

The Ebenezer Star

The quarterly newsletter of the Auburn Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

January - March 2019

A Few Words from our President

Love, Love, Love...

...is the spirit of this place! *This place*. It's an interesting place, our AUUF. Some have called it a refuge or a haven from the rest of the world, a world that sometimes seems so unloving, ungenerous, unkind. Perhaps that is why our AUUF seems so loving—because it is in contrast to the larger, less caring world.

Whatever the reason, I hope you all have come to realize that love is the spirit of this place! I bet if I stopped each one of you and asked, "How have you experienced love here?" you would have some interesting things to share. So, think about it now. How have you experienced love here? Some of you, especially newcomers, might not have experienced it directly (yet!), but maybe you have seen or heard something loving.

Maybe you have seen some of our children gleefully hugging one another or an unsuspecting adult. Perhaps you have seen someone go out of their way to be helpful in some way. Have you received food from Diana's Pantry or brought food to share? Perhaps you have received a hug after sharing a sad concern. Have you talked with our minister and felt truly heard? Maybe you've received the Comfort Quilt made by the loving hands of fellow AUUFers to be shared with those who are sick or grieving. Have you been on the receiving end of a series of meals? Maybe you participated in a social

action or fundraising effort that left you feeling love for your fellow (hu)man.

We UUs are good at loving—near and far. Here we spread love as we care for this place and for one another. We care for our spaces by lovingly volunteering our time during work parties. It is through the loving actions of volunteers that we are able to keep this boat afloat—volunteers for our auction, lay-led services, aesthetics, grounds, maintenance, music, and so much more! We share our space with outside groups generously and for a donation only. Why? Because we want them to know and love us. We support the LGBTQQIAAP community with open arms. Why? Because we Stand on the Side of Love! There are so many ways that we share and show love here!

I hope you are feeling the love and that reading this reminds you of how special our AUUF is. So, remember, love shared is not love divided, but love multiplied. The more we give, the more we receive!

Lovingly,

Amy Phillips
AUUF Board President



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: Meh in Midwinter

Rev. Marti Keller, AUUF Consulting Minister

5 The Board at Work

Peter Livant, AUUF Board Past President

Features

6 RE Happenings

(Photos by Noriko Aoi and Ayesha Alam)

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: Meh in Midwinter

Meh: “indifference; to be used when one simply does not care; know how they are feeling; to feel nothing.”

A few years back “meh” was one of those words of the year. (Last year, one dictionary picked “youthquake,” another “feminism.”) That was when there was a weekly feature in the New York Times Sunday magazine, which dedicated a solid inch to a “not hot, not not, just meh” list, culled from suggestions on their Twitter hashtag #mehlist.

Some of the selected ones: brown mascara, turkey thighs, wool hoodies, framed maps, chopsticks, double dating, and the world did not end. My own list included all of the half hour prime-time network comedies, Korean tacos, bacon ice cream, and infinity pools. Let alone the last couple of seasons of the now ended Downton Abbey, though “Call the Midwife,” with its feel good message about a close knit community in London’s East End is not meh at all.

When I asked some UUs what was on their meh list, one admitted that cooking had become that way, when once they went out of their way to cook from scratch, now it had become just a repetitive chore. Others talked about meh more universally, as not being happy, not sad, going through the motions when their emotions were in the fog. Uninspired, unimpressed, unpersuaded.

Meh can feel like mild blues: not good, not bad, just less than ideal. When nothing is going on and the sun isn’t shining, we can fall into ennui. Like the weeks ahead, perhaps, like mid-winter. While one familiar Christmas carol in our hymnal links mid-winter with late December and the birth of Jesus

on a cold winter’s night long ago, meteorologists would pick a date somewhere in January.

Even here in the Mid-South, in my state of residence, Georgia, and in Auburn, sitting on the more eastern end of Alabama, the temperatures can drop—a lot—and then there will be those teasing warmer days that fool us into a false sense of spring. But overall there will be more cloudy days than not, even if they are those tauntingly slightly overcast ones, the never-quite-sunny ones.

There are things we can do to make the winter blues, what ancient monks called *acedia* (seasonal melancholy) less debilitating. We can watch how much caffeine we take in, watch the carbs, watch the sugar, and eat more protein. We can keep a look out for patches of sun, and make sure we take advantage of it. We can walk or exercise in other ways.

Winter, even here in Alabama, can highlight our fragility and vulnerability, our need for community and hospitality. For tea and comfort, and for reaching out.

That’s what this UU Fellowship is here for.



Rev. Marti Keller
Consulting Minister
minister@auuf.net

Love is the spirit of this church, and service is its law; this is our great covenant: to dwell together in peace, to seek the truth in love, and to help one another.

James Vila Blake, Unitarian Minister, 1894

Announcements and Events

Fabulous Fundraising Results

The 2018 Annual AUUF Auction, held on December 7, was another grand success! Through the generosity of everyone who donated wonderful items and those who bid on them, the Auction raised \$12,000. The proceeds will help finance the ongoing operations of the Auburn Unitarian Universalist Fellowship for the remainder of this fiscal year. Many thanks are due also to all who organized, volunteered at, or otherwise contributed to or participated in the many moving parts of this successful fundraising event. Extra kudos go to our delightfully audacious auctioneer, Jey Koehler, as well as our expert auction wranglers, Darrell Crutchley and Laura Kloberg.

