

# 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 •

## ***Southern Storytellers at First E on November 9***


Mark your calendars for a special evening of Southern storytelling and song at First E on Saturday, November 9, from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. Storytellers Mary Ann Hopper, Dorothy Kirk, Gail Reeder, and Nita Roberts will be joined by jazz singer Tia Rix and special guest Tammy Wynot for an evening of songs and tales of Southern life--humorous, witty, poignant, sad, wry, and laugh-out-loud funny. Delicious refreshments, wine, beer, sodas, and bottled water will be available. Admission is \$10--more if you can, less if you can't.

Rev. Marsha Mitchiner will be coordinating a raffle, so you may win a fabulous prize! Also, Marsha is organizing volunteers for the event, so if you'd like to get involved, contact her. This adult-themed entertainment is a fundraiser for First E. For more information, contact our office at 404-378-5570 or visit our Facebook event at <https://www.facebook.com/events/342344435911062/~>

*(More about the performers on page 6.)*

The First Existentialist Congregation  
Presents

AN EVENING  
OF  
SOUTHERN  
STORYTELLING



with  
Mary Ann Hopper, Dorothy Kirk,  
Gail Reeder, Nita Roberts, Tia Rix,  
& Special Guest Tammy Wynot

Saturday, November 9, 7:00-10:00pm

Admission \$10, more if you can, less if you can't  
Delicious Snacks, Wine, Beer, Sodas available

First Existentialist Congregation  
470 Candler Park Drive, Atlanta, GA 30307  
404-378-5570

**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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human liberation  
and founded on existentialist  
and feminist principles.*



## **Notes From the Board**

*By Libby Ware, Board Chair*

**The Board met on Monday, October 7** at 7:00 p.m. We discussed who should lead the children's program since Stephanie is going to Michigan for at least six months. Aurelia and Umidi Davutakhunova will run the program, and we will reassess in three months depending on Stephanie's timetable. When Stephanie left, she was making \$15 more than Aurelia. Since we're not sure when Stephanie is coming back, we decided not to fill her position permanently, but to pay Umidi the same as Aurelia.

The South Region of UUA sent an e-mail to member congregations regarding promotion on the internet. One suggestion is to write reviews on Yelp! and other rating websites. Anyone can do this, so I encourage everyone to do so.

We have been offered a free booth at the Rainbow Expo, which is comprised of vendors offering services for same-sex weddings. Stell volunteered to staff the booth, and Andy made rental brochures for her to hand out.

We sent a note to Pauline Clance and Nancy Zumoff saying how nice it was to see them on Founders Day and that we hoped enough emphasis was given in the service to Lanier's legacy. (We have since received a gracious note from them.)

Marsha is looking for input on what members would like to do for holiday giving this year. Also, she suggested that once a month we give all undesignated cash in the collection plate to a particular charity. We will discuss what charities we'd like to support at the next Board meeting, which will be on November 4. ~

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## **Do You Goodsearch?**

**Are you a Goodsearch user?** This is a search engine that donates one cent every time someone uses it. You just go to Goodsearch.com and put in First Existentialist Congregation as your chosen charity. You can download the optional toolbar--it's that easy. I've used it for years (Helen Strait suggested it as an ongoing fundraiser) and have not had any problems.

GoodShop is an affiliated site that donates a certain percentage of the total price to First E if you buy online from them. Some retailers includes Land's End, Office Max, Office Depot, Barnes and Noble, Travelocity, JC Penney's, Nordstrom, Crate and Barrel, Bed, Bath, and Beyond, Sears, Old Navy, 1-800-flowers, Audible, and Hilton.

So how about signing up and give Goodsearch and Goodshop a try? Every penny counts. ~ *Marsha*

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## ***Guild Reports***

### ***Program Guild*** *by Charlene Ball*

**The Program Guild** met on Tuesday, October 29, at 7:00 p.m. at First E to plan the COLs for the first quarter of 2014. Speakers for November will be Duncan E. Teague, Rev. Marsha Mitchiner, Rev. Janna Nelson, and Rev. Kate Hauk.

