
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 Turns 40!!!

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"Dancing Color" (acrylic) by Rev. R. Lanier Clance. Photo by Charlene Ball

**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

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D. Patton White,
Chair; Stell Simonton,
Recorder; Mark White,
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spiritual community
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human liberation
and founded on existentialist
and feminist principles.*



Notes From the Board of Directors

By Rev. Marsha Mitchiner and Charlene Ball

The Board of Directors met on August 1, 2016, at 6:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary. In the absence of the Chair and Co-chair, Charlene chaired the meeting, and Marsha took notes. There was no quorum, but those present reviewed and discussed issues. Lorraine reported on the on-line UUA General Assembly workshops and asked if the Board wanted to have a representative on the National or Regional committee. The Board requested that Lorraine suggest action points, and Charlene suggested interested persons get together to discuss.

Andy noted there are plans to replace the First E sign hanging in the front garden area and requested to be involved in the design and installation process. Andy will work on a design to be implemented later than Founders Day on September 18, as his time frame will not allow him to finish the sign by that date. The old sign will be used as part of the 40th Founders Day Celebration, and a banner will be purchased to advertise Founders Day.

Carla Key, owner of Primavera School, attended the meeting and requested 1) that something be done to keep children from being able to open the front door; and 2) that the Woodland Sanctuary be reopened to the school. The Board held an email vote after the meeting (since we didn't have a quorum) and decided to keep the Sanctuary closed to all but First E, as that is what the Guidelines for the Woodland Sanctuary state.

Bill Laney reported that he has contacted several floor people about redoing the sanctuary floor. Marsha reported that 15 people attended the discussion on 7/31 and that some expressed interest in an ongoing discussion on a regular basis. She reported that school supplies are being donated. She will announce a meeting after the COL on 8/14 to discuss ideas for celebrating Founders Day.

The Art Guild announced that a show of Lanier's work will be up at the end of August. Bill Read reported that an electrical switch work has been added to the light behind the stage, new safer electric outlets have been installed in the upstairs bath, and a new toilet has been installed.

Primavera has made some additions to the building. The Board discussed revising their agreement to require them to get written permission before they make any more substantive changes to the First E building. Bill Read reported more income in July due to higher pledges received, rentals and fund raisers. Bill and Marsha will send a letter to former members to invite them to the 40th Founders Day. Bill noted the success of the fundraisers. The yard sale drew in \$648; the Coffeehouse brought in more than \$825, and the Book and Bake Sale brought in \$940.

Mary reported that Membership held a kiddush on 7/31 in support of the discussion group to follow.

Our next meeting will be on September 12, since the first Monday in September is Labor Day. The meeting will be at 6:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary. All are welcome to attend. ~

Community News & Activities

--An exhibit of the art of Rev. R. Lanier Clance will go up on August 28, as part of our 40th Anniversary Celebration in September. If you have art by Lanier and would like it to be part of the exhibit, please contact Patton White.

--Aviva has offered to lead singing/ teach us to sing, so if you're interested please let her know. A class will be scheduled soon, probably immediately after a COL.

Community News continued on page 7.

Guild Reports

Art Guild

By Charlene Ball

The Art Guild arranges for exhibits of visual art on the walls of First E as well as other kinds of artistic expression throughout the year. In honor of First E's 40th anniversary and to celebrate the memory of our founding minister Rev. R. Lanier Clance, we have arranged to have a special exhibition of Lanier's art on the Sanctuary walls from August 28 until October 2. Members of the Art Guild are Glen Lopez, Chair; Charlene Ball; Elaine Gale; Patton White, and Kitty Wimbish. We welcome feedback. ~

Fundraising Guild

By Charlene Ball

The Fundraising Guild seeks volunteers for September's Fiddler's Green on September 17 at 8:00 p.m. at First E. this month's Fiddler's Green will feature folk duo **Lashbrooks** and songwriter/composer/playwright **Michael Johnathon**. If you would like to volunteer to help with concessions, contact Libby (toadlibby@yahoo.com), Stell (simontone@bellsouth.net), or Charlene (mcharleneball@yahoo.com). If you'd like to help with setup of the concert, contact Chris Moser at chrismoser@bellsouth.net. ~

Membership Guild

By Charlene Ball

The Membership Guild will coordinate a Potluck for our Founders Day celebration on September 18. Please join us and bring a dish to share with your fellow Existentialists. Membership organizes kiddushes and potlucks and arranges for Sunday greeters. Greeters include Carol Sandiford, Elaine Gale, Robert Stewart, Wilj Sturkey-Mercado, Mary Howard, and others. If you're interested in joining Membership or being a greeter, us, contact Wilj at cincodemayo55@comcast.net or Elaine at ergale@hotmail.com. ~

Program Guild

By Charlene Ball

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. This month, we have Saralyn Chesnut facilitating an open mic, "Thoughts on Labor Day"; Rev. Angela Denise Davis on September 11 speaking on "Them and Us"; Rev. Marsha Mitchiner speaking on Founders Day on the topic, "The Next Chapters: A Collaboration"; and Rev. Marti Keller speaking on, "Defy Hate."

