+The Ebenezer Star

The quarterly newsletter of the Auburn Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

October – December 2019

The Road Ahead



A wise colleague once told me that the most important job of a new minister is to love their congregation, and the members and friends of AUUF have certainly made that easy to do! From welcoming us throughout the month and checking in on how we're settling in to being patient as I get to know what makes us tick, it has been an amazing journey so far! As I'm writing this column, it's been just over a month since I officially became the settled minister of Auburn Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, and I'm certainly loving the Auburn-Opelika area and our fellowship. It's an exciting place and time to do ministry and an area that needs the values Unitarian Universalists proclaim on a weekly basis.

It's an exciting time to be at AUUF, and I have been able to feel your palpable joy at the beginning of our (hopefully!) long time together. And there's good reason: in addition to Calvin and my arrival, we welcomed back our wonderful and talented Director of Religious Exploration, Julie Meadows. In addition, to our Choir Director, Martha's, delight, we were blessed to receive a brand new Steinway piano in our sanctuary, which has significantly improved the quality of music during our Sunday services, and your new minister is already making a name for themselves as a worship columnist for *The Auburn Villager*.

It strikes me, though, that even the best transitions can invoke some anxiety. After all, Diana was minister of this congregation for twenty-six years, which is a long time to get used to things being done a certain way. You may be worried: will we love our new minister? Will they love us? Will they change the things I love? Will we grow? What will our fellowship be like in another twenty-six years?

The thing about transition is that, by its very existence, it brings change, and even the best change can feel overwhelming and unwelcome. The key is that any lasting transformation must be shared: it cannot come from just the minister or the Board or anyone else. It must come from the congregation as a whole. A great example is the ministerial search process: though the Ministerial Search Committee did a lot of heavy lifting, it was, ultimately, the congregation as a whole that decided to bring a new minister to Auburn. And, in turn, I have my own questions about where we are and where we will go in the future.

I see a bright path ahead for AUUF! We are already known in the community as a place dedicated to living progressive values in the world. But our next chapter is certainly not yet written and will need all of us to author where we will go. I look forward to chatting with more of you in the coming weeks and months about what you love about our community. And I invite you to meet with me anytime!

I am so excited to be on this journey with you!

Blessings, Rev. Chris Rothbauer

AUUF MISSION

The Auburn Unitarian Universalist Fellowship is a community dedicated to affirming a reverence for life and enriching the spiritual lives of its members. Here we honor the one and the many; here we welcome a diversity of thoughts, beliefs and passions; here we speak without fear and listen with open hearts. We gather to care for one another, share our burdens and joys, and celebrate life's passages. Strengthened by this Fellowship, we bring a liberal religious presence to our larger community and work for a safe and just world.

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The name of our newsletter, The Ebenezer Star, was inspired by the original purpose of the building in which the Auburn Unitarian Universalist Fellowship meets and an architectural feature on its ceiling. Newly freed African American women and men constructed this building as a place of worship for their Ebenezer Baptist congregation. Inside, a hand-carved, four-pointed star is the unique focal point of the beautiful ceiling. It is our hope that The Ebenezer Star will serve – as storied stars often do – as a guide for navigating your journey while finding connection, meaning, and community.

A Few Words from our President



Greetings, fellow UUs! Ingathering has come and gone, and a new worship year is upon us. As I write this, I realize that that word, "worship" is a sticky one for me. Maybe it is for you, too? Although I've been attending AUUF for over 20 years (that seems impossible), I still get stuck on the meaning of "worship" in a faith that encompasses so many different beliefs and does not require a belief in any deity. How does one worship if one does not believe in a God? The very definition of "worship" requires a deity: Noun-the feeling or expression of reverence and adoration for a deity. Verb- to show reverence and adoration for (a deity); honor with religious rites. So how do we, as UUs, with as many versions of "truth" as there are individuals, express reverence? What do we, collectively, revere? How do we, collectively, worship?