If you'd like to facilitate or suggest a speaker or musician, please come to a Program Guild meeting. To find out when we next meet, contact one of our members: Patton White: [patton@beacondance.org](mailto:patton@beacondance.org); Charlene Ball: [mcharleneball@yahoo.com](mailto:mcharleneball@yahoo.com); Linda Bell: [lbell@gsu.edu](mailto:lbell@gsu.edu); or Bill Laney: [bill3391a@yahoo.com](mailto:bill3391a@yahoo.com). ~

### ***Membership Guild*** *by Wilj Sturkey*

**We had a kiddush on Sunday, October 27, el Dia de los Muertos.** The upcoming Thanksgiving feast at first E was mentioned. At this point we don't have a volunteer to organize the event, so we would like to solicit one. The organizer will need to create sign up sheets for the food donors, get help setting up tables, find help to clean up, etc. There usually are 40-50 guests.

Founders Day at First E was a success with a large number of people in attendance. However, it was agreed by all of the Membership Guild that we will push for not having any kind of big event including kiddushes and potlucks when there is a festival in Candler Park. Some people could not approach the building to park and did not attend Founders Day as a result. There was frustration by some people who did attend because of the parking problem.

We will have a New Member Recognition on November 3, which is also Guild Day. ~

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## ***Community News & Activities***

--**"Painting for Fun,"** an art show featuring the students of Ashlea Davis, will be on the walls of First E from November 8 through December 8. Opening reception is Friday evening, November 8. Several First E members will exhibit their work.

--**An Evening of Southern Storytelling** will happen on Saturday, November 9, at 7:00 p.m. at First E. Stories with a grownup Southern flavor will be performed by Dorothy Kirk, MaryAnn Hopper, Nita Roberts, and Gail Reeder. Atlanta jazz singer Tia Rix will sing. Snacks and libations will be available. \$10 admission. This show is a fundraiser for First E. ~

--**Thanksgiving** is an annual activity at First E. We need a coordinator for this fun and satisfying day of food, gathering, and communion. If you would like to coordinate or help, please contact Rev. Marsha, Robert, Wilj, or Elaine.

--**First E Discussion Group** will hold its first meeting on December 15 after the COL to read *Gather At the Table* by Sharon Leslie Morgan and Thomas Norman DeWolf. We will read the Introduction and Part 1 (which includes chapters 1-3.)

*Continued on page 7*



# Social Justice Corner

## A TOWN HALL WITH SENATOR BERNIE SANDERS

By Linda A. Bell

**Although few politicians could lure me** to a meeting at 8:00 in the morning, I nonetheless looked forward to the town hall with Senator Bernie Sanders on October 18, 2013, at the Communication Workers of America, District 3, headquarters. Despite beginning so early, the meeting attracted a lot of folks like those of us from the Social Justice Guild of First E: people who see in Sen. Sanders someone who represents us rather than banks, corporations, and wealthy folks generally, and certainly not right-wing extremists who reject reason and science and see freedom as the right to work for less and with no health care.

I wasn't disappointed. Sen. Sanders quoted the Republican President Dwight D. Eisenhower expressing pride in Social Security and the minimum wage. In sharp contrast, Sanders noted, are those in Congress today who want to do away with both as well as with the Affordable Health Care Law. These politicians seek to alter or undo Social Security (to keep Americans from being "enslaved" by it); to "reform" Medicare (by giving retirees \$8,000 and "wishing them good luck" dealing with cancer and other illnesses); and to abolish the very concept of a minimum wage (low though it is at \$7.25/hour) as well as the Environmental Protection Agency and other regulatory agencies (in favor of the "freedom" of corporations to destroy the environment and the health and lives of our citizens).