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. If you would like to facilitate, contact Charlene at mcharleneball@yahoo.com. The next meeting of the Program Guild will be on at 5:00 p.m. in the First E Sanctuary. All members and friends are welcome to attend our meetings. ~

Social Justice Guild

By Lorraine Fontana, Linda Bell, and Charlene Ball

The Social Justice Guild meets bi-monthly, so our next meeting will be on October 2 downstairs after the COL service. On August 7, the SJG met to hear a presentation by Brother Jumoke Ifetayo, a representative of N'COBRA (National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America) and the Reparations Movement. (More on this presentation will appear in the October newsletter.) SJG Members are active in various social justice projects, including writing

Guild Reports continued on page 4.

Social Justice Corner

Thoughts about the Consequences of The New Jim Crow

By Katrice Baker

In American history studies, most of us know of the dire consequences of the Jim Crow laws that were passed in all of the Southern states as well as other states outside the South, around the turn of the century. I don't need to go into details of the cruelty of the lynchings and the penury system that Doug Blackmon talked about in his book, *Slavery by Another Name* (2008).

While some believe that JC laws ended sometime in the 1950's, the system of mass incarceration of young black males from the inner cities and impoverished rural and suburban communities still exist. According to the author Michelle Alexander (*The New Jim Crow*, 2010), the United States has the highest incarcerated population in the world, including China. More than two thirds are black and Hispanic. Known as the prison industrial complex, or the "school to prison pipeline", the system perpetuates this problem. Many of these young boys come from broken homes where there is little to no parental nurturing. Domestic violence, sadly often become the norm, and many end up on the street and drop out of school, ending up in gangs and selling small quantities of drugs to survive. Others engage in prostitution.

What can we all do as citizens? The Black Lives Matter movement has for the past three or so years been staging rallies around the country to address this issue and even more so of the shootings by white police officers.

These precious boys need big sisters and brothers! ~

Fiddler's Green at First E on September 17 to Feature Folk Duo Lashbrooks, Michael Johnathon

Atlanta Area Friends of Folk Music presents Lashbrooks and Michael Johnathon on September 17 at Fiddler's Green, AAFFM's Monthly Coffeehouse Concert at First E. Show begins at 8:00 p.m. General Admission: \$10, AAFFM Members \$8 minimum. All proceeds beyond our rent go to the performers. Troy and Rhonda Lashbrooks are singer/songwriters, music producers, and entertainers. They present their soulful roots and progressive folk music with heart-felt lyrics, exciting acoustic guitar, and rich harmonies. Look for them at www.lashbrooksmusic.net and on Facebook at Lashbrooks and BrooksTone Productions.

Folksinger Michael Johnathon is a songwriter, playwright, composer of an opera *Woody: For the People*, author of the play *Walden: The Ballad of Thoreau*, and host of the live audience broadcast of the WoodSongs Old Time Radio Hour. He has performed 2,000 Earth Concerts at schools and colleges and benefits for the homeless, farm families, and shelters helping battered women and children. He helped organize the national WoodSongs Front Porch Association. Members of the WSPA are called "SongFarmers," which is also the title of his latest album, the first national CD release to be recorded on iPhone. Visit his websites: MichaelJohnathon.com; WoodSongs.com; WaldenPlay.com; WoodyGuthrieOpera.com; SongFarmers.org . ~

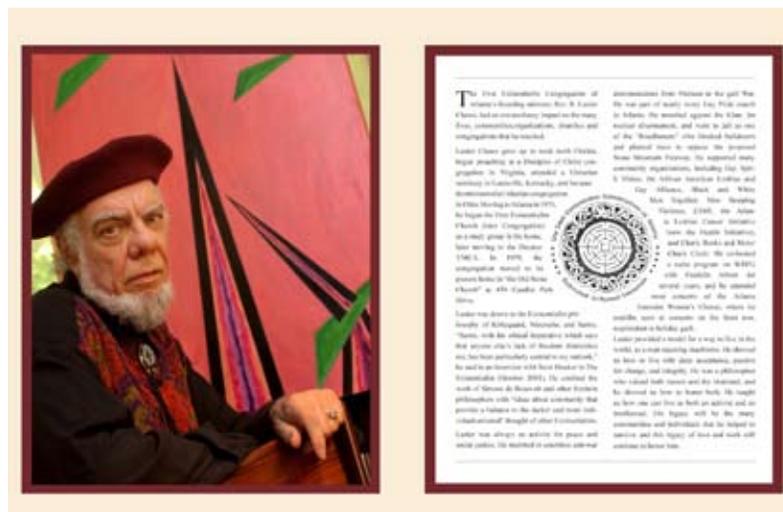
FIRST EXISTENTIALIST TURNS 40!