Another way of thinking about "worship" is to look at the etymology of the word. From Google (aka "**God**gle") we have this: The word "worship" is derived from the Old English weorbscipe, which has been etymologized as "worthiness or worth-ship"—to give, at its simplest, worth to something. So, for UUs, the questions become, to what do we give worth and how do we express the worth that we feel for something? In non-UU faith traditions worship includes song, prayer, ritual and celebration (directed to a God). For UUs, "worship" or expressing reverence likely looks different from person to person. One could argue that we don't collectively worship. We come together. We sing, laugh, share and drink coffee. But what is the collective "thing" that we come together to revere or celebrate? Life itself? I really don't know, but I encourage you to think about what holds ultimate worth to you and how you express reverence for that in your life. And, I encourage you to share with fellow AUUFers what you discover. Maybe you regularly give thanks for each meal and the many hands that provided the sustenance? Perhaps you listen to music on "10" and let it take you away from yourself and the insanity of this earthly life? Perhaps you give thanks each morning that you lived through another night, or maybe you sit in silence ritualistically and practice "being" vs. "doing"? Maybe you don't give much thought to "worship" and don't see any value in celebrating- singing, dancing, art making, praying/giving thanks? In case you are still as stuck on the notion of "worship" as I am, here is a suggestion for a starting place: Since our 1st principle announces that we honor the inherent worth and dignity of every person, can we "worship" every person we encounter? How would we do that? What would that look like day-to-day? What if we express that "worth-ship" simply by being kind? Sometimes a smile is sufficient. While it might not change the world, it likely has just as much (maybe more) impact than praying to an invisible God- collectively or individually.

Warmly,

Amy Phillips Board President

The Board at Work



Early September AUUF Board Report:

Our AUUF Board retreat will be Sept. 14 the day after this goes to the editor. At the Board retreat we will review our past year and will set goals for the upcoming year.

Wish I could share more, but we are not there yet.

We are working toward accessibility to our Buildings, starting with the Busch Center. A ramp to the basement along the south side of the building is planned, but we are being careful not to obstruct any utility access, and this has required marking the utility placement. Now that it is marked, we can plan the construction. The downstairs bathroom is mostly completed with a couple of minor additions.

Renovations abound.

- The beam under the bell tower needs attention. Jim Newton is getting a couple of estimates to have this repair done. We will keep you posted.
- The Board approved new furniture and carpet for Rev. Rothbauer's upstairs office. The upstairs renovations are underway.
- The teen RE space is going through a renovation, we are combining two rooms downstairs [the past minister's office and the admin. office]. This will require a wall removal and door relocation. Also relocating will be the admin. office which will move to the upper floor, the room with the window to the front porch.
- There may also be a relocation of Diana's Pantry, but that has not been determined.

The Board has a focus on the safety of our Fellowship with attention to addressing weather, fire, and shooter drills. We will also be installing an AED (automated external defibrillator) and "No Weapons" signs. We are considering digital keypad entry for our buildings, but this may require a wifi connection that is more direct. Our tire swing on the playground will be getting bumpers for the uprights so that the hard edges of the wood will be padded. And the last bit on safety is that we will have an employee list with names, job titles and photos, posted in each building to help our members/friends learn who does which task. I think too, that an officer list and a committee chair list is in order to be posted, although this is available on the Web site.

Other items of interest:

- The minister's installation is set for an April and we need an installation committee. If you like planning for such things please volunteer.
- Our piano is appraised at a relatively high value, so let us all take care to keep it safe. No food or drink should ever be placed on the surface of the piano.
- We also need to establish a Personnel Committee. There are many details in the hiring process and it would be helpful to have the load shared. If you have an interest please volunteer.
- Our Buildings Chair, Shannon Price, needed to resign due to a lack of communication on the part of Board with the chair. We do regret that this happened and will do our best to have better communication with a future chair. The Board is seeking someone who would be willing to take on this task. Shannon has agreed to train or share the information needed with the next chair.

Submitted by Laura Kloberg Board member, VP of Finance

Welcome to Another Year of RE!



I want to start by saying how glad I am to be back. Thank you to everyone who helped keep things going while I was away. Professionally, I am so grateful to you, your time, energy and commitment to

something that means the world to me. Personally, the care I have received from this community supporting my family and preserving my position got me through the worst experience I could ever imagine, I am so appreciative.

Now to RE updates!

RE started, this year, on Sept 15 with an RE for All Ages, Pinwheels for Peace. I hope you were able to either participate or have the privilege of seeing all the beautiful Pinwheels spinning in front of the Fellowship Hall. We honor International Day of Peace with many others from around the world by creating this visual public statement about peace!

Our youngest RE class will be using the Spirit Play program again this year. We are still looking for a couple of other teachers to help out. If you have ever considered participating in RE, here is your chance. This age group is so much fun and super rewarding because you will find you always have lots of little someones happy to see you on Sunday morning!

