

# The Ebenezer Star

The quarterly newsletter of the Auburn Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

---

October – December 2018

## A Few Words from our President



A couple of years ago, before we hired our Interim Minister, Rev. Pam Gehrke, our congregation engaged in a process of discovery. The goal was to figure out what mattered most to us as a Fellowship and to discern what we, collectively, wanted in terms of paid ministry (no paid ministry, ½-time, ¾-time, or full-time). Our leadership presented us with a series of questions and collected an abundance of data! Two points stick out in my mind from those surveys: (1) We wanted full-time paid ministry. (2) We valued the “community” aspect of AUUF. So, Pam was hired as our full-time interim minister for two years (2016-2018), and the AUUF community that was most familiar to us - one served for over 20 years by the full-time ministry of

Rev. Diana Jordan Allende (1994-2016) - rocked along as if nothing much had changed. The reality is that to maintain that full-time ministry familiarity, we used money from our reserve funds. Perhaps it was helpful, during that transition, to maintain the sense of community that had become so familiar versus changing things even more. Transitions are hard.

Now, we find ourselves at another point of transition. We are in the process of seeking a Settled Minister to serve our beloved community for longer than a year or two. This is a rare opportunity to select the minister “just right” for AUUF. Someone who is a good fit for the long haul for our unique, eclectic, sometimes irreverent brand of UUism! Someone who “gets” us and wants to become an integral, vital part of both our AUUF and our Auburn communities. But, given our current membership and stewardship, what we have to offer a potential full-time minister is not as competitive as we would like.

And so, we come back to the proverbial table. No, we won’t be doing more surveys! But we will be gathering at literal tables. As our Settled Minister Search Committee (SMSC) continues their work of seeking our next minister, we will be sharing, again, what AUUF means to us. This fall, the SMSC will lead us in “cottage meetings” where we will talk honestly about what we want for the near- and long-term future of AUUF. We will examine our desire for full-time ministry and assess what we will sacrifice to have it. We will work to align our wants and our needs. We will think about what we give to this place and what we receive from one another as a community. We will identify what might be expected of us if we are to have a full-time minister and what might be expected of us if we are not able to have a full-time minister.

This is an exciting time for our AUUF community! By the time you read this, the SMSC will have begun leading these conversations about the future of ministry at AUUF. I hope you’ve been participating. And I hope you will continue to support the process of “visioning” the future of AUUF! It matters that you are a part of this process. You matter. Our community is special because we value everyone’s voice. Please share yours!

In loving gratitude,  
Amy Phillips, AUUF Board President  
[president@auuf.net](mailto:president@auuf.net)

---

## 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.

# Contents

## Columns

- 1** A Few Words from our President  
Amy Phillips, AUUF Board President
- 3** Reflections on Small Group Ministry  
Rev. Marti Keller, AUUF Consulting Minister
- 5** The Board at Work  
Peter Livant, AUUF Board Past President

## Features

- 6** RE Happenings, in Photos  
Noriko Aoi and Robert Zabawa, Photographers

## Sections

- 4** Announcements and Events
- 7** Upcoming Sunday Services

*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 black 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.*

# Reflections on Small Group Ministry (Amplified)

The beginning of my UU small group ministry work parallels the formal beginnings of the small group ministry movement within Unitarian Universalism. My own participation led to my evangelism (not a word I use often as a Jewish UU) for the transformative role small group ministry plays in binding us together, coming to know and respect each other, and recharging our souls.

As a lay minister in the Atlanta UU congregation and a person on the brink of professional ministry, I was part of what we called a credo group, temporarily formed to help each other develop our own personal statements of faith (much as our Coming of Age youth do every year). Later we settled on meeting in a home one morning a month, and - with some change in membership as people moved on literally and figuratively - were together some 20 years.

I helped form more than two dozen small groups for this congregation, groups gathered by age and stage, gender identity, affinity, and geography. We called them covenant groups, bound by promises of right relationship, confidentiality, active listening, and suspended judgment. Bound together in a spirit of trust and belonging.