By Rev. Marsha Mitchiner

Members and Friends of The First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta—aka the E Church, Ex Church, E Cong, and most recently First E—will celebrate our 40th anniversary on September 18, 2016. We will hold a special Celebration of Life service followed by a pot luck. On display will be past years of newsletters, event fliers, and photos highlighted by an exhibit of art work by our founding minister, Rev. R. Lanier Clance (1938-2013).

The Congregation began meeting in Rev. Clance's home and then moved to the Decatur YMCA. Since moving into "The Old Stone Church" in 1979, First E has been an important part of the Candler Park, L5P, Inman Park, Lake Claire, Decatur neighborhoods and well beyond. We describe ourselves as "a philosophically based spiritual community founded on existential and feminist principles," and we are a member of the Unitarian Universalist Association. First E has been a constant presence in the fight for civil rights, LGBT rights and other progressive issues. First E opened its doors and hearts early in the crisis of those diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. It organized a community festival prior to the Candler Park Festival and takes part in the annual PRIDE and MLK Days, and members attend many protests, rallies and marches. We recently hung a Black Lives Matter banner as a sign of our congregation's support. We are especially proud to be stewards of a beautiful green space that serves as a place of peace and remembrance dedicated to Rev. Clance.

An invitation is extended to everyone—members, friends, and community—to join the celebration, meet and learn about us, and experience some real existential joy. We hope to see you on the 18th. ~



Celebration of Life for Claiborne DuVal White

The Family (Nancy, Patton and Terry) and Partner (James Nash) of Claiborne DuVal White will be hosting a Celebration of Life to bring the many people that were part of Claiborne's life together to share, laugh, cry, dance, eat and celebrate a life well lived. Claiborne was an artist in many ways, so if you have any of his work, please bring some of it to share so that we can see it again! Claiborne was an amazing cook/chef/baker, so we will share a pot-luck meal to honor his memory. And most of all, Claiborne was a people person of all people persons, so we hope everyone will share some of their favorite memories of the times that they spent with him. For all people coming from out of town, we will be researching over the coming few weeks possible lodging/accommodations, so please let us know if you would like assistance with this. And finally, since this is over Labor Day Weekend, we hope that this will be only one of many opportunities for us to be together informally over the course of the weekend. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to Lost-N- Found Youth, *Infy.org*, 2585 Chantilly Dr., Atlanta, GA, 30324, or The First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta Endowment Fund, *firstexistentialist.org*, 470 Candler Park Dr., Atlanta, GA, 30307. ~

Community News & Activities *Continued from Page 2*

--Anyone interested in an ongoing meditation group after Sunday services, please contact Andy at *Andyweiskoff952@icloud.com*.

News From First E Members and Friends

--Patton White, whose brother Claiborne died in July, announced there will be a Celebration of Claiborne's life at First E on September 3 (see article on this page).

--Mary Turnpaugh is seeking a mentor for her grandson, a sweet 17-year old who needs a positive adult (other than his grandmother) in his life. Mary's email is *mary.turnpaugh@gmail.com* if you'd like to discuss volunteering with her.

--Marti Keller's mother died recently.

--Amelia Hartley, Sharon Mathis's daughter, will soon start grad school in Public Health.

--Aurelia, who works with the Children's Program, celebrated five years here. We sang Happy Anniversary to her.

--Charlene and Libby have a friend who has been diagnosed with ALS. Keep her in your thoughts.

--Rita Furman had knee surgery 2 weeks ago and she's doing quite well. Please keep her in your healing thoughts.

--Kitty Wimbish was bitten by a dog and had to have stitches. It has been a traumatic experience. Keep her in your thoughts.

--If anyone is interested in the most recent UUA General Assembly news, let Robert know, and he will send you a link. Any time you have news of interest to the Congregation, please drop me a note @ *robertstewart359@gmail.com*

Community:

--Submissions and news for the October newsletter are due to Charlene by Sunday, September 21. Send to *mcharleneball@yahoo.com*.