There are also a few upcoming events to mark on your calendar. These are events for the entire community, not just for RE families. These events are being hosted by the 2nd-6th grade RE class who are using a Harry Potter curricula. These events are the Harry Potter Movie Night for the Community and the Yule Ball. More information about these events will be coming out as we get closer to them. This class will also be selling homemade laundry soap, liquid and dry. This project supports using resources wisely which is the Environmental Horcrux! I hope you are able to participate in these events and enjoy having a new source for getting your laundry soap!

Harry Potter Movie Night for the Community-Come join us at the Fellowship on October 11 at 6:00 for a viewing of The Prisoner of Azkaban. Bring the whole family for an evening of magic, muggles and munchies.

Our youth RE class will continue to visit their Alabama Water Watch testing site this year, making this their third year of collecting water quality information in the Tuskegee National Forest. I have had the privilege of attending water testing with them over this last year and I am honored to have had the opportunity to get to know these young people. Our group of youth are some of the kindest and most considerate youth. I hope that you will take advantage of every chance you get to engage them in conversation. You will find your lives are enriched.

Our RE year, as I always say, looks to be an exciting one! I encourage all those who do not have children/youth in the program to find a way to get to know these young people who will be the future leaders of AUUF. Our opportunity to bring these children and youth into the larger life of our congregation by making space for them in all we do will send the message that we want them to continue to be part of our community when they graduate out of RE. We are truly blessed to have these young people in our lives, let us enjoy it!

> Julie Meadows, Director of Religious Exploration

News from the Grounds Committee

AUUF is collaborating with Auburn University Tea Gardening group, and they built a raised bed between the RE building and playground early this summer to grow plants for teas. The group promotes beverage diversity and food security, and welcomes people at fellowship to use the plants for tea. The grounds committee looks forward to further collaboration and educational session for us to learn more about tea herbs in near future.



As a part of our long-range plan of landscaping using native

plants with multiple purposes, the grounds committee planted four blueberry bushes along the sanctuary building (between the sanctuary and RE building) early July. We would like everyone to know that the first three bushes from the playground entrance was donated in memory of Michael Hein by staff at Auburn Arboretum for his dedicated work there. It is our wish that many people will enjoy the harvest years to come.

Finance at AUUF

How do we do what we do and continue what we do year after year? With money of course. No one wants to talk about money and it seems as though no one really likes to plan how we acquire it to make our Fellowship function. Guess that is my job, but I sure would appreciate some additional brainstorming. Might there be some folks out there that would be interested in assisting brainstorming and help with some of the planning needed for some of our fundraisers? For sure, I would like some company.

We have a few annual fundraisers such as parking on home football gamedays, yard sales, plant sales, the auction, and our canvass drive. Each has its parameters and best practices for making them function well, but all of them require participation by several people.

The canvass is by far the largest source of funds and this is usually a springtime event to prepare our budget for the upcoming year. Jerry has helped with this for several years and we often get many or our members to participate in the canvass. Last year we did it early so that we would know what funds we had available for a settled full-time minister. I would like to do that again this upcoming spring because it made it easier for the Board to figure out budgeting for all areas of interest.

Another large fundraiser is our annual auction. What we all need to remember is that it is good if we invite folks from outside of our Fellowship to the event as this brings in additional funds and it widens the fun. Currently we have coordinators to help with the pre-auction planning. Thanks for these folks who have volunteered (kitchen planning: Cathy McVay; bar Planning: Eddie Peek; finance planning: Darrell Crutchley; childcare planning: Carolyn Levy; collection of donations: Laura Kloberg)

There will be volunteers needed for auction night too and it would be good to have someone help with this planning and coordination. If you think you may want to try some finance fundraising planning, then let's talk. Call or text.

Laura Kloberg, AUUF VP for Finance

Announcements and Events

Save the Date for Reverend Chris's Installation Service! Reverend Chris' installation will take place on April 26th, 2020. An installation service is a ceremonial recognition of the bond between a minister and the congregation. Anyone interested in helping to plan this special event can talk with Rev. Chris or Amy Phillips.

Schedule an Appointment with Reverend Chris: To schedule meetings with Rev. Chris, please feel free to use the electronic scheduler found at revchris.appointlet.com

Our Whole Lives (OWL) Comprehensive Lifespan Sexuality Education: Our Whole Lives (OWL) is a comprehensive lifespan sexuality education curricula. OWL for grades 7-9 started in August, and OWL for grades 4-6 will start in the Spring. For more information contact Julie Meadows

AUUF Auction: Mark your calendars for the annual AUUF Auction, our largest fundraiser of the year, for December 6, 2019!

