

The Existentialist

Newsletter of the First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta

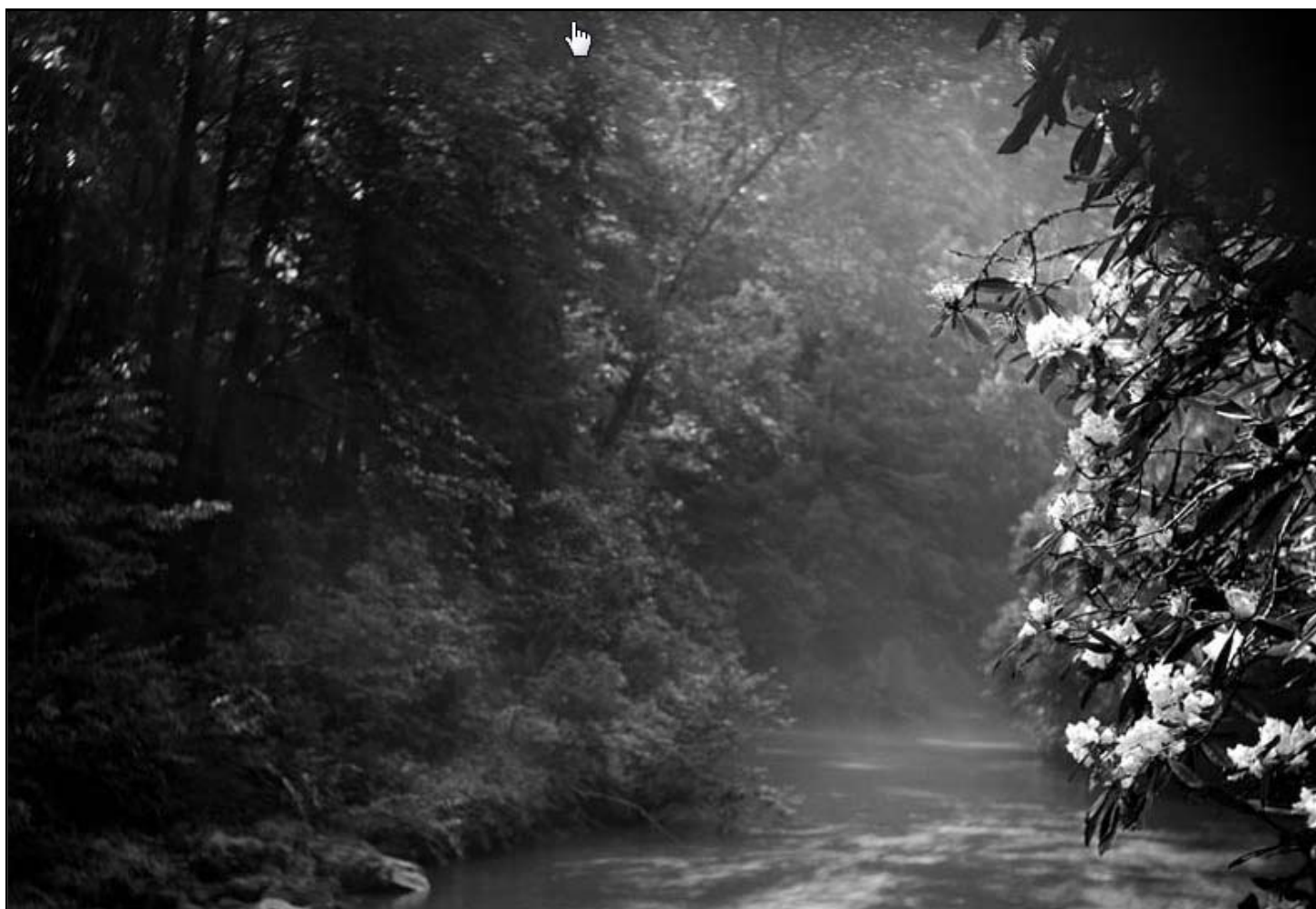
470 Candler Park Drive, N.E., Atlanta, GA 30307 • Founded in 1976 •

A Philosophically Based Spiritual Community

Dedicated to Human Liberation

and Founded on Existentialist and Feminist Principles •

REIS BIRDWHISTELL PHOTOGRAPHY SHOW MAY 31-JULY 5 AT FIRST EXISTENTIALIST



"Untitled" by Reis Birdwhistell. Story on page 7.