Speakers in September

September 4: Dr. Saralyn Chesnut

Dr. Saralyn Chesnut was the first Director of Emory University's Office of LGBT Life, a position she held until she retired in 2008. She was also an Adjunct Assistant Professor in Emory's Graduate Institute of Liberal Arts from 1994-2010, and taught Women's Studies as well as the first courses in Lesbian and Gay Studies ever offered at Emory. She is now a freelance writer, editor and researcher. She will facilitate an open mic on September 4 on the topic, "Thoughts on Labor Day." ~

September 11: Rev. Angela Denise Davis

Rev. Angela Denise Davis will speak on September 11 on "Them and Us: Reflections on Radical Inclusion." The topic sounds particularly timely, especially for the date. This will be Angela's last sermon at First E this year. She is taking a couple of months off, but she will return in January 2017.

Rev. Angela Denise Davis is a regular speaker at First E. She is a certified rehabilitation counselor, a freelance graphic designer, and an ordained minister. A graduate of Clark Atlanta University, she holds a master of divinity from Vanderbilt University Divinity School and a master of science in rehabilitation counseling from Georgia State University. She lives in East Point with her partner Mary Anne Adams, who is the founder and director of ZAMI NOBLA, a collective that focuses on Black lesbians and aging. ~

September 18: Rev. Marsha Mitchiner

Rev. Marsha Mitchiner grew up in middle Georgia and was an active member of her church. In her teen years, she became disillusioned with organized religion but felt a need to find a community of individuals seeking answers without dogma. She found her spiritual home when she came to First E in 1980 and joined Rev. Lanier Clance's ministerial training program. She was ordained by First E in 1993, and now serves as our Fellowship Minister. Marsha will speak on Founders Day, September 18, on "The Next Chapters: A Collaboration." ~

September 25: Rev. Marti Keller

Rev Marti Keller will speak on September 25 on "Defy Hate." She will join congregations all over the country today in a "preach in" following the PBS premiere of the documentary film, "Defying the Nazis: The Sharp's War," by Ken Burns which airs on September 20. This look at a Unitarian couple who helped Jewish refugees during World War 11 is a window into the crisis facing nearly 60 million people today who have been forced from their homes by violence, discrimination or climate change. How do we take moral action? ~

Here is a link about the film: <http://kenburns.com/films/defying-the-nazis/>

September 2016 Sunday Celebrations of Life

September 4 Thoughts about Labor Day: An Open Mic

Hosted by Dr. Saralyn Chesnut

Facilitator: Dr. Saralyn Chesnut

Accompanist: William Chelton

September 11 Them and Us: Reflections on Radical Inclusion

Speaker: Rev. Angela Denise Davis

Facilitator: Dr. Sharon Mathis

Accompanist: Aviva and the Flying Penguins

September 18 Founders' Day Celebration

The Next Chapters: A Collaboration

Speaker: Rev. Marsha Mitchiner

Facilitator: D. Patton White

Accompanist: Alan Dynin

September 25 Defy Hate

Speaker: Rev. Marti Keller

Facilitator: Libby Ware

Accompanist: David Tyberg

Member Moment: Joseph Verdell

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The Back Page

The Passing of a Legend

By Rev. Marsha Mitchiner

The Atlanta LGBT community and many others are mourning the loss of "Diamond Lil," the legendary drag queen who passed away of cancer on August 4. Lil was born Phillip Forrester in Savannah and moved to Atlanta in 1965. She began her drag career at age 30 singing in her own voice



Diamond Lil, photo from Facebook

with a band, unlike most drag queens, who used lip sync. She did not allow others to define her or put her into a mold that did not fit. She had a great sense of humor as reflected in some of the songs she wrote -- "Queen of the Dunk 'n Dine," "KY Boogie," "As Long As I'm Moving," and more -- not taking herself too seriously. She inspired and offered advice to many in the drag culture. I enjoyed her performances many times at different venues in the city and still have an early 1970s feature article on her from *The Great Speckled Bird* (an underground newspaper). She was a regular at The Colonnade Restaurant on Cheshire Bridge, where she was frequently interrupted by fans. Several years ago, she volunteered to headline a First E Coffee House fundraiser. Why am I writing this for our newsletter? Although I

did not know her personally, I see her as someone who lived with authenticity (even though an authentic drag queen may sound like an oxymoron) and reflected a responsibility to live her life on her terms. She will be missed but not forgotten. ~

Memorial Service for Diamond Lil

September 17th / 6:00PM

Spiritual Living Center of Atlanta

1730 Northeast Expressway, Atlanta, GA 30329



The Existentialist is published monthly. Deadline for the October 2016 newsletter is September 18. Send your articles and announcements to mcharleneball@yahoo.com. The editor reserves the right to edit or refuse any material submitted.