

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 •

Art on the Walls

Thanks to **Glen Lopez**, First E's curator of art shows and chair of the Art Guild, we once more have art on the walls of the Sanctuary of First E. Beginning with Glen's own show of his photographs during October, the art continues with the wonderfully whimsical, colorful paintings of Claire Vohman (More about Claire on page 3). Claire's art will be up through October.

On Friday, November 8, an opening party will be held for "Painting for Fun," the art of Ashlea Davis's students, many of whom are First E members and friends. Ashlea began teaching Painting for Fun workshops in 2008, and many of First E's members have discovered through them their own hidden talents for creating beauty. ~



*Top to bottom:
Glen Lopez and
companion Rang-
er; detail of photo
"Boy and Dog" by
Glen Lopez; de-
tail of painting on
glass by Claire
Vohman. Photos
by Glen Lopez.*



**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
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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 Libby Ware, Board Chair

The Board met on September 3, 2013. Bill Laney is coordinating with Don Aiken on getting bids for a lift. Don said that if we built up the platform on which the lift would be installed, we wouldn't need the premium lift. Libby signed a letter drafted by Bill Read requesting the \$4,000 in matching funds from the Candler Park Neighborhood Organization.

Stell drafted a survey on Survey Monkey to link to the e-mail Robert sends to people who sign the log. The Board suggested some revisions, so the survey will be ready shortly. We did this to find out what newcomers like or don't like about our congregation.

Stell ordered new t-shirts including children's sizes since the first batch sold quickly. We intend to have the additional shirts for the Founders Day celebration. Also, Membership will recognize new members on Founders Day. Each new member will receive a t-shirt.

Bill Read proposed that we change the By-laws to change the Finance Guild to a Finance Committee. Now the Finance Guild has only one standing position: the Treasurer. The Treasurer serves for 3 years. Bill proposed that we create a new standing committee: the Finance Committee, with standing positions. This committee will be responsible for finance reports, counting, and other financial functions. Having a Finance Committee will provide improved continuity and safety. The Board is required to appoint a By-laws Committee to study the By-laws, make a proposal, and submit it to the Board. The Board then recommends the By-law changes to the membership. The changes must be decided on and made known to the congregation 30 days before the congregational meeting at which they will be voted on. The meeting can be a specially called meeting. The By-laws Committee will be Libby, Bill R, Charlene, and Edith Covington.

The ramp is slick and people have slipped or need additional assistance. We decided to have the ramp pressure washed then apply a sealant with a gritty substance.

We decided to include in the Facilitator's Guidelines information about the Opener having the key to the downstairs while the Children's Program is going on.

The next meeting will be Monday, October 7 at 7:00 pm. ~

***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 last met on July 30 to plan the last quarter of 2013. Our speakers for October will be special guest speaker Mona Reeves, Duncan Teague, Rev. Janna Nelson, and guest speaker and member Lisa Cottrell. On October 27, we will honor the Day of the Dead, one of our favorite holidays. Rev. Marsha Mitchiner will facilitate and do the altar. If you like, bring photos of loved ones who have died and mementoes of them, even some of their favorite foods.

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, October 29, at 7:00 p.m. at First E. If you'd like to facilitate or suggest a speaker or musician, please come to one of our meetings, or you can contact a Program Guild member: Patton White: patton@beacondance.org; Charlene Ball: mcharleneball@yahoo.com; Linda Bell: lbell@gsu.edu; or Bill Laney: bill339la@yahoo.com. ~

Membership Guild

by Wilj Sturkey

The Membership Guild co-sponsored a kiddush on Sunday, Sept. 15 along with Glen Lopez. The kiddush was to honor artist Claire Vohman, whose art work currently hangs on the walls of the Sanctuary. Claire was in attendance and talked about her art and sold some of her items.

Founders Day at First E is coming up on Sept. 29. We hope all members and friends and visitors will join us for a celebration of our unique community. There will be a potluck and we are inviting everyone to bring something to share.