Fall AUUF Work Party: Please mark your calendars for Saturday, Oct 12, From 8am-12pm for the Fall AUUF work party.

Rev. Chris in the News: Rev. Chris is now a contributor to the worship column series in the Auburn Villager. Their first column, titled "What is a Unitarian Universalist" appeared in the Sept 5 issue of the newspaper.

RE Harry Potter Movie Night: Join the middle RE class for Harry Potter Movie Night Oct 11, 6pm.

Combined Ages RE: RE will have combined age classes on Oct 27 (Fall Festival Celebration), Nov 24, Dec 22, and Dec 29. RE will celebrate the Yule Ball on Dec 14.

Cookie Walk! Mark your calendar for the annual Habitat for Humanity Cookie Walk, Saturday, December 7, 8am-1pm at Grace United Methodist Church. Cookie donations are welcome!

Pinwheels for Peace: The Re program started its new year with Pinwheels for Peace on September 15.

Alabama Arise! On September 7, six representatives from AUUF travelled to Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Montgomery for the 2019 annual meeting of Alabama Arise. Thanks for making our fellowship's voice heard in voting for Alabama Arise's 2020 issue priorities! Pictured, from left to right: Gramelda Smith, Camilla Hirschel, Diana Eidson, Jim Newton, Emily Livant, and Rev. Chris Rothbauer.



"What is a Committee on Ministry?"

For the first time since our previous settled minister's departure, AUUF has a Committee on Ministry! Because these committees typically don't run during an interim period because of the nature of interim work, it has been a while since we had a Committee on Ministry, and some newer folks may not realize how important this committee is to the life of the Fellowship.

So, what is a COM?

A little history first. In the 1980s, the UUA started recommending congregations form Ministerial Relations Committees, whose role was to advocate for and be a support to ministers. The idea was that Ministerial Relations Committees would bring issues with a minister's performance to their attention. The reality became that they were essentially public relations committees for the minister, often becoming a gossip committee who was constantly trying to explain the minister. In addition, their focus was extremely narrow, focusing on the congregation's relationship to the ministry to the exclusion of everything else happening within.

Around 1989, Rev. Robert Latham released a new recommendation: that congregations instead embrace Committees on Ministry. In Latham's view, Committees on Ministry, rather than focusing narrowly on the minister, would, instead, look at the overall ministry of the congregation. While the minister is certainly still a part of this, wellfunctioning Committees on Ministry recognize that ministry is shared and that there are many aspects of congregational life which fall under the heading.

So Committees on Ministry take a wide view that ministry is much more than just the minister!

What is ministry then? Rev. Dan Hotchkiss, a Unitarian Universalist congregational consultant, says ministry organizes a congregation to focus its limited resources on its most important goals. Ministry, in other words, is how we live our mission, both within our congregation and in the wider world. AUUF Minister Almost everything a congregation does is ministry. Religious education, Sunday services, membership, social action, green sanctuary, music, pastoral care,

congregational support, outreach, communications, aesthetics, buildings, grounds, denominational affairs—these are all ministries within our fellowship that help us live our mission!

You may be asking what a Committee on Ministry does. During the 2019-2020 year, your Committee on Ministry will be examining the ministry structure of the fellowship, looking at what's working and what's not. We will be interviewing ministry leaders within our congregation about how their areas of focus are going and in what ways the Board and Committee on Ministry can support them. We will also be reading and viewing resources to help us understand congregational dynamics within our fellowship. We will be asking: what is important to our fellowship, what direction should we take going forward, and are our ministries helping us to live out our mission?

We will be making recommendations about the future of ministry within the fellowship. In the end, our task is to make sure our congregation is living its values as fully as possible!

If you have any questions or concerns about the ministries of the fellowship, we invite you to approach a member of the Committee on Ministry! Your feedback is always valuable and appreciated!

Your Committee on Ministry: Ayesha Alam Ralph Banks Nanette Chadwick Marcia Rossi Temesgen Samuel Rev. Chris Rothbauer

Submitted by Rev. Chris Rothbauer

AUUF Remembers the 400th Anniversary of Slavery in America

On August 25, 2019, AUUF marked the 400th anniversary of the first enslaved Africans landing in North America. At 3pm that day churches, parks, and communities throughout the country rang bells for four minutes – one minute for each century - to mark the first ship carrying enslaved Africans landing at Point Comfort in Virginia, near the Jamestown Settlement. Reverend Chris Rothbauer gave a brief introduction, noting, "we are here in front of our building, which was historically Ebenezer Baptist Church, a church built by freed slaves shortly after the Civil War. We are here today to ring our bells to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first slave ship in America. May we remember this time, and may it never happen again."



