

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 •

Old Stone Church BiRacial History Project 2013 Update

By Edith Kelman

As many of you know, the **Early Edgewood-Candler Park BiRacial History Project** is anchored at First E, in the Old Stone Church in Candler Park. Our stone sanctuary was hand-built by Antioch East Baptist Church families in the 1920s. This African American congregation worshipped here until 1950, when Antioch sold the building and moved to the Edgewood Community south of the railroad. The First Existentialist Congregation moved into the Old Stone Church in 1980.

The History Project marked its 8th year in collaboration with First E and Antioch East in 2013, working together to research and put forward the vital role of the Black church and African American families in the history of Candler Park. Also, 2013 marked Antioch's 139th Church Anniversary. Each year at Antioch's November Anniversary service, we are invited to give an update of the History Project's activities in the past year. Here are some highlights of that update:

- **Historic Walking Tours** of African American sites in Candler Park were offered in partnership with the Atlanta Preservation Center, Mary Lin School, and Black Mecca of the South Tours.



Legacy Marker and Bench at 420 Oakdale; site of first Antioch East Baptist Church building.

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**First Existentialist
Congregation of
Atlanta**

470 Candler Park Drive,
NE
Atlanta, Georgia 30307
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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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Bill Read, Treasurer
Charlene Ball,
Recorder
Elaine Gale
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human liberation
and founded on existentialist
and feminist principles.*



Notes From the Board

By Libby Ware, Board Chair

The Board met on December 2, 2013. Libby announced that we received the \$4,000 grant from the Candler Park Neighborhood Association. Don Aiken told Ted that in order to be up to code, we need to repair the top steps because the front doors open out, not giving enough clearance for wheelchairs. We talked about different ways to accomplish this. Libby said that Eleanor Smith, a specialist in accessibility, advised moving the step out on one side only and putting up guard rails so wheelchairs would not fall down the stairs. Bill Laney said if we made the top step larger, we would need to change the height of all the steps. We agreed to get bids on both methods. Bill Laney passed around two lift designs. One would cost \$7,000, but that doesn't include labor. Much of the work can be done by Congregation members. We will need someone to hire people to pour concrete, fix the steps, and do electrical work.

Bill Read passed out proposed by-law amendments that create a Finance Committee instead of a Finance Guild. The current Board Chair and Treasurer would always be ex officio members, and other members would be appointed by the Board for renewable one-year terms. The Board approved of the proposed amendments. The by-laws will need to be voted on at the next Annual Meeting in April.

The next Board meeting will be Monday, January 6, at 7:00. ~

Philippines Relief for Survivors of Typhoon Haiyan

By Libby Ware

The Social Justice Guild collected donations for the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) in connection with their relief efforts in the Philippines. The UUSC is working directly with established partners in the Philippines and focusing their efforts on survivors most likely to fall through the cracks of traditional rescue and relief programs—communities already marginalized by ethnicity, religion, race, language, class or gender.

Thanks to the generosity of the Congregation and \$100 from the Social Justice Guild, we raised \$400 to send to the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee. ~

***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> .***

Guild Reports

Program Guild *by Charlene Ball*

The Program Guild welcomes facilitators. Many First E members find that facilitating at the Sunday Celebrations of Life is a way to participate in the life of the congregation. Facilitating in January will be Bill Laney, Charlene Ball, Cindy Lou Who, and Patton White. If you'd like to facilitate or suggest a speaker or musician, please contact a PG member or come to a Program Guild meeting. The next Program Guild meeting will be January 28 at 7:00 p.m. Our contact information: Patton White: patton@beacondance.org; Charlene Ball: mcharleneball@yahoo.com; Linda Bell: lbell@gsu.edu; or Bill Laney: bill3391a@yahoo.com. ~

Building & Grounds Guild *by Bill Laney*

We will be soliciting bids for electrical work in January. A reminder to the Congregation: please pick up any items that you may have left in the cove, or take any items you want. The cove must be cleared out with nothing there except what is on shelves. Thanks! ~

Community News & Activities

--**Art Exhibit by Artist Sylvia Seiler** will open after the service on January 26.