In addition to working with this UU community over a decade, I set up covenant groups in a small congregation in the Georgia mountains and met with interested lay leaders from other UU societies. As a board president and now minister with the UU Women's Federation, I cheered on and promoted small group meetings around reproductive justice. I served on the UU Small Group Ministry Network Board with people as geeky as I was (and still am)

about the up close and personal benefits of what psychiatrist and author M. Scott Peck has described as "a safe place precisely because no one is attempting to heal or convert you, to fix you, to change you.... Free to seek your own psychological and spiritual health, free to become your own whole and holy self."

I was abidingly committed to creating what Parker Palmer has called circles of trust. Twenty years later I am still committed to these circles of trust that Palmer envisions as places where we show up and speak our truths and help each person listen to their inner teacher.

Our Auburn UU Fellowship has some history of formal covenant, or chalice, groups, as well as groups that have come to serve similar functions: writing groups, drumming circles, and others. During my time with you as Consulting Minister, I would like to take a look at where we are with places to share our "ultimacy" journeys - the search for truth and meaning in our lives - in "intimate" configurations, and explore some new forms and formats for doing so.

We can only be made richer, deeper and more connected by doing so.



Rev. Marti Keller  
Consulting Minister  
minister@auuf.net

# Announcements and Events

## Gratitude

The family of Cassidy Meadows wishes to thank all of you for kind words, meals, hugs, whiskey, laughs, shared tears, firewood, money, tea, coffee, kisses, dog walks, furniture moving, flowers, biscuits, jelly, a quilt, the comfort blanket, chocolate bars, tadpoles, plants, ice cream, gifts of time and labor, your patience, and so many other forms of support that you have showered on them.

## The 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Pancake Breakfast is a Yummy Success!

The middle RE class offers its enthusiastic thanks to those who attended the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Pancake Breakfast they hosted on September 29. Donations for the delicious breakfast prepared by these young people and their teachers totaled \$320. Proceeds will cover the materials needed to make Hogwarts student robes that class members will wear as they work to combat horcruxes and advance the goal of a creating a peaceful world community with justice for all.

## Peanut and Tree Nut Allergy Alert

One of our child members has an allergy to peanuts and tree nuts so severe that any exposure will cause a serious health emergency (including breathing the air nearby where peanuts or tree nuts are served or consumed). Please refrain from bringing food to the Fellowship that contains any hint of these allergens.

**The Spectacular As Always Annual Auction**  
of the Auburn Unitarian Universalist Fellowship  
Friday evening, December 7, 2018  
From 6 pm until 9 pm  
at 450 East Thach Avenue

As always, you are invited to join us for tasty treats and beverages. The silent auction begins at 6, the live auction begins at 7. Do come.

## AUUF Auction Actions

### Donate Items

It's time to go on line and enter the info about the item(s) you are donating to the auction: [www.auuf.org/auuf-annual-auction](http://www.auuf.org/auuf-annual-auction). (You can also see there what's been donated before.)

### Volunteer to Assist

Talk to Fleming Blackburn or Laura Kloborg about matching your skills and energy to any of the many tasks required to make our auction a rousing success. Volunteer for pre-auction prep, auction-night jobs, and/or post-auction follow-up. Be a part of the festivities, and then take pleasure in the feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction that will follow.

# The Board at Work

“I AM PART OF THE RESISTANCE INSIDE THE PHILLIPS ADMINISTRATION.”

— Anonymous (aka Peter Livant)

Just kidding!! Really, I’ve never removed documents from Amy’s desk to prevent her from imposing tariffs on Beacon Press books, but I am constantly emailing her documents that her phone cannot open. Does that count as resistance??

All seriousness aside, the Board has *done stuff* while the asphalt was melting under the Auburn summer sun. And all Trustees are new: Jim Newton, Ruth Crocker, Diana Eidson and Chris Basgier. Welcome!

Preparing for Marti’s mid-July visit was important. All had to be just so! Identifying suitable space for the Teen RE class has been a knotty problem, and as of this writing, it still is. Your Board worried about various concerns of the Settled Minister Search Committee.