November is Guild Month and our Membership Guild will make a presentation about our group and what we do and our efforts to attract new members and friends. ~

"Claire Was Here" - Artist Claire Vohman's Work on Display Through October

Currently exhibiting in the First E gallery is local folk art artist Claire Vohman. Her pairings on windows will be on display through the end of October. Here is her short description of herself: My art business is "Claire Was Here" -I'm from Atlanta, but come and go from GA just about every 6 years. Most recently I returned from Arizona in 2009. I have always wanted to create art, and I finally started doing so at age 35. I feel so lucky to be able to do what I love so much! I can write backwards easily with my left hand, so reverse glass painting suits me very well. (I'm ambidextrous) Right now I live on 20 acres in Decatur with a muscadine vineyard, chickens, my 2 large dogs and 2 cats. I participate in craft fairs and also sell my art in galleries around the country (mostly the south-east) I was Baptized Methodist, but did attend the Unitarian Church off N. Druid Hills Rd. when I was a child. I now go there for Thanksgiving. I love trees, and am ever hopeful for World Peace. ~

Website: <http://www.ClaireWasHere.com/>

Social Justice Corner

Strange Bedfellows

By Libby Ware

On Saturday, September 7, several members of the Social Justice Guild participated in a rally in opposition to the proposed air strikes on Syria. When we arrived at CNN, we noticed that, in addition to the usual anti-war activists such as IAC, Grandmothers for Peace, WAND, and other friends, we saw Syrian-Americans and Iranian-Americans, some women wearing veils, as well as members of a group called Overpass. Affiliated with tea party groups, Overpass members have hung banners from overpasses, in numerous states, calling for President Obama's impeachment. Some of us talked to the women holding signs for impeachment. We found that we agreed with some of their complaints, such as domestic spying by the NSA. But we argued about Bengazi, saying that other embassies have been bombed. When one of the women said, "other presidents have been impeached for less," we had to agree.

Days earlier, when I heard that both Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi and House Speaker John Boehner agreed with the President on attacking Syria in response to that country's use of chemical weapons against the opposition, I thought, "It's a done deal." But at the rally, State Senator Nan Orrock urged us to contact our representatives, saying "Only one member of the Georgia delegation has come out in favor of air strikes." I knew that Sen. Saxby Chambliss supported the air strikes, but was unaware that Senator Johnny Isakson had not decided yet.

Public opinion polls showed a majority of citizens opposed the air strikes. The media portrayed the American public as "war weary," but I tend to agree with former Congressman Dennis Kucinich, who said that Americans are "not war weary, but war smart."

So here we have tea partiers agreeing with long-time anti-war activists; Democrats and Republicans in the House and the Senate on both sides of the issue, former President Carter and former Vice President Dick Cheney against air strikes, and former Vietnam soldier and anti-war activist, Secretary of State John Kerry, doing a lot of sabre-rattling.

And now, our frenemy, Russian President Vladimir Putin, is joining President Barack Obama in diplomacy with Syria, allowing our president to save face after threatening Syria with crossing a red line.

Soon the Democrats and Republicans in Congress will be back to partisan politics, but for once, we got to see Representatives and Senators listening to constituents and making their own decisions, instead of following the political party to which they belong. I can only hope we see more of it, and the next time I'm at a rally, I hope to see a variety of interested citizens involved. ~



Photo: Libby, Charlene, and Lorraine. Photo by Misty Novitch.



Stephanie and Sasha will leave us for Michigan to be with Stephanie's mother. We will miss them very much and we appreciate all the years that Stephanie has been First E's Child Care Program Director. Sasha's cheerful presence will be greatly missed. ~



Photos of Stephanie (top right) and Sasha (bottom left) at Art on the Beltline. Photographer unknown; taken from Patton White's Facebook page.