**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,
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Bill Read, Treasurer
Stell Simonton,
Recorder
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Bill Laney
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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
with Additions by Charlene Ball*

The First E Board of Directors met on Monday, May 4th. The Board elected officers for the current year: Chair, D. Patton White, Secretary, Stell Simonton, Treasurer, Bill Read. Board members for 2015 are Linda Bell, Elaine Gale, Bill Laney, Hank Pfadenhauer, Bill Read, Stell Simonton, D. Patton White, Mark White, and Cindy Lou Who. The Board agreed to the recommended raise for Marsha, our Fellowship Minister, submitted by the Ministerial Relations Committee. The Board also discussed other ways of making our space more user-friendly for people with disabilities. Marsha agreed to spearhead an effort to find a pool of volunteers who can represent First E. at other events. Marsha also agreed to provide a recommendation on addressing burnout on Guild service. The Board agreed to re-negotiate our contract with Edith Covington so that it can also include duties as Bookkeeper for the organization. Edith reported on rental activity, which is very active at this time. The next board meeting will be Monday, June 1st, at 7:00 PM, all are welcome! ~

Community News & Activities

--**A Book Discussion Group will begin on Sunday, June 28**, after the COL upstairs. We will discuss *Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome* by Joy DeGruy. See Lorraine if you want to order a copy at Charis (or contact Charis directly).

--**SAVE THE DATE! The First E Annual Book & Bake Sale** will take place on Saturday, August 15. Bring your donations of books and media to First E or see Libby or Charlene. To volunteer, see Marsha.

--**SAVE ANOTHER DATE! First E Coffeehouse on Saturday, July 18, featuring Scott Hooker and Janna Nelson** and other artists.

--**Shine Baby Shine! Storytelling by Dorothy Kirk**, former First E member, at the Highland Inn Ballroom on Thursday, June 4 at 8:00 p.m., Saturday, June 6, at 5:00 and 11:00 p.m., and Sunday, June 7, at 3:30 p.m. Tickets at atlantafringe.org.

--**We're Not Dead Yet!** Concert at First E on June 27 with Jamie Anderson, Dianne Davidson, and Diedre McCalla.

--**First E Day at Bennett's Market on June 14!** Come out to lunch at Bennett's Market & Deli in Grant Park and help raise funds for First E. Proprietor Victoria Trestrail will donate 10 percent of the day's take on June 14 to the First Existentialist Congregation. It's a fun way to munch on sandwiches, socialize and benefit First E.

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

Guild Reports

Program Guild *by Charlene Ball*

The Program Guild met on Tuesday, May 19, at 6:00 p.m. to plan the Celebrations of Life services for July, August, and September. We are pleased to announce that July's speakers are already confirmed, and we think they will be special. First, on July 5, Rev. DiAnna Ritola will return. (She spoke, you may remember, about Bugs Bunny and his wrong turn at Albuquerque.) This time, DiAnna will speak on "Birthing a New Self." Singer and songwriter Shelia Pattee will provide special music.

On July 12, we're excited to welcome back Rev. Janna Nelson, with Scott Hooker on the piano. They are in Atlanta for a visit, and will also be playing at the First E Coffeehouse on Saturday, July 18.

We will be hearing special guest speaker Bill Nichols on July 19. Bill is a former member of First E, and we're glad to welcome him back. And on July 26, we are happy to announce that Rev. Angela Denise Davis will return. Angela will speak on "Saving Room for Grace."

— We are sorry to announce that Rev. Kate Hauk, who has been a regular speaker at First E for several years, will be moving to Ohio. We will miss her unique humor and wisdom, and we wish her well.