It's a Steinway!

Sometimes the stars align just right with perfect timing and a small miracle happens. In our case, maybe a baby grand miracle.

As you no doubt have heard in announcements from Martha but also from the lovely sounds floating from our wonderful Steinway piano, AUUF has been given an exquisite instrument. How did it happen that our Fellowship acquired the "Cadillac of pianos?"

Abby Shapiro and her husband, Alan Furr, decided it was time to let her piano, one her



father had given her mother, go, but both wanted it to go where it would be appreciated for the fine instrument that it is. Alan and Carl Backman (our steadfast bass) play together in the community orchestra and Alan asked Carl if he knew a good home for the piano. Alan had also contacted the Beth Shalom and Columbus synagogues—Beth Shalom did not have the space for the piano, and Columbus had not yet answered. Carl let Martha know about Abby and Alan's piano-release decision. Martha contacted them, visited, played the piano, and accepted the baby grand on behalf of the Fellowship (minutes? nay, seconds!) before the Columbus congregation expressed their interest. The stars aligned.

But what of the steadfast little upright the Steinway is replacing? Chris, Lacey, Evelyn, and Margaret Basgier were on the lookout for a piano so they covered the cost of moving the baby grand to the Fellowship and the upright to their home. Ah! Stars are twinkling everywhere!

Submitted by Martha Law, Choir Director

He Has it All

Conrad Ross

Shades, sunglasses Go-a-heads, slip-ons A harness, girdle Keys, on a long chain Suspenders to hold up his pants Glass case on his belt. No cell phone.

Uncharted Territory

Amy Phillips

an anxious waiting, heartbroken wailing silence absent solitude, sadness sadness, an abyss echoing what new truth will this grief carve into our souls? what new shadows will this deep devastation form? a grand canyon of sorrow who will we become in this unnerving un-becoming?

My trip to California

At the beginning of the school year this year I took a trip to California for my mom's cousins wedding. We spent a few days extra sightseeing and I got to see some amazing things, although we only had those two days. The first of those two days we went to San Francisco. We drove in the morning and went to see the mission district. As we approached, I started to be inspired. My heart started to beat rapidly and I knew that that was my happy place that I've been looking for, for so many years in my life.

We visited the Golden Gate Bridge Park and explored the tea garden. We then decided to go to the golden gate bridge. When we got to the bridge we got out and looked back over the bridge at an overlook point. I got to see Alcatraz (The Rock)! We then started to go to a state park and the drive there was very scary because it was the side of a mountain with a 100 foot drop off. It was crazy!!Turned out we couldn't get into that park so we drove forty five minutes to Japantown. On the way there, my brother fell asleep in the car. He is so cute when he falls asleep!! We then headed to Fishermans Warf and my brother woke up. As we were driving through Fishermans Warf my brother said "Sissy where's Japantown?" I laughed a little and said "we went there while you were asleep silly." We then decided that we were hungry and wanted to find dinner. We had unfortunately not found anything to have for dinner. We decided that we wanted to go

back to the mission district, yes where I was inspired. I was so excited that we were going back there for dinner and after twenty minutes of searching we finally found a parking spot with a restaurant that seemed interesting. Turns out the restaurant was terrible. It was called "Slurp" and they served Asian food but it wasn't very good, actually it was terrible. We went back to the hotel and got a good rest.

On the second day we drove for about 4 hours to get to the Calaveras Big Tree State park. While we were there we got to see some huge giant sequoias. We spent the whole rest of the day that had sunlight there. After nearly getting lost we finally headed to our family's house for dinner. We headed back to the hotel for the very last time and rode our plane home the next day.

I hope you enjoyed reading this about my trip!!

Aryana Pratt



Minister and Staff

Minister	Rev. Chris Rothbauer	Drop-in Office Hours
	minister@auuf.org	Off-Site: Wednesdays, 3-6 pm:
	(334) 246-9313	Starbucks, 2056 Interstate Drive, Opelika
		On-Site: Thursdays, 9 am-12 pm:
		Upper Busch Center
		Make an appointment with Rev. Chris online:
		https://revchris.appointlet.com/
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Sunday Services always at 10:00 a.m.

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