--"**Curve & Texture...paintings by Karen Phillips**" closes January 15, 2014.

--**First E Discussion Group** meets January 26 after the COL to discuss Part 2 of *Gather At the Table* by Sharon Leslie Morgan and Thomas Norman DeWolf.

--**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

--**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.

--**Bennett's Market** prepares meals to go, also sandwiches, prepared foods from local farmers and growers, and locally produced arts and crafts. Proprietor: Victoria Bennett-Trestrail.

--**RAP, a discussion group about race**, meets at the Little 5 Points Community Center on January 26 from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.

--**The Moral Mondays movement** in Georgia's first big action on Monday, January 13, at the state capitol demanding Governor Deal expand Medicaid in Georgia. For information, visit <https://www.facebook.com/events/467658946686612/>

--**The Candler Park Geek Chorus** meets once a month at First E on Wednesdays at 6:30.

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Social Justice Corner

Moral Monday Georgia Rally for Affordable Health Care for All on January 13

Moral Monday Georgia's Medicaid Expansion Rally will take place at the Georgia State Capitol, 4-6:00 p.m. on January 13, 2014. Moral Monday Georgia is a statewide coalition of concerned community groups and individuals working for policies and legislation that work for all the people of Georgia, and inspired by the "Moral Monday" movement in North Carolina. Medicaid expansion has the potential to provide access to health insurance to 650,000 of our most low-income Georgians, prevent over 3,600 deaths each year and create nearly 70,000 more jobs for the state of Georgia.

We call upon Georgia to stop the war on the poor and working people by accepting federal funding for Medicaid expansion that will provide health insurance for an additional 650,000 Georgians. Access to high-quality health care is a right of all people and should be provided equitably as a public service. Georgia can make good progress in this regard by fully implementing the Affordable Care Act in Georgia. Join us at the rally and help us demand that Governor Deal expand Medicaid now. Guest speakers include spokespeople from Georgia community, labor and faith-based organizations.

Learn more at <http://moralmondayga.org/> or contact MoralMondayGa@gmail.com.

Future Moral Monday Georgia actions will focus on the following:

- Reject efforts to repeal the Affordable Care Act and fully implement it in Georgia*
- Expand Medicaid and fully fund other essential health care programs for citizens of Georgia*
- Act immediately to address the crisis in the treatment and placement of persons with mental illnesses, developmental disabilities and substance abuse problems*
- Provide sustainable funding for Georgia's trauma centers*
- Remove the barriers to adequate and legal health care currently faced by the uninsured, immigrants and women ~*

(This article was taken from the website and Facebook page of Moral Monday Georgia.)

Community News & Activities ~ continued from page 3

--Cate Morrill of Shoulders Down is offering Movement Improvement classes to members (existing or newly signed up) of SAGE for \$7/each for drop-ins at the Rush Center (by Radial Cafe). cate@shouldersdown.com, 404-525-6466.

--Quicksilver Country Dancers will have their monthly English Country Dance 1:30-5:00, \$7.00, in Decatur. Info: www.qcdancers.org.

--Submissions and news for the February Newsletter are due to Charlene by **January 19**. 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: rstewart@toyodausa.com . ~