Sen. Sanders appealed to statistics, noting that polls—even of those who identify with the Tea Party—indicate that the people of the US are worried primarily about jobs, health care, and their children's educations; about protecting the social safety net; and about corporations and the wealthy paying their fair share. While polls indicate that some 76% of Americans say that Social Security and Medicare should not be cut, beltline media continue to ignore this fact and to maintain that the biggest issues facing the country—even the major concerns of the population—are the national deficit and debt, along with their supposed drivers, the so-called entitlement programs (among which they always include the earned benefits program, Social Security). Seldom if ever do these purveyors of what passes for news bother to mention that both the deficit and the debt largely reflect previous and continuing costs of the unfunded wars and large tax breaks approved unquestioningly by conservative politicians when they dominated the lawmaking branches of government.

Meanwhile, Sen. Sanders reminded us, huge corporations and the wealthy spend enormous amounts to buy congressmen and senators, especially their votes for even more tax exemptions (though the top 10% have made 95% of the new income generated from 2009 through 2012 and hardly need additional exemptions). Moreover, to prevent working people and the poor from getting health coverage, the extremely wealthy, like the Koch brothers, with their \$71 billion—as Sen. Sanders pointed out, *more money than they could possibly spend in 10 lifetimes*—put millions into politicians and advertising to shut down the government and to prevent payment of previously-incurred debt.

So what's to be done? Sen. Sanders agreed with many of the community leaders at the meeting: "Organize!" ("Early to bed/ Early to rise/Work like Hell/And organize"). He admonished us to remember that most workers share our concerns for jobs and wages, for health and health care, and for our children to have opportunities to make better lives for themselves. Instead of allowing divisive issues such as gay marriage and abortion to be used by those on the right to separate

**. . . the people of the US are worried primarily about jobs, health care, and their children's educations; about protecting the social safety net; and about corporations and the wealthy paying their fair share . . . .**

*Continued on page 7*

## ***Southern Storytelling on November 9 - continued from page 1***

**Maryann Hopper** (aka B. Leaf) enjoys the creative pursuit of a good tale. She has decided she better get to publishing a collection of her southern stories before long since she just keeps on writing them. She has been sharing her stories for years at public events. She reads six of her southern tales on her CD, *Missing the Magnolias*. A native of Mississippi, she lives in the woods north of Atlanta with her partner of 28 years, Drea, and their smart-as-whip tabby cat, Skid.

**Dorothy Kirk**, a native North Carolinian, became a storyteller as a result of taking singing lessons when she retired. She tells how in her story "Singing Changed My Life Twice." When Dorothy started, her dream was to create a show. She did and in August 2012, she performed her one-woman show, "Hold Still! I Can't See Myself," in Asheville. She has since performed it in Salisbury, NC, Columbia, SC, and Tryon, NC, with upcoming performances in Palm Springs, CA. She is working on her 2nd show, "I Came Out in a Darkroom."

**Gail Reeder** is a writer/comedian whose love of laughter is a rural N.C. family tradition. She was a member of The Sisters of No Mercy and Funny That Way theatrical troops. In addition to three books on fabric art, Gail has written a column for *Pulse Magazine* and articles for *Southern Voice*.

**Tia Rix** was born to sing. The daughter of Atlanta jazz legends Bob and Phyllis Rix, Tia began recording at age 13. Her passion has always been jazz, and she's sung with some of the greats, including Detroit pianist Johnny O'Neal; NYC bassist Steve Doyle; and Teaneck, NJ, guitarist Russell Malone. Locally, catch her at Churchhill Grounds or Twain's on Tuesday nights and the Queen of Sheba restaurant on Thursday nights.

**Nita Roberts** spent 33 years telling stories to the toughest of audiences, her seven-year-old Fulton County students. After retirement, she decided to spin yarns for safer audiences...adults. They seemed less likely to have tickle fights with each other or to stretch-out for a nap should the tale drag on a bit. She is a Georgia native and appreciates the opportunity to share and explore small-town southern life. She lives in Roswell with her partner Jeanne, their fourteen-year-old, one-eyed peekapoo KC and Alex the Cat, who rescued them all from having to sleep soundly throughout the night. Her favorite topic, besides all things Southern, is her son, Kyle. Just don't get her started....