The Program Guild is Patton, Linda Bell, Charlene, Bill Laney, and Hank Pfadenhauer. We meet quarterly. Our next meeting will be on August 18 at 6:00 p.m. at First E. All members and friends are welcome to attend our meetings. ~

Membership Guild

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, Carol S., Hank, Robert, Bill Laney, Mary Howard, and Wilj. The Openers are Elaine, Hank, Wilj, Stell, and Andy. 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 or Elaine at ergale@hotmail.com. ~

Social Justice Guild *By Charlene Ball*

The Social Justice Guild will begin a new book discussion group on Sunday, June 28, after the service. We will discuss *Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome* by Joy DeGruy. Charis will order copies. If you want to order a copy, let Lorraine know. At the meeting on June 28, we will decide on future dates. If you want to participate, tell a member of the Social Justice Guild so we can put you on the email list to receive messages about reading assignments.

Many SJG members are active with Moral Monday and other social justice organizations. We will place announcements in the Community Activities section of the newsletter and in Robert's weekly E-blast to keep First E members and friends informed about opportunities for taking action. ~

Social Justice Corner

I Don't

by Rev. Duncan E. Teague

The following is an excerpt from the sermon, "I Do, I Don't, I Don't Know," delivered to The First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta, May 3, 2015.

I typically do not condone violence and looting in the streets of Baltimore or any other place. First, because I have PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder. I don't want to relive those traumas while witnessing fighting and the destruction. Secondly, the acts of the minority of looters lead to violence. And in this case, the violent backlash will never be televised. It will occur in a board room in places where the people in the streets are not permitted. It will happen as people in suits of many colors, worn by people with the main color green in mind, are in discussion about where to place resources, where zoning will and will not occur. And the reactions to what was televised will be swift and hateful. There will be lines drawn that no one else understands. There will be violent silences about development, redevelopment, and insurance rates and prime interest rates, and there will be years of blight. Shops and businesses will thrive only in "acceptable" parts of the city.

How do I know this? I grew up in Kansas City, Missouri. And I can show you where the fires were set in 1968 on the April evening when Dr. King was killed. How can I show you something that happened then, forty-seven years ago? Because the economic blight to the Troost Corridor is still going on. An economic engine of the Black and working class communities has only dimly come back since 1968, and the fire marks on some buildings are still there.

May we find the source of peaceful coexistence in time to save the planet and ourselves, before we perish together with too many toys and not enough love?

I don't condone false arrests or murder by police officers, who were having some kind of thrill ride and lynching an African American, or a prisoner, or just a man who they decided to pick up and put inside a police squad car. We have arrests, and charges have been filed. Let's not forget a policeman killed Harvey Milk and confessed to the crime and was allowed to leave after his brief time—five years in jail—on a manslaughter conviction.

It is my belief, now as several cities erupt after some officer shoots an unarmed man who looks like me and the people pour into the streets, that "The Revolution" has begun. There are clashes, and urban centers all over the country in places thought to be quiet are blowing up.

We will see. What can we do? Where can we turn? Whom shall we fear?

I don't know the answers. I believe we have each other in the here and now. I believe we have the potential to begin



Continued on back page

Minister's Corner

by Rev. Marsha Mitchiner

THANK YOU, ANDY

Many thanks to Andy Weiskoff for his 3 years (one of several 3 year stints) of service on the First E Board of Directors. Andy is a thoughtful voice in discussions and has a quiet way of getting things done. He has become our go-to man for fliers and other special graphics. In addition to the colored cards and banners with clever messages about us, Andy is the mastermind behind the First E tee-shirt ("We're looking for a few good men, women," etc.). So again, THANK YOU, ANDY for your support in so many ways. Enjoy your year off (Board elections aren't until next April.....Just kidding, Andy. I think they will give you a 2 year breather.) When you see Andy, please let him know you appreciate his service and gift of self.

Thinking of those in our community:

*Martha Renfroe-Garner is out of her leg cast and beginning the process of getting stronger and walking without a cane. Sharon (Sanders) is having health issues and asked that we keep her in our thoughts & hearts.

*Nathaniel Jones is doing better and will hopefully be back with us before much longer. Contact Marsha for information on how to send mail or set up a visitation on site or by remote video.

*Congratulations to Lost n Found Youth for raising \$10,000 at the recent Monte Carlo Casino Night. People were having mega fun while helping a good cause.