*As individuals, we value
Freedom and justice for everyone
Commitment to the well-being of all
human beings
Accepting responsibility for our choices
and actions
Diversity and fellowship, intellectual
curiosity and challenges.*

*~ From the Existentialist Commitment
Statement ~*

Community News & Activities

--**Stephanie Murphy, director of First E's children's program**, and daughter Sasha will be moving to Michigan to look after Stephanie's mother. We are sad to see them go and will miss them very much.

--**The Upbeatniks** present their premier concert at First E Saturday, September 28, at 4:15 p.m. with Alan Dynin and musicians, featuring music of Dave Brubeck.

--**Rev. Dean Rowley** got a pacemaker installed last week and has decided to retire from the Park Service. We wish him health and a happy retirement.

--**Kaya Erbil, a new member** of First E, is working with her friend in Damascus to help communicate with Syrian youth after hearing gunfire in the background as the two were Skyping. Media makes us aware how small the world really is.

--**Patton White** celebrated his 30th reunion at Emory University.

--**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.

--**Save the Date for An Evening of Southern Storytelling** Fundraiser for First E on Saturday, November 9 at 7:00 p.m. Featuring stories with a grownup Southern flavor by Dorothy Kirk, MaryAnn Hopper, Nita Roberts, and Gail Reeder and songs by Tia Rix. ~

--"**Claire was Here**," the colorful, whimsical art of Claire Vohman, will be on the walls of the Sanctuary through October.

--"**Painting for Fun**," the next art show on the walls of First E, will feature the art of Ashlea Davis's students, some First E members. Opens Friday, November 8, and runs through December 8.

--**Wednesday evening Ukuleles Galore**, practice, community, and instruction, at First E around 6:30 or 7:00 p.m.

--**First E Discussion Group** will read *Gather At the Table* by Sharon Leslie Morgan and Thomas Norman DeWolf. First meeting TBA. See Charlene if you want to order a discounted book from Charis.

--**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.

--**Bennett's Market opened October 1** with sandwiches, prepared foods from local farmers and growers, and locally produced arts and crafts. Proprietor: Victoria Bennett-Trestrail.

--**Evelyn Lowry, longtime civil rights activist** and wife of Rev. Joseph Lowry, has died at the age of 88. We send supportive thoughts and prayers to her family and friends.

--**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 October 20 from 5-8:00.

--**UUA will have Leadership Training Day** in Tuscaloosa, AL, October 12. The Board can provide limited scholarships. If you are interested, see a Board member.

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

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

Duncan Teague Featured Speaker October 13



Duncan E. Teague, M.Div., of Decatur, GA, will speak at First E on October 13. His topic will be "Over the Rainbow."

Duncan, a frequent and beloved speaker at First E, is a ministerial candidate in the Unitarian Universalist (UU) Association (UUA). In 2012, he completed his ministerial internship with the Tennessee Valley UU Church of Knoxville, TN. He serves the denomination on the Appointments Committee of the UUA Board of Directors. He graduated from Candler School of Theology at Emory University in 2011 and completed that spring an Emory University Hospital Clinical Pastoral Chaplaincy internship. He is a regular speaker at The First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta and other congregations in the UU and other faith traditions. Teague had the honor of facilitating the memorial celebration of the late Rev. Lanier Clance, his friend and mentor in ministry. From his previous life in HIV/AIDS research, education and prevention, he has also facilitated the "Spirituality and HIV" workshop of AID Atlanta.

Duncan's most recent recognition was as 2011 honoree of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation's (GLAAD) 25th Anniversary celebration in Atlanta for inspiring the ongoing work of GLBTQ liberation. His narrative is featured in the book and stage productions of Sweet Tea, an anthology of Black gay men's lives in the South by E. Patrick Johnson, professor at Northwestern University of Evanston, IL. He is a performing artist and was the senior member of the theatrical poetry troupe, The ADODI Muse, A Gay Negro Ensemble, who performed nationally, and he is a published poet and writer.