**Tammy Whynot** was created in the 80's to prove that there's more to life than standing by your man. She has appeared at several music festivals, the Punch Line, and the Atlanta Civic Center. Most of her appearances, though, have been at fund raisers for various Atlanta groups like ALFA, Charis Books and Womonwrites. ~

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### ***Everybody Wins!!!!***

***During the Evening of Southern Storytellers on November 9 at First E we will have a special drawing of several items--including a one hour massage and hand crafted art. For the price of a ticket you may win the item of your choice, and First E will benefit from your generosity. Even if your ticket is not drawn, you can still feel good knowing you are supporting our community. Come out. Have fun. Feel good. ~ Marsha***

***Please 'like' us on Facebook!  
[https://www.facebook.com/  
groups/43340332955/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/43340332955/)***

## ***Community News & Activities ~ continued from page 5***

--**Janet Metzger presents "Poetry and Songs of James Broughton"** on Sunday, November 10, at 7:30 pm at First E with Franklin Abbott and Sam Hagan, and Bob Strain on piano. Admission free! Refreshments available.

--**Kenyan Dinner Party** on Saturday November 30, 7-10:00 pm at First E. Sponsored by 414House. Third in a series of international dinners. \$20 donation in advance. Limited seating (50 only). Please make your reservation by November 16. Get ticket on Paypal for Kenyan Dinner Party at [https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=\\_s-xclick&hosted\\_button\\_id=PZK6C9Q2VW728](https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=_s-xclick&hosted_button_id=PZK6C9Q2VW728)

--**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](mailto:cate@shouldersdown.com), 404-525-6466.

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

--**Quicksilver Country Dancers** invite you to join them November 3 at 1340 McConnell Drive, Decatur, the Life Enrichment Center, 1:30-5:00 for dancing. Orientation 1:30-2:00 for newcomers. Singles/ Couples/ Groups are all welcome, gender neutral, \$7.00. More information at [www.qcdancers.org](http://www.qcdancers.org).

--**Photography of Little 5 Points** exhibit opens at 414House October 4 and goes through November.

--**RAP, a discussion group about race**, meets at the Little 5 Points Community Center on November 17 from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m.

--**Friends Bonnie and Mark Gramlich offer a "Seaside Special"** for their place in St. Augustine with especially low rates. If you are interested, contact Robert.

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

--**Richard Rifkin**, pianist, is looking for work and a place to live. If you know of anything, email Robert (email below), and he will forward information to Richard.

--**Submissions and news for the December Newsletter** are due to Charlene by November 17. 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](mailto:rstewart@toyodausa.com) . ~

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## ***Senator Bernie Sanders - continued from page 5***

us and to convince many to vote against their own interests, we must focus on our common concerns in order to develop large enough coalitions to make needed economic changes in society.

Responding to the despair voiced by a member of the audience—that so few politicians seem to be working on the issues discussed—he argued that such despair is mistaken. Rather than viewing him as a lonely hero fighting for these issues, he said, we should recognize that there are many, many others, in Washington and elsewhere, who are doing important and much-needed work but whose names and efforts we are unlikely to hear about. He reminded us that, as visible as he has managed to make himself, he seldom appears on or has his work mentioned by the major TV networks.

All in all, this was a most informative and inspiring town hall, well worth the effort required to get downtown so early on a Friday! ~

## *Painting for Fun Art Opening on November 8*

On Friday, November 8, an opening reception will be held featuring the art of Ashlea Davis's students, classes known as "Painting for Fun." Thirteen artists will be represented, including new students Andy Weiskoff and Phyllis Thakis, who began painting with Ashley last July.

"Painting for Fun" began in the summer of 2008 when Ashlea and some friends were vacationing on Harbor Island. One friend said, "I want to learn how to paint marshes." They went out and painted the marshes. Ashlea was inspired and said, "I'd like to teach novices to paint and call it "Painting for Fun." She began offering painting classes, and many First E people as well as others have learned how much fun painting can be. At present, Ashlea offers



three classes a week.