Sylvia Sleeper Seiler

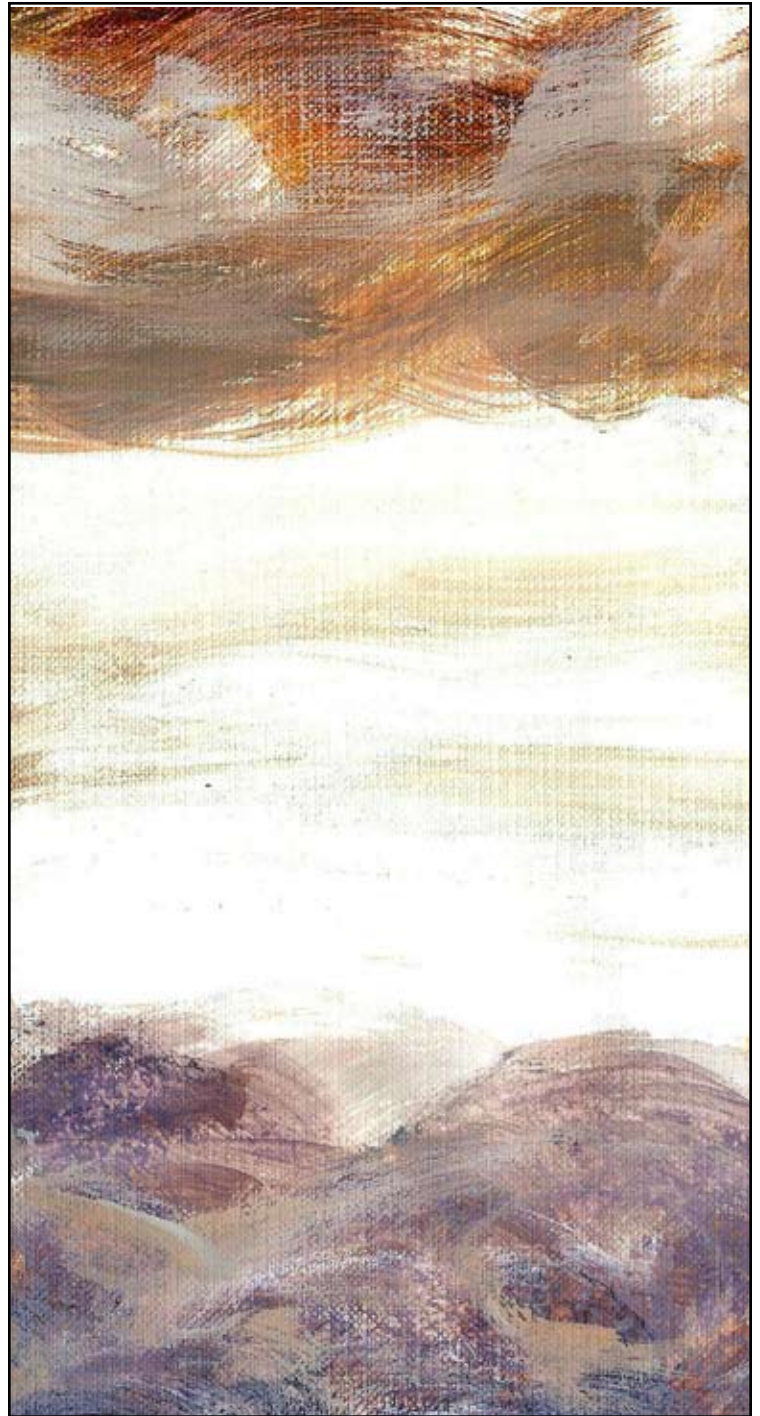
~ Artist Statement

Plain and simple, my inspiration to be creative comes from nature. I love the feeling I get expressing my landscape ideas as abstracts. It opens me up to surprises and new possibilities. Out of nowhere clouds tell stories, trees ask questions and my mind is free to roam. This is the joy I hope my viewers get when they look at my work.

My technique involves painting in stages. I start by layering the canvas with a rich variety of colors and textures, then I shape the work with my brush creating movement and energy. I am always learning something new with my art, and now I look forward to growing further by sharing my artistic experiences in public exhibits.

Sylvia Sleeper Seiler's art exhibition opens January 26 and will be on the walls of First E for a month. ~

*Could a greater
miracle take place
than for us to
look through each
other's eyes for an
instant? ~ Henry
David Thoreau*



Detail from painting by Sylvia Sleeper Seiler.

