marsha Mitchiner	10/19
Cate Morrill	10/27

The longer I live the more beautiful life becomes. ~
Frank Lloyd Wright

Please 'like' us on Facebook!
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/43340332955/>

Social Justice Corner

Social Justice Guild Awards Rick Westbrook Honorary Membership

On Sunday, September 30, 2012, The Social Justice Guild presented Rick Westbrook, First Ex's Office Administrator, with a plaque announcing his honorary membership in the Social Justice Guild: "Whereas Rick Westbrook is an engaged social activist in the areas of homeless youth, AIDS/HIV, safe sex, marriage equality and other LGBTQ issues, is a leader of the Flaming Sugarbakers Sisters, has helmed the East Point Possums which has contributed to a variety of community organizations, and is a consummate fundraiser, the Social Justice Guild of the First Existentialist Congregation, hereby makes Rick an honorary member."

Lorraine Fontana, Chair, had proposed to the Guild that we honor Rick in this way and we unanimously agreed, all of being impressed with the amount of time, energy, and love that Rick dedicates to various causes, especially his commitment to homeless queer youth. As a guild guided by concern for social issues, we are all inspired by Rick's example. ~



*Rick Westbrook, aka Sister Rap-ture Divine Cox
Photographer unknown*

"I Believe in Atlanta" Screened on September 14 at First E

On Friday, September 14, Anna Simonton screened *I Believe in Atlanta*, a documentary that she has spent the past year producing, at the First E. The film examines Atlanta's history as a city whose political and business leaders have invested heavily in crafting an image of Atlanta as cosmopolitan, forward-thinking, and racially harmonious in order to attract business and development. Through interviews and first-person narration, Anna questions Atlanta's official image, seeking out the experiences of those for whom development has resulted in displacement and marginalization. Edith Kelman of the BiRacial History Project is featured, as Anna discovers that Candler Park was once a racially mixed neighborhood, and that the First Existentialist Congregation was an African American Baptist church.

The inclusion of this history in the film made the First E a fitting location for the Atlanta premiere. Roughly eighty people attended and Anna collected nearly \$500 in donations to cover fees for submitting *I Believe in Atlanta* to film festivals. The audience response to the film was overwhelmingly positive, and the crowd enjoyed drinks and food while mingling after the screening.

Anna wishes to thank The First Existentialist Congregation, The Social Justice Guild, and the BiRacial History Project for making the space available free of charge, helping to plan and set up the event, and for being a really awesome group of people that she feels lucky to have support from! ~

***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> .***

Award-Winning Slam Poet Theresa Davis October 14

Born into a family of writers and entertainers, Theresa Davis is one of Atlanta's best known performance poets, winning poetry slams and featuring at spoken word venues around Atlanta and the nation as well as leading writing and performance workshops and headlining conferences across the southeast. She is a member of The Word Diversity Collective/Art Amok and represented Atlanta as a member of the 2006-2010 Art Amok Slam Team.

Theresa has shared the stage with Eve Ensler, Jane Fonda, Pearl Cleage and Doria Roberts in *The Vagina Monologues*, with Berniece Johnson Reagan of Sweet Honey in the Rock and with Def Poet Jon Goode in their joint production of "Wish You Were Here" at 7 Stages. With her mother Alice Lovelace and her brother Hasan Davis, she created the spoken word performance group MoDaSo (Mother/ Daughter/ Son). She has released two music CD's "This is for Family" and "The Uncivil War." She has self-published two collections of poetry *Torn* and *Head Games*.

In 2009 Theresa was ranked 8th in the Women of the World Poetry Slam. In 2011, she was the Women of the World Poetry Slam Champion. The same year, she was the Atlanta Art Amok Slam Team Grand Champion. She was voted Best of Atlanta Spoken Word by Creative Loafing 2008 and 2009. She received *SOVO's* "Best of Gay Atlanta



Theresa Davis
Photograph by Terri Rice

Poetry/Spoken Word 2009 and *Georgia Voice's* "Best of Atlanta Poetry" 2011.

She designed and created Ebony Angels, a line of hand-crafted dolls; *Mental Notes*, hand-crafted books; and started a clothing line for children. A teacher for 18 years, she currently teaches middle school using the arts across the curriculum. Her children Imani (22), Tia (21) and Zion (10) are her constant sources of energy and inspiration. ~

Day of the Dead Sunday, October 29

By Rev. Marsha Mitchiner

Each year on the last Sunday in October, we celebrate The Day of the Dead (*Dia de los Muertos*), a Mexican holiday celebrated around the world. This tradition was brought to us by Jill Ruhlman following a trip she made to Mexico and we've taken it into our hearts and made it a First E ritual. It is a time to remember and celebrate the lives of those we have loved but have passed on. It is an opportunity to share our stories of these loved ones who touched our lives in such a way that they reside forever in our hearts.