Duncan is married to his long-time companion of 20 years, David Thurman, a neuro-epidemiologist and instructor at Emory School of Medicine. ~

Lisa Cottrell October 27 - Rising Up Against Violence Against Women

Lisa Cottrell, longtime First E member and feminist advocate, will speak on October on "Rising Up Against Violence Against Women: What Will You Do?" Lisa is a licensed professional counselor in private practice in Decatur. She is also a poet, writer, photographer, activist and artist. She is CEO and founder of Well Being Psychotherapy. She specializes in the treatment of trauma, anxiety, depression, and grief using EMDR, CBT, DBT, mindfulness, existential psychotherapy and other techniques. She developed and leads a Trauma & Addiction Recovery group, Dialectical Behavior Therapy skills groups, women's empowerment groups, teaches Mindful Meditation, and provides continuing education to other psychotherapists. She worked at Talbott Recovery Campus, a nationally acclaimed dual diagnosis treatment center, for almost 10 years. She was Development Director for Men Stopping Violence and also worked at the DeKalb Rape Crisis Center.

Lisa is an activist for peace, justice and equality. She has studied with Zen monk Thich Nhat Hanh and is inspired by the teachings of the Buddha. She has been a member of the First Existentialist Congregation for many years (since the early 80s) and is a former Board President. She is delighted to announce her engagement to her partner of almost 11 years, Carol Calvert. She lives happily with Carol, their two dogs, Lucy and Impala, and their cat, Annabelle. ~

Make a career of humanity. Commit yourself to the noble struggle for human rights. You will make a greater person of yourself, a greater nation of your country and a finer world to live in. ~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

October 2013 Sunday Celebrations of Life

- October 6** *Finding God Through Sex*
Speaker: Mona Reeves
Facilitator: D. Patton White
Accompanist: Richard Rifkin
- October 13** *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*
Speaker: Duncan Teague
Facilitator: TBA
Accompanist: Aviva and the Flying Penguins
- October 20** *TBA*
Speaker: Rev. Janna Nelson
Facilitator: Charlene Ball
Accompanist: Scott Hooker
- October 27** *Rising Up to End Violence Against Women: What Will You Do?*
Speaker: Lisa Cottrell
Facilitator: Rev. Marsha Mitchiner
Day of the Dead Recognition
Accompanist: Charli Vogt
-

Man is not fully conditioned and determined but... is ultimately self determining. Man does not simply exist but always decides what his existence will be, what he will become in the next moment. ~ Viktor Frankl

The Back Page

Members and Friends Speak Out

At First Existentialist, There's Room to Find New Meaning

By *Stell Simonton*



I don't always listen to the speakers at First Existentialist. I always give them a chance, but sometimes I find myself daydreaming.

However, when Kim Palmer spoke at the First Existentialist on April 28, I sat up and took note. She was a seminary student at the Candler School of Theology, and she described her internship as a hospital chaplain. The thing was, she didn't believe in God. She described herself as "non-theist." She was a former engineer who had felt drawn to go to seminary and minister in hospitals. She found in liberal religion an affirmation of both reason and spirit, she said.

As she sat by the bedside of patients who were in need of comfort and support, she was able to pray with them. It turned out that prayer fit with her beliefs. It sounded as if prayer, to her, was an expression of -- and a call for -- compassion.

This made perfect sense to me. I was raised in the Presbyterian Church, but I don't accept the storyline of Christianity. What I do accept is an underlying message: Love your neighbor (and recognize the wonder of existence).

The universe -- and our life within it -- is powerful and worthy of awe. Compassion is a recognition of the value of our lives.

I am fascinated by the nature of existence, particularly the mystery of time and consciousness. To me, First Existentialist is a community that allows space for exploring these things and for seeking -- and creating -- meaning in existence. We value community; we also have the freedom to explore. ~

The First E Newsletter is published monthly. Deadline for November 2013 newsletter is October 20. Send your articles and announcements to mcharleneball@yahoo.com. The editor reserves the right to edit or refuse any material submitted.