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Old Stone Church Biracial History Project Update ~ continued from page 5

- **Grant funds from Candler Park Neighborhood Organization & GA Humanities Council** enabled us to organize our extensive research materials, with the assistance of retired school librarian, Susan Davis.
- The resulting collection is called the **Candler Park Local History Collection**. It now lives at the Mary Lin Elementary School, in the Media Center. During school hours, it serves as a user-friendly resource for the school and the community.
- We have dedicated this Local History Collection in the memory of **Ms Mattie Carey Howard and Ms Margaret E. Latimore**, two dear friends and contributors to this Living History Project.
- We have made a positive connection with the **Atlanta Public Schools Archives and Museum** to share research materials and vision of schools serving community histories.
- In May we celebrated at Antioch East our **Third Annual Fellowship in the Park: Sharing the Spirit of History**.
- This summer, **GSU Archives and Special Collections** helped us scan and digitize the documents in our **Local History Collection**.
- We reinvigorated the **History Project's website** with help from our committed neighbor at Bakeman Solutions.
- **AND**, last but not least,.

We completed the design and fabrication of the **third Historic Legacy Marker in Candler Park**, honoring the site of Antioch's first church. Underwritten by the 420 Oakdale Group of neighbors--Roger Bakeman, Don Bender, and Kelly Jordan--the new marker was recently installed by our good friends Danny Feig and Randy Pimsler. The marker now joins the Commemorative Bench at 420 Oakdale Rd. They stand together in remembrance of the site and story of Antioch's First Church, located there from 1877 to 1916.

All are welcome to visit the marker and bench at 420 Oakdale Road. Feel free to stay a while, sit on the bench, and meditate on this living history. You are also welcome to visit the Local History Collection at Mary Lin School during school hours. And check out the new look of the History Project's website anytime at www.biracialhistory.org.

It is an honor to be of service to our shared community's living history. It is a profound gift to move forward together in the spirit of healing and justice. We extend deep thanks to all who have embraced this community work..... More to come!

Edi/th Kelman, Project Manager

Time of Looking Backward and Ahead

By Robert Stewart

This is the time of Janus, the 2-faced god of gates, looking outward and inward, backward and ahead. The year 2013 has seen enormous progress in many areas, including social justice involving the LGBT community in the US. As we look forward to the new year, there is a tradition of making resolutions. However, as Chris Freytag wrote, "A resolution may be the act of deciding or resolving on a course of action, but a commitment can be far stronger, because it's a specific pledge, promise or obligation." Here's one I hope you will make: Be and stay healthy. There is only one you, and you are needed & valued. Eat well, exercise often and get plenty of rest. -

Truth Spoken in Sandals by Ted Pettus ~ continued from Back Page

Forty-something Ted has also repeatedly felt grateful for good hiking boots with stiff soles and ankle support on this jagged path. About 3 hours up the trail, above 9,000 feet, I was catching my breath and appreciating the breathtaking panorama and glacier-capped mountains.

Then I saw new colors moving in the faint distance. As we drew closer, I began to realize it was a train of about 20 ladies descending the mountain in fantastically bright, colorful saris and local garments (the photo shows half of them). A fortunate period of time passed while we hiked toward each other, and their outlines and colors grew ever more distinct in the bright mountain sunlight. It already looked and felt surreal to me when we finally stepped aside. As the ladies approached and passed, I took in the colors, the smiles, and could not ignore that they wore sandals. To drive the contrast home further, one who looked about 15 wore low-rise heels. Sappu knew several of them from his village and pointed out that one of the ladies was over 70 years old. I looked at my dirty shorts and sweaty shirt, and mostly I looked at my rugged hiking boots.

Although Twenty-Something Ted's male insecurities wanted to reframe the story, 40-Something Ted had the good fortune to be overwhelmed with the beauty/strength of the people and the colors and the moment. Nothing could be hammered into any of the mental cubby holes conditioned into my western mind, and I had to just breathe. Subconscious stereotypes of "other" people, cultures, and oneself rolled down the mountainside as I got to appreciate the beauty of these fellow humans, their garments, and the truth spoken in their sandals. ~



Ladies descending the Himalayas in sandals. Photo by Ted Pettus.

Facebook friend Ted Pettus to see all the photos. Please say who you are and mention the First E association.