We moved the monthly Board meeting to the third Thursday of every month, in the evening. Marti will attend electronically. We haven’t yet figured out what to do in months having no third Thursday.

The Board spent mucho time considering how to adjust the Fellowship-approved FY2018-19 budget

that funded a ¾-time Minister to one that funds ½-time ministry. The savings had to be put to the best use possible. By the time you read this (if you’ve made it this far), the Fellowship will have voted on the revisions.

Tucked into the middle of August was the second Board Retreat of the modern AUUF era (which began last year). We spent a Saturday getting our collective heads screwed on straight. By the end, (1) we had agreed on a Board Covenant (eeeeek! the “C” word!!), (2) we had set three big goals that might be achievable in one year, and (3) we had been challenged to balance management (“doing things right”) with leadership (“doing right things”). We had a nice al fresco lunch. Al is a great caterer.

Tell your Board what you think. An email sent to [auufboard@auuf.net](mailto:auufboard@auuf.net) will go to all Board members. To get the President’s attention email [president@auuf.net](mailto:president@auuf.net).



Peter Livant

Past AUUF Board President

## *Ebenezer Star* Submission Guidelines

Articles may be submitted to [communications@auuf.org](mailto:communications@auuf.org) (max. 500 words). Poetry, photos, and art work are also welcome. Deadline for the January - March 2019 issue is December 10, 2019. Announcements and events may also be submitted at any time. Please include dates and times, location, cost (if any), and suggest a title. All submissions are subject to editorial discretion and revision.



# RE Happenings, in Photos

Sundae Sunday & RE Registration for Fall 2018 - Spring 2019



Pinwheels for Peace



Priming and Painting the Middle RE Classroom



# Our Minister and Staff

**Consulting Minister**

Rev. Marti Keller  
[minister@auuf.net](mailto:minister@auuf.net)

**Director, Religious Exploration**

Julie Meadows  
[auufdre@gmail.com](mailto:auufdre@gmail.com)

**Office Administration**

Zenda Davis  
[officeauuf@gmail.com](mailto:officeauuf@gmail.com)

**Minister Emerita**

Rev. Diana Jordan Allende  
[dallende1010@gmail.com](mailto:dallende1010@gmail.com)

## Upcoming Sunday Services

**October 7: "Beyond Categorical Thinking."**

Jan Newton and Staff from the Southern District of the UUA

**October 14: "Yoga, the Power of Breath."**

Katharine Brown

**October 21: "Won't you Be My Neighbor?"**

Rev. Marti Keller

**October 28: "I Am Curious, UU." Thoughts on the life of Michael Servetus.**

Rev. Marti Keller

**November 4: "Day of Remembrance" (formerly Dia de las Muertas)**

Lay led, Sunday Services Committee

**November 11: "Meditation: Looking Within"**

C J Marbutt, Conrad Ross, Chris Basgier

**November 18: "Mixed Blessings" (Annual Bread Communion)**

Sunday Services Committee

**November 26: "UU Values"**

Conar Rochford

**December 2: "Blintzes & Blitzen." How UU's do both Hanukkah & Christmas.**

Rev. Marti Keller

**December 9, 16, 23, 30: TBA****December 24: Christmas Eve Service**

Rev. Marti Keller

**Auburn Unitarian Universalist Fellowship**  
**P.O. Box 669**  
**Auburn, AL 36831-0669**

**Location: 450 East Thach Ave.**

---

---

## Connect with Us

Sunday Services always at 10:00 a.m.

Web Site: [www.auuf.org](http://www.auuf.org)

Email Listserv: [Connect@auuf.org](mailto:Connect@auuf.org)

To Subscribe: [auuf.org/subscribe](http://auuf.org/subscribe)

[Facebook.com/AuburnUUFellowship](https://Facebook.com/AuburnUUFellowship)

Newsletter submissions:  
[communications@auuf.org](mailto:communications@auuf.org)

Volunteers are  
the Heart of  
AUUF

Please remember to  
volunteer to help our  
community thrive!!

[www.auuf.org/signup](http://www.auuf.org/signup)