"Painting for Fun" will be on the walls of First E from November 8 until December 8. ~

*Above: "Landscape" by Andy Weiskoff; left: "Seascape" by Phyllis Thakis. Photos by Ashlea Davis.*



# **November 2013 Sunday Celebrations of Life**

## ***November is Guild Month***

### ***Special Guild Presentation each Sunday in November***

***November 3 Saving Daylight and the New Moon***

***Speaker: Duncan Teague***

***Facilitator: D. Patton White***

***Accompanist: William "Bill" Chelton***

***Membership Guild Presentation***

***and Recognition of New Members***

***November 10 Duty and Service***

***Speaker: Rev. Marsha Mitchiner***

***Facilitator: Charlene Ball***

***Accompanist: Richard Rifkin***

***Building and Grounds Guild Presentation***

***November 17 Practicing Authentic Gratitude in the Midst of Suffering  
and Angst***

***Speaker: Rev. Janna Nelson***

***Facilitator: Bill Laney***

***Accompanist: Scott Hooker***

***Social Justice Guild Presentation***

***November 24 Readings, Stories, and Reflections of the Season  
--from Kate Hauk***

***Speaker: Rev. Kate Hauk***

***Facilitator: Libby Ware***

***Accompanist: Alan Dynin***

***Program Guild Presentation***

# The Back Page

## Members and Friends Speak Out

### *Blooming While Falling ~ October 20, 2013*

*By Rev. Janna Nelson*



This title came from vague beginnings; from thoughts of early autumn to early nightfall, short days, long nights, bare tree limbs, cold houses, dark and dreary days and leaking roofs, days of indoor recesses, children (and adults) wearying of being cooped up, the stress and pressures of attempts to cover the countless standards and preparation for tests; then the onslaught of various holidays and traditions that are so often weighted with emotional and familial pain, times of doing one's duty, calling that love-- Then, alongside that roll call of miserable things, came another roll call, the roll call of experiences I have had, some of them created through intentional reframing of the first roll call.

Back of My Mind Blues- that sense of leaving something undone, a constant companion whispering in my ear, creating a hyper vigilance, an acute awareness of all the things I might have left undone, or not done well, or simply done wrong, that companion that goes alongside, or perhaps trails behind hidden in my shadow, that other travelers on the road of recovery from fundamentalism of any sort know well. A sense of guilt, free-floating anxiety, that limits my ability to feel, to enjoy, to even be able to recognize and not condemn feelings, the anxiety that tells me my feelings are not to be trusted, as they are debased by the essential fact of my fallen-ness from the glory of god, my fall from grace.

And, brothers and sisters, there was a time when I believed that, although I was discovering, through therapy and mindful practices and intentional personal growth, the ability to recognize and therefore blunt the power of that internalized guilt and shame, I would always have some measure of it flowing through my veins, mingling in less toxic percentages with the blood of life pulsing in me. I never expected to lose it, to recreate my life in ways that are not tainted by incessant whispers of "not good enough," by constant second-guessing, nagging reminders of my many mistakes and limitations and shortcomings. But I have.

Do not get me wrong; I still experience guilt and anxiety, but they are now due to specific actions, or awareness of fundamental truths of being a human being living in a physical body, with very finite limits. I continue to have those moments of groundlessness, of confronting the abyss of non-being, facing the depredations of aging and wearing out flesh. I experience the guilt that comes from being a human being in a world of tragic disregard for other humans, for life, for our world, the guilt of not having clean hands, of being caught up in webs of complicity, on a more personal level, of letting others down, of not always following through on commitments, of my actions that come from bad faith.

But I now accept that all this is part of accepting my freedom, and now I know that there are many choices I do have, that life is a rich and boundless tapestry, abundant with diverse joy and sorrow, that the very fact of my existence as a finite being is not shameful, that instead it can be a cause for rejoicing, that all around me there are ongoing acts of tremendous courage and beauty that serve to inspire and encourage me, that I can find beauty and meaning and purpose and enjoyment and happiness and connection. ~

*The First E Newsletter is published monthly. Deadline for December 2013 newsletter is November 17. Send your articles and announcements to [mcharleneball@yahoo.com](mailto:mcharleneball@yahoo.com). The editor reserves the right to edit or refuse any material submitted.*