Peanut and Tree Nut Allergy Alert

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

2019 Canvass Begins in January

During our annual canvass, Fellowship members and friends make their pledges to sustain AUUF programs, maintain its buildings, and nourish and grow its ministry. Sunday, January 13, will mark the official canvass kickoff. The canvass is taking place earlier this year due to our search for a full-time settled minister. Knowing by the beginning of March what our financial situation will be for the upcoming fiscal year is essential for the Board to negotiate a fair and affordable compensation package with our new minister. Information about Canvass goals, needs, and a fair-share contribution guide were mailed out in December, along with a thought-provoking message about pledging in light of the oft-used UU phrase, "Love is the spirit of this church." Please read through it all and consider what you can give, out of love, for this place.

Valentine Express Schedule

All aboard the Valentine Express! Participate in the fun of making Valentine's Day cards with the children after service on January 20, from 11:15 – 12:30. This is an annual RE-For-All-Ages event in which AUUFers express their creativity to produce a wide range of Valentine's Day messages. Cards will go up for sale for \$2 apiece after Sunday services on January 28 and February 3. On February 10, RE children will deliver cards to buyers' designated recipients after service and during potluck.

Half of the proceeds from the sale of these small works of art are given to charities selected by each class of children. The other half of the money raised will fund non-budgeted, RE-related improvements.

The Board at Work

Yes, Virginia, there is a Board. It labors long and hard to see to it that good little girls and boys (and gender-fluid children) and their parents (and non-parents) are worry-free, and can hop into bed each night assured that the wheels of the AUUF are well-oiled with oil pressed from organic canola bushes in small batches by indigenous artisans, and that the proverbial ointment is being constantly checked for flies, which found are removed and disposed of in an ecologically appropriate manner. All is for the best with this best of all possible Boards.

Although we have lots of committees, the Board thought we needed a few more. A Safety Committee was formed earlier this year (or was it last year?) and like a radio signal from a distant station, it has faded in and out ever since. At present it is on the operating table in Dr. Frankenstein's lab, waiting for Igor to throw the switch. Until the Safety Committee is jolted into life, please don't do anything dangerous while at AUUF. Would you like to be on the Safety Committee?

A Personnel Committee was formed recently. The major item in its portfolio is to manage the hiring process when there is a position we are seeking to fill. Would you like to be on the Personnel Committee?

AUUF is searching for a "settled" minister, i.e., a minister who will be here for many years. The brunt of that work falls on the Settled Minister Search Committee (SMSC). They deserve a big hug; they are working their figurative fannies off. The Board tries to help. For example, we realized

that the usual timing of the Canvass, ending in late spring, was wrong. We must know our funding for next fiscal year by March, so that we will be able to negotiate a compensation package with a prospective minister in March, which is when that happens. So the Board moved the Canvass this year to a much earlier date: Canvass kick-off is January 13. That gives the Board a lot less time to prepare for the Canvass, especially when the Auction comes just a month before the Canvass. Oh, well. All is for the best with this best of all possible Boards.

The Board is contemplating the "second hour" as it's known in wider UU circles. That's the hour or so after the Sunday service ends. We hope to have programs that engage our minds and our hearts, and allow us to know each other better. At the time of this writing, we are in the planning stage. By the time you read this, programs for the Second Hour should be a reality. Reverend Marti has helped a lot. Another program that will provide opportunity for more personal, more intimate interactions is the Circle Dinner/Circle of Friends program. The Board hopes to have this running in early 2019.

An email sent to auufboard@auuf.net will go to all Board members. To get the President's attention email president@auuf.org.



Peter Livant
Past AUUF Board President

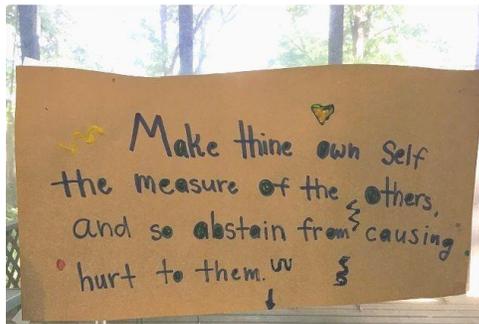
RE Happenings

Leadership Changes. While our Director of Religious Exploration, Julie Meadows, takes an extended leave of absence, members of the RE Committee – composed of chair, Ayesha Alam, and Noriko Aoi, Kitty Frey, and Ellen Abell – have taken on several of her previous responsibilities. These include planning for such winter and springtime events as Valentine Express, the Cooperative Egg Hunt, and the RE Service, as well as keeping parents informed and seeing that teachers have what they need to work with their classes.

Teacher Appreciation. The Committee would like the Fellowship to know who this year’s RE teachers are: For the Spirit Play class (the youngest children), Robin Russell, Sam Price, Rasika Ramesh, Jamie Harrison, and Ellen Abell. For the Harry Potter class, Conar Rochford, Lisa Harry Nathan, and Andrew DeVelschow. For the Peace Train class (our senior youth), Robert Zabawa, Shawn Jacobsen, Greg Schmidt