IT'S OFFICIAL

I'd like to express my appreciation to the Board of Directors for renewing my contract for 2015. And a special "thank you" to the members of the Ministerial Relations Guild--Shelly Ahmann, Edith Covington, and Jean Heinrich-- for their open discussion of my duties and responsibilities and for a recommendation to the Board that I receive a raise. (and thanks to the Board for approving it.) Being minister to our congregation is a joy and challenge. We come together from different backgrounds, beliefs and ideas of how we want to make a positive difference in our immediate and larger world. Our commitment is, as a community and as individuals, to support one another in our journey to find our personal Truth and make that difference we seek. My job is not to lead anyone in that journey but to be with you as support, counsel, encouragement and, hopefully, as a relevant speaker and positive influence. I hope you will feel comfortable in making comments, suggestions and requests that involve you personally or the congregation. Thanks to each of you for allowing me this opportunity to serve. *Marsha*

~ *The only time we have is now.* ~

Community News & Activities ~ continued from page 2

--Geek Chorus meets on Second 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.

--For updates about Moral Mondays in Georgia, please drop a note to Lorraine at tana44@hotmail.com.

--Dr. Bombay's presents a monthly Indian dinner on the last Monday of each month to help girls in Darjeeling, India, to remain in school. Reservations are required. The dinner is \$20. For tickets, visit TheLearningTea.com.

--Lost-n-Found Thrift and Consignment Store, 2585 Chantilly Drive, is open M-Sat 10-5; Sundays noon-6. Lost-n-Found, which helps homeless GLBTQI youth, was founded by our former office administrator, Rick Westbrook.

--Submissions and news for the July Newsletter are due to Charlene by Sunday, June 21. Send to mcharleneball@yahoo.com.

--Contact Robert Stewart with your news and activities for his weekly e-newsletter: robertstewart369@gmail.com. ~

We Aren't Dead Yet



Jamie Anderson · Deidre McCalla · Dianne Davidson

Join Jamie Anderson, Deidre McCalla, and Dianne Davidson, legendary women's music artists, for a concert, "We Aren't Dead Yet!" on Saturday, June 27, at 8:00 p.m. at the First Existentialist Congregation. Tickets will be \$25.00 in advance and \$30 at the door, and are available at <http://www.wady.brownpapertickets.com>. Don't miss this rare opportunity to see and hear these women's music artists at First E! ~

Reis Birdwhistell Photography Exhibit

By Reis Birdwhistell

I have been a professional photographer for 35 years shooting corporate meetings, publicity events, conventions, portraits, architecture, displays of products, dance and some fashion. I have worked for everyone from my next door neighbor to major companies. I moved to Georgia in the early 70's and started going to the mountains soon after, enjoying the Chattooga's waters and forest.

After losing a few cameras to the waters of the Chattooga, I was looking around for a camera that I would not mind losing. I found a pinhole camera, no lens to worry about, made of wood that could take a beating and about \$100.00. I've only lost one, so far. With the pinhole my average exposure is over one minute, so movement plays a big part in the setup of the shot. I try to see the patterns and flow of the river as I previsualize the image. Sometimes seeing things in the prints I did not see as I took the picture. I really enjoy that part of the process.

Reis Birdwhistell's photography exhibit opens on Sunday, May 31, after the service and will run through July 5. ~

Speakers in June



Rev. Maressa Pendermon

Reverend Maressa Pendermon on June 14

Reverend Maressa Pendermon, JD, M DIV, is an ordained reverend in the Unity Fellowship Church Movement (UFCM), currently serving as senior pastor of Unity Fellowship of Christ Church, Greater Atlanta. She also serves as a chaplain resident for the Care and Counseling Center of Georgia in Atlanta, and currently works at Atlanta Medical Center providing pastoral care. During this second year residency, she is concentrating on providing pastoral/spiritual care to patients who have survived trauma and who present with mental illness. Reverend Pendermon is a community strategist and a trained facilitator. She is passionate about social justice issues and works in community with traditionally marginalized and low wealth individuals and communities from a human rights perspective and through a womanist theological lens.