<https://www.facebook.com/Dhauladhar>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhauladhar>

<https://maps.google.com/maps/ms?msid=211860314105042238228.0004ee24fdf55802dc391&msa=0&ll=32.262314,76.347256&spn=0.067064,0.091667>

January 2014 Sunday Celebrations of Life

- January 5** *The Power of Marking a Beginning*
Speaker: Duncan Teague
Facilitator: Cindy Lou Who
Accompanist: Charli Vogt
- January 12** *A Retrospective*
Speaker: Rev. Marsha Mitchiner
Facilitator: Bill Laney
Accompanist: Alan Dynin
- January 19** *Readings, Stories and Reflections of the Season -- from*
Kate Hauk
Speaker: Rev. Kate Hauk
Facilitator: Charlene Ball
Accompanist: William "Bill" Chelton
- January 26** *Mandela's Long Walk to Freedom*
Speaker: Rev. Janna Nelson
Facilitator: Patton White
Accompanist: Scott Hooker
-

Being attentive to the needs of others might not be the point of life, but it is the work of life. It can be ... almost impossibly difficult. But it is not something we give. It is what we get in exchange for having to die. ~ Jonathan Safran Foer

The Back Page

Members and Friends Speak Out Truth Spoken in Sandals

By Ted Pettus

June 2013

This past summer, I had the privilege of teaching anatomy at the Men Tsee Khang school of Tibetan medicine in McLeod Ganj, India. I had nine days on my own before classes started, and I would like to share two of my culturally educational moments from that period.

Some of the most beautiful moments of insight occur when one gains a humble awareness of one's own good fortune. At the same time one may sense the greatest feeling of enlightenment when realizing the strength, good nature, and wisdom of another who was previously under-appreciated. This is very often what I find at the root of the joy I find in experiencing cultural contrasts.

McLeod Ganj is a smaller town outside of Dharamsala (like Decatur to Atlanta) that is home to his holiness the Dalai Lama, the HH Dalai Lama Temple, and the Tibetan government in exile. Thus, this Indian town is quite Tibetan. McLeod Ganj rests on, and is spilling over the sides of, a narrow ridge that ascends from Dharamsala to the Himalayan mountains looming above. When I arrived, we traveled through the town to the Eagle's Nest Hotel in those mountains above.

The main route through town is a narrow, busy road making the entire ride a lot like a game of chicken with oncoming cars, motorcycles, vendors' booths, pedestrians, and cows. I did not drive, and no westerner should ever, ever attempt to drive there. These drivers read each other's minds and know exactly when to step aside, swerve, or honk.

The narrow streets narrow further in certain stretches so that one car or motorcycle parked in the wrong place can cause a head-to-head traffic jam that can last indefinitely. For me, a car on one side of the street and a motorcycle parked on the other did the job. My driver, a large Tibetan man, asked (ordered) a skinny stranger to move the unclaimed motorcycle (no one knew who owned the bike). He began to move the bike, and pretty soon, others joined in, giving advice and criticism as authorities on the subject. Pretty soon the motorcycle fell over. With more help he eventually got it into the ditch upright, and everyone felt relieved for a moment before they walked on as if nothing had happened. It would have been easy for me to move on unmoved, but I could not ignore their wonderful lack of awareness of what would happen if you messed with someone's personal property in Atlanta. Also, we do not realize how materialistic we are in the way we sanctify personal property. Life moved on for everyone in this story without involvement by police, lawyers or other weapons. I felt educated.

The Eagle's Nest Hotel was near trailheads for many great Himalayan hikes. Not all of the guests were as focused on hiking, so every time I went for a hike I went with the Eagle's Nest's best guide, Sappu. Raised within walking distance of the hotel, Sappu had been climbing these hills his entire life and could run straight up and down the hills where most mortals slowly follow the switchback trails. Forty-something Ted often struggles to keep inner Teenage/Twenty-Something Ted from gaining ego-driven, competitive, and impulsive behavioral influence. We hiked as high as 11,500 feet, and at times I could feel my heart beating fast and hard through my loud panting. I would remind myself, "slow down and catch your breath, you are not in your twenties, old sport."

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The First E Newsletter is published monthly. Deadline for the February 2014 newsletter is January 19. Send your articles and announcements to mcharleneball@yahoo.com. The editor reserves the right to edit or refuse any material submitted.

