

R. Lanier CLANCE

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Obituary

Family-Placed Death Notice

CLANCE, R. Lanier Rev. R. Lanier Clance lived by his philosophy, "I experience, therefore I am." A passionate humanist, feminist, thinker, and political activist, he founded The First Existentialist Congregation of Atlanta in 1976. Rev. Clance died at his home in Druid Hills on April 15 after a long illness. He was 74. Lanier was courageous and confident in himself and others. His congregation was among the first to be intentionally diverse. It attracted members from the LGBT community, neighborhood couples, artists, and the occasional homeless visitor. The Sunday morning "Celebration of Life" was aptly named. As a speaker and leader, he was known for his spontaneity, honesty, and gift of being present in the moment. His legacy includes both a profound acceptance of others as they were and his dedication to urging his congregants to become more fully themselves. Lanier was caring and open to anybody. He nurtured genuine connections across all the parts of his life, from grocery clerks to therapists. He was an enthusiastic mentor and cheerleader. He inspired a number of young women to further their education. He acted as surrogate parent to a niece, nephew, and god daughter. He encouraged an array of artists to take their work to new levels. To them all, his message was, "Know who you are and what you want. Then go for it". His generosity with support and connections coupled his words with action. As a counselor, Lanier echoed his dedication to human liberation. Trained in existentialist and Gestalt therapies, he worked with individuals, couples, and as a consultant in national and international settings. He was a compassionate and forthright companion through his clients' suffering and joy. Rev. Clance loved a good demonstration. He was a committed pacifist as well as an activist for neighborhood preservation, LGBT rights, and a spectrum of causes promoting peace and justice. Born in Jacksonville, Florida, Lanier's journey took him from his Baptist upbringing to Disciples of Christ seminary, ordination as a Unitarian Universalist minister, to existentialist minister and scholar. He said, "When I retired, I gave up words for color." His paintings and textile art were collected by an admiring group of fans. Lanier's sense of humor, outrageousness, and style were with him every step of the way. He loved sparkly clothes, Paris, and figuring out how to make things work, from mechanical to human systems. Lanier will be remembered for his gift of engaging others in opening their spirits to know and celebrate the depth of human experience in each moment. He is survived by his life partners Pauline Rose and Nancy Zumoff, along with a large community of family and friends. A memorial service will be held at First Existentialist Congregation on May 12 at 3 pm. Please note changes in a previously announced date and time. Donations in Lanier's honor can be made to First Existentialist Congregation or to any organization or charity in tune with his spirit.



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