Reverend Pendermon serves as vice-president of Women Healing Women, Inc. (WHW), an organization that helps female survivors of violence; and is an organizing member of Women in Transition (WIT), a spiritual and communal experience of women transitioning from incarceration or from other experiences. She also serves on the advisory board of Georgia State University's School of Public Health's Community Engagement Core.

A native of Boston, Massachusetts, where she was raised in public housing, Maressa has been involved in advocacy, organizing and coalition building since the 80s. She holds a B.S. in Criminal Justice from Albany State University, a J.D. from the University of Florida College of Law, and a M. Div. from Candler School of Theology. She also holds certifications from the Interaction Institute for Social Change in Cambridge, MA. Rev. Pendermon will speak at First E on July 14 on "Journey to Freedom." ~

Dr. Saralyn Chesnut: The Bloom of the Present Moment

Dr. Saralyn Chesnut moved to Atlanta in 1973 and quickly became part of the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance (ALFA) community. In 1983, at age 35, she decided to pursue a doctorate in Women's Studies at Emory University. In 1993 she became the first Director of Emory'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, and is active in SAGE Atlanta, an organization that provides services and advocacy for older LGBT people. She will speak on June 7 on "The Bloom of the Present Moment." ~



Dr. Saralyn Chesnut

June 2015 Sunday Celebrations of Life

- June 7** ***The Bloom of the Present Moment***
Speaker: Dr. Saralyn Chesnut
Facilitator: Lynn Tippetts
Accompanist: Alan Dynin
- June 14** ***Journey to Freedom***
Speaker: Rev. Maressa Pendermon
Facilitator: Dr. Sharon Mathis
Accompanist: Dr. Jean Heinrich
- June 21** ***Fathers' Day Panel***
Panelists: Jo Hamby, Glen Lopez, and Mark White
Facilitator: Robert Stewart
Accompanist: Aviva and the Flying Penguins
- June 28** ***Do We Really Need Mosquitoes?***
Speaker: Rev. Marsha Mitchiner
Facilitator: Dr. Saralyn Chesnut
Accompanist: William "Bill" Chelton

*As a congregation, we pledge: to explore and take seriously
our central values of freedom, justice and responsibility. ~
From 1st Existentialist's Commitment Statement*

The Back Page

Members and Friends Speak Out

I Don't ~ Continued from page 5

some of the change that must help us survive. I believe if we wait until the most oppressed are easily swayed to violence in the street, we won't have to worry about Islamic extremists. It will be the hungry, the tired, the poor and uninformed who will teach us to care if there is anything left. The revolution has started and I don't know what to do.



I fear that the peaceful protests, which went on for a week, were hijacked by people who can use footage like what we saw to get any idiot they want in the highest levels of power. It would not cost that much money to pay off some very angry people to ignite the violent behavior of a crowd. In Baltimore they were peaceful for a week, and then it just blew up. Really?

Do you remember the use of the Welfare Queen, the “lazy” unemployed workers, and the “sinful” gays who wanted to destroy marriage and the American family? Now it will be the “dangerous” Blacks who cannot be controlled by our police. We are going to see that footage of the rioting and the looting again.

I fear that we, Black men, are being used in our pain and anguish to further causes that have nothing to do with the people in the streets. The decision makers may have gotten more than enough proof footage to convince the apathetic, Middle American voter to come out once again in fear to vote “get things in order.” I fear that the years of underfunding and poor schools have fueled what some will need to push against the little bit of awakening that occurred during the Obama years.

As Karen Armstrong warns us, and I ask: May we find the source of peaceful coexistence in time to save the planet and ourselves, before we perish together with too many toys and not enough love? May those of us who have the strength to enter the struggle do so, and may the others of us find the strength and wisdom to support what must be done? ~

CHARTER FOR COMPASSION

Our Congregation is a Charter Partner of Compassionate Atlanta. By signing the Charter for Compassion, developed by theologian Karen Armstrong, we pledge to abide by the Golden Rule.

***To see the Charter for Compassion visit their website:
www.charterforcompassion.org***

The Existentialist is published monthly. Deadline for the July 2015 newsletter is June 21 Send your articles and announcements to mcharleneball@yahoo.com. The editor reserves the right to edit or refuse any material submitted.