This year our Day of the Dead service will be on Sunday, October 29. We will have tables set up at the front of the sanctuary as an altar. Bring pictures and mementos of your loved ones and a dish or favorite food or drink. We will have a kiddish following the service: a time to enjoy remembering, sharing and being part of a caring community. ~

October 2012 Sunday Celebrations of Life

October 7 ***Are You Serious?***
Speaker: ***Robin Stinson***
Facilitator: ***Karla Crawford***
Accompanist: ***Richard Rifkin***

October 14 ***Listening to the Voices Outside Your Head***
Speaker: ***Theresa Davis***
Facilitator: ***Cindy Lou Who***
Accompanist: ***Alan Dynin***

October 21 ***The Courage to Teach***
Speaker: ***Rev. Janna Nelson***
Facilitator: ***D. Patton White***
Accompanist: ***Scott Hooker***

October 28 ***Day of the Dead: Remembering***
Speaker: ***Karla Crawford***
Facilitator: ***Bill Laney***
Accompanist: ***Charli Vogt***

**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.**

The Back Page - First E Members Speak Out

At Founders' Day on September 30, several members told about how they came to First E. Here are some of their stories.



Libby Ware: I first came to First E in January 1984. Lanier was giving a New Year's talk. The one thing he said that stuck with me was: "This year if I feel like dancing, I'll dance." Even though I found the service interesting and the congregation friendly, I only went a few times before getting involved in a relationship, and we did other things on Sundays. About ten years ago I started dating a woman who said, "I know you are not a joiner, and I don't want to urge you, but you might want to maybe consider coming to First E sometime." I did and a few months later became a member. I never thought of myself as a joiner, and I discovered that First E is full of people who don't consider themselves to be joiners. Now ten years later, not only did I join, but I'm chair of the Board. Thank you, Charlene, for suggesting I come. ~

Patton White: In May of 2000, I received a call from Dr. Jean Heinrich, with whom I had previously worked in a performance that toured to Southern California. She asked me, in her role as a member of the Program Guild, if I would like to come to the First E. to share a short dance performance as part of the Sunday Celebration of Life, in July. Not really knowing anything about the congregation, I was a bit hesitant, but then embraced the idea of creating an 'existential' dance—a structured improvisation that would involve the congregation in the performance. As I danced, I instructed the congregation to provide the sound accompaniment by giving those seated in the circle a sound to perform, e.g. rubbing hands together, humming, clapping, stomping, etc. Following the Celebration of Life I found myself reflecting on the First E. and was immediately struck by how similar the mission and values the First E. embraced to those of another organization I was very involved with—Alternate ROOTS. Many of the songs that were a part of the service even had a similar social justice focus. I began to come on a more regular basis, and within a year or so, had decided to join as a member. ~

Linda Bell: For several years, students in existentialism classes at GSU had been asking if I knew anything of the First Existentialist Church—that is what it was called back then. I didn't. I just assumed it would be a bunch of kooks and thought I already had enough of those in my life. When Jean-Paul Sartre died in 1980 and I heard of a memorial service at the church, I decided to go. I felt that I really needed some way to mark his death, after spending so much time and energy reading and writing about his work. Even so, I went with trepidation, fearing that it would be religious and knowing that any nod toward a deity would be such an insult to an atheist like Sartre. What I found instead was wonderful, a service that made me think of the testimonial services I had experienced in the Methodist church in which I grew up, but with an important difference: here the testimonials were to Sartre, not to God! Granted, I suppose, the minister and those who attended were rather kooky, but in a good way; and I found myself coming back. The minister, Lanier Clance, even got me involved in a couple of services. Occasionally, he would read from one of my books, each time causing me anxiety lest what he was going to read was poorly written. However, I'll readily admit that I valued having an enthusiastic and encouraging reader in Lanier. All these years later, I'm still here and appreciating more than ever the emphasis on liberation, justice, and community. ~

The First E Newsletter is published monthly. The deadline for submission of material for the November newsletter is October 14. Send your articles and announcements to mcharleneball@yahoo.com. The editor reserves the right to edit or refuse any material submitted.