

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

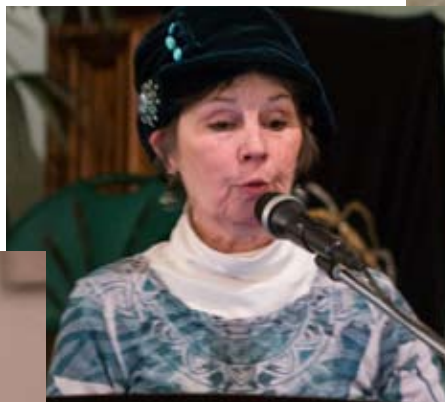
and Founded on Existentialist and Feminist Principles •

Existential Moment Coffeehouse

First E's Existential Moment Coffeehouse on Saturday, March 15, was a resounding success, with comedy, improv, music of all kinds from classical piano to jazz to blues, and tasty snacks and libations. We raised \$1,356, plus \$260 raised by the First E children's program. Guest artists included Aviva and the Flying Penguins, the Bentley Brothers (Andy Weiskoff and Ted Pettus), Aubrey Cox, Lesly Fredman, Scott Hooker, Janna Nelson, Susan Ottzen, and Craig Rafuse. Photos from the show appear here on page 1 and on page 6. ~



*Clockwise from upper right:
Craig Rafuse, Janna Nelson,
Scott Hooker; center: Jean
Heinrich*



**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:
Libby Ware, Chair
Bill Read, Treasurer
Charlene Ball,
Recorder
Elaine Gale
Bill Laney
Ted Pettus
Stell Simonton
Andy Weiskoff
Cindy Lou Who
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

The Board met on March 3. Bill Laney brought estimates from three electricians for the lighting project. We decided to hire Sergio, whose bid is approximately \$4,075. After the electrician's work is done, First E members will add track heads and lamps. The lights will cost about \$70-\$80 each. Bill suggested a fundraiser where members buy a light. Andy and Bill R proposed we call the campaign "This Little Light of Mine."

Carol Sandiford sent information about Atlanta joining Compassionate Cities. Karen Armstrong, a theologian, gave a TED talk about how compassion is at the root of all major religions. The movement in Atlanta started at the Friends Meeting. Carol asked if First E would become a charter partner of Compassionate Atlanta. We voted to become a partner.

Lorraine is applying for a scholarship to the UU General Assembly in Providence, Rhode Island. She asked if First E would match the funds for her to travel. We voted to provide \$250 for transportation.

A preschool "mothers morning out" program will be renting the downstairs. The program is Primavera, a Spanish language program. They offered to pay an advance if we would replace the carpet. They also expressed concern about the playground equipment. Subsequent to the meeting Elaine arranged for new playground equipment. She will look into new carpeting. Primavera will work around the summer camp that Cheri will have when school gets out.

The next Board meeting will be Monday, April 1, at 7:00 downstairs. All are welcome to attend. ~

DONATION RECEIVED FROM ANONYMOUS DONOR

One of our Candler Park neighbors has given a generous donation of \$5,000 for the accessibility fund. This shows how important accessibility is to neighbors, renters, members, and friends. This individual wants to remain anonymous, but we would like to thank them.

Guild Reports

Program Guild *by Charlene Ball*

The Program Guild has been busy lining up new and familiar speakers, musicians, and facilitators for our Sunday Celebrations of Life. On April 13, First E member Ted Pettus will talk about his experiences in India last summer teaching at the Dalai Llama's college at Daramsala. Also in April we will hear Rev. Marsha Mitchiner, Rev. Janna Nelson, and special guest Bobby L. Wilson, President and CEO of Metro Atlanta Farm. Dr. Jean Heinrich will provide music for the service on April 6. Other musicians will be Scott Hooker, Aviva and the Flying Penguins, and Bill Chelton. Our annual Congregational Meeting will be on April 6 after the COL.

Facilitators are members and friends who lead Sunday services. Recent facilitators have included Charlene Ball, Karla Crawford, Lorraine Fontana, Bill Laney, Ted Pettus, Libby Ware, Patton White, Cindy Lou Who, and Kitty Wimbish. If you would like to facilitate, contact a member of the Program Guild.

The Program Guild consists of Patton White (patton@beacondance.org), Charlene Ball (mcharleneball@yahoo.com), Linda Bell (lbell@gsu.edu), Jean Heinrich (doctorjean06@yahoo.com), and Bill Laney (bill339la@yahoo.com). Contact us if you want to give feedback, tell us about a speaker or musician you'd like to hear, facilitate, or join the Program Guild. ~

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The annual congregational meeting will be on Sunday, April 6, immediately after the service. This is YOUR annual meeting where we will elect a new Board; vote on a by-law change that replaces the Finance Guild with a Finance Committee; and hear a short finance report and a quick summary of what the Board has worked on the past year. We will end with a Q&A, so bring your questions to the Board and Guild/Committee Chairs. In order to vote, you must have pledged by March 6.

Community News & Activities

-**Artist Vickie Martin's** art will continue on the walls of First E through April 27.

--"**A Compassion Celebration**" at Morehouse College on April 7 will feature theologian Karen Armstrong. To register to attend, visit the website www.compassionateatl.com.

--**Edith Covington is helping adults** of all skills levels, beginners and up, to **develop their computer skills** on a 1:1 basis. Call Edith or email her at edithcovington@gmail.com

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Social Justice Corner

Charter for Compassion---Karen Armstrong

By Carol Sandiford

First, let me briefly address the question: “Who is Karen Armstrong?” Born in Wildmoor, Worcestershire, England, on November 14, 1944, she is a British author, commentator and academic known for her multiple books on comparative religion (translated into 45 languages). She first rose to prominence in 1993 with her book, *The History of God: The 4000 Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam*. She has been called “a prominent and prolific religious historian” (Bonos, Lisa, Washington Post, 1/14/2011) and described as “arguably the most lucid, wide-ranging and consistently interesting religious writer today,” (Miller, Laura, Salon, 4/18/2001). Her work focuses on commonalities of the major religions, such as the importance of compassion and the Golden Rule, and includes Hinduism and Buddhism. She has said that “religion is not about believing things. It’s about what you do. It’s ethical alchemy--- behaving in a way that changes you.”

***“Compassion is not an option.
It’s the key to our survival.”
Karen Armstrong***

In an interview at the U S Holocaust Memorial Museum, July 5th, 2007, she said: “In the face of religious fundamentalism, a product of contemporary culture, we urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world---it is the path to enlightenment and indispensable to the creation of a just economy and a peaceful global community.”

Awarded the \$100,000 TED prize and “One Wish to Change the World” in February, 2008, Armstrong wished for help with the creation, launch and propagation of a Charter for Compassion, in the spirit of the Golden Rule---to identify shared moral priorities across religious traditions in order to foster global understanding and a peaceful world.

The Charter for Compassion website launched in November, 2008, inviting people of all faiths, nations and backgrounds to submit their own words to the Charter. Thousands of submissions were entered, read and commented on by over 150,000 visitors. These contributions were reviewed by the Council of Conscience, a multi-faith, multi-national group of religious thinkers and leaders, in Vevey, Switzerland and incorporated into the final document. The Charter was unveiled on November 12th, 2009, around the globe, at more than 75 events. The Charter is a cooperative effort to restore not only compassionate thinking, but more importantly, compassionate action to the center of religious, moral and political life.

What can we do to make First Existentialist Congregation a more compassionate spiritual community? ~

In June, 2011, Lorraine Fontana and I attended the UUCA 50th Annual General Assembly in Charlotte, N.C. and were privileged to hear the Ware Lecture, given by Karen Armstrong: “The Challenge Of Compassion.” We shared with First E Congregation summaries of her inspiring and challenging message in written form and at a Sunday COL service. More recently, I attended the Compassionate Cities/Atlanta Launch at the Carter Center on February 2, 2014. Co-sponsored by fifteen organizations and attended by an impressive number of participants, this event re-awakened my awareness of the Charter and re-kindled my commitment to engage in this initiative. At this event, we learned that the city of Atlanta had committed to sign on as a Compassionate City, joining the Charter Action Network with over 470 Partners. The question we were asked that day was: “What can we do (individually and collectively) to make greater Atlanta a more compassionate circle of cities?” (A report of the many ideas generated that day is forthcoming).

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Existential Moment Coffeehouse ~ more photos



Clockwise from upper left: Isaac Zulu (of Aviva and the Flying Penguins), Aviva Vuvuzela, Aubrey Cox, the Existential Band (Jean Heinrich, Andy Weiskoff, Ted Pettus, Susan Ottzen).



Charter for Compassion--Karen Armstrong - continued from page 5

Each attendee was asked to: 1. Sign the Charter for Compassion; 2. Gather and organize citizens in our city, neighborhood, workplace, school, spiritual community, etc. to host a conversation around the Charter—and then take action to call on elected officials to become a Compassionate City or identify an organization that would officially become a Charter Partner. I signed the Charter that day! I brought the information back to our Social Justice Guild and requested that it be shared with our Board, to consider becoming an official Charter Partner. Thanks to our Board Chairperson, Libby Ware, this request was honored promptly and I am delighted to report that our Congregation is now a Charter Partner! If you go on-line to **Charter for Compassion** (www.charterforcompassion.org) ; click on **Partners**, then click on **Religion and Spirituality Partners** and scroll down to the “F”s, you will find First Existentialist Congregation’s Partner webpage. You can also read the text of the Charter on their home webpage and sign the Charter as an individual.

You might also want to go to www.compassionateatl.com to learn more about the city of Atlanta’s Partner status. The Compassionate Cities Campaign was initiated in April, 2010. Seattle was the first city to sign on.

I encourage you to save the date of April 3rd, 7:00 p.m. for “A Compassion Celebration” at Morehouse College. Karen Armstrong will be the featured speaker. You can register to attend at the Atlanta website.

Finally, I would ask us a similar question to the one we were asked at the Carter Center on February 2nd---

What can we do to make First Existentialist Congregation a more compassionate spiritual community? ~

Community News & Activities ~ continued from page 3

--**Glen Lopez has calendars for sale**, \$5, featuring his photography in our neighborhood including members of First E and Little 5 Points. See Glen for a calendar.

--**Annual Meeting of the First E Congregation** will be on Sunday, April 6, following the service. We will elect the new Board and vote on an amendment to the Bylaws that will create a new Finance Committee to replace the Finance Guild. We will also hear a short finance report and a quick summary of what the Board has worked on the past year.

---**Bennett's Market**, owned by Victoria Bennett-Trestrail, offers sandwiches, meals, and produce from local farmers and growers.

--**Lost-N-Found Thrift Store** is located at 2585 Chantilly Drive, Atlanta, and is open Thursday-Sunday from 12:00 to 6:00. Shop and help homeless LGBTQ youth.

--**9to5Atlanta presents Equal Pay Day BYOF** (Bring Your Own Friend), an intergenerational panel discussion about what equal pay means to you on April 8 at the Rush Center, 1530 DeKalb Ave., Atlanta, 7-9 pm. To RSVP, contact 404-222-0037 or charmaine@9to5.org.

--**The Feminist Women's Health Center** will hold its annual event, Stand Up for Justice, on April 12 at the UUCA, Cliff Valley Way. For information, visit feministcenter.org.

--**Geek Chorus** meets on First Wednesdays--bring your favorite beverage to share, love offering to First E for allowing us to use the space, and musical instruments to pluck, bang or strum.

--**Ukuleles group** meets on second, third, and fourth Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m.. Participating is free. Teacher once a month: cost: \$15.00. All levels welcome.

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Bobby L. Wilson of Metro Atlanta Farm on April 27

Bobby L. Wilson, President and CEO of Metro Atlanta Urban Farm, founded Metro Atlanta Farm, a five acre property, to use as a teaching tool, economic empowerment zone, and as a food production site for the southwest Metropolitan Atlanta area. Bobby uses this farm to promote the benefits of urban agriculture in food and job insecure areas. In addition to running the farm, he has served as Program Director for The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension/Atlanta Urban Gardening Program (AUGP) where he offered gardening instruction and support to some three hundred gardens located at public housing complexes, shelters, schools, churches and elder care facilities in metro Atlanta. He also serves as President of the American Community Gardening Association, a bi-national organization.

Bobby has twenty years of professional development and service promoting, developing and sustaining the work of gardening and greening. His ideals and standards of professionalism attract local, regional, national and international notice, and he serves on many boards and committees. He frequently speaks to civic, business and church groups and has received numerous awards and commendations. Bobby's leadership in research, food security, and volunteerism all have practical expression in such activities as developing demonstration gardens, increasing production in community gardens to provide for donations to shelters and large community feeding programs, facilitating formal training of gardeners and the development of nutrition education with school gardeners and the members of the Metro Atlanta Urban Gardening Program Leadership Development Association.

Bobby has a vision for Metro Atlanta Urban Gardening Program as a public service. He seeks to provide creative program development and funding, staff development, viable local, regional and national partnerships, as well as curriculum development and participatory planning. ~

Inch by inch, row by row, goin' to make this garden grow. . . .

Community News & Activities ~ continued from page 3

--**MoveOn hosts Health Care for All** visibility event this Saturday, March 29, at 11:00 a.m. in Decatur. We'll gather with signs and flyers in high-traffic areas to remind people who's responsible for blocking Medicaid expansion—asking drivers to honk their horns for health care and giving flyers to pedestrians with more details on how they can join the fight.

--**RAP, a discussion group about race**, meets at the Little 5 Points Community Center on Sunday, April 20, from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.

--**UUA Southern Region** to hold first-ever concurrent Annual Assemblies April 25-26. Mid South District Annual Assembly 2014 will be held at the Unitarian Universalist Metro Atlanta North (UUMAN), 11420 Crabapple Rd., Roswell, GA 30075. Register by April 20 at <http://fd8.formdesk.com/swuuc1/MSDAA14>.

--**Submissions and news for the May Newsletter** are due to Charlene by **April 20**. Board and Guild reports and member news items, opinion pieces, poems, meditations. The newsletter welcomes your submissions.

--**Contact Robert Stewart** with your news and activities for his weekly e-newsletter: rstewart@toyodausa.com . ~

April 2014 Sunday Celebrations of Life

- April 6** ***Spring in Atlanta: Ahhh(cho) - Taking the Bitter with the Sweet***
Speaker: Rev. Marsha Mitchiner
Facilitator: Bill Laney
Accompanist: Dr. Jean Heinrich
Annual Congregational Meeting after the Service
- April 13** ***Meaning, Perspective, & re-Meaning; What I Learned from Science, Travel, and The Grateful Dead***
Speaker: Ted Pettus
Facilitator: Charlene Ball
Accompanist: Aviva and the Flying Penguins
- April 20** ***Spiritual Activism - inspired by Gloria Anzaldua***
Speaker: Rev. Janna Nelson
Facilitator: D. Patton White
Accompanist: Scott Hooker
- April 27** ***People-Plant Relationships***
Speaker: Bobby L. Wilson
Facilitator: Cindy Lou Who
Accompanist: William "Bill" Chelton
Special Programming by First E's Youth Program Honoring Earth Day

Don't Forget!
Annual Congregational
Meeting
Sunday, April 6

The Back Page

Members and Friends Speak Out

Finding Community

By Cindy Lou Who

In my early twenties, I was looking for community. First E's founding minister, Lanier Clance, was my therapist and suggested I check out First Existentialist Congregation. I have been a member since about 1994. I am currently on the Board—for the third time—and have even been Chair! I facilitate occasionally and have even been a speaker a couple of times. First E is truly my spiritual home. Being part of this organization has allowed me the room to grow as a person; to mature and BE myself. Members and friends of the congregation move in and out of my life, and my involvement has ebbed and flowed over the years, but the lessons, experiences and memories are part of me. I belong to First E for purely selfish reasons: I want and need it to exist.

Costumes are my career, and I have been fortunate to work at the Alliance Theatre (over 18 years) and the Georgia Shakespeare Festival (I have lost count how many summers-13ish?). They have been my stable core, with random other summer jobs (San Francisco Opera, Sacramento Music Circus) and movie gigs (Fried Green Tomatoes, The Blindside, Bus Boycott) thrown in. My job title is "Draper," but as hardly anyone knows what that is, I usually just say "Costumer." What I do is make patterns and finesse the mockup on the actors; then cut out the beautiful fabric. I especially like to match motifs in the fabric.

The current focus of my life is my two small children: Ociana (age 6) and Hubert ("Who-Bear," age 5). They are my challenge and my joy. I am very lucky to have my mom (Rozellan or "Rosie") living with me. She is home with them when they get off the school bus and cares for them until I get home. As a single, full-time working mom, the time we spend together is cherished. We like to go to plays, the Zoo, museums, and parks to nourish our minds. And there is a special someone that I met right here at First E. We try to juggle family time with dating.

Lanier played a huge part in changing how I look at the world. He was big into "What if?" and re-framing the question. He taught me that life isn't always either/or, but that we make up our own rules while creating our lives. I love that First E is a place where people can gather and ask questions, that answers are not as important as being together and talking. ~



The First E Newsletter is published monthly. Deadline for the May 2014 newsletter is April 20. Send your articles and announcements to mcharleneball@yahoo.com. The editor reserves the right to edit or refuse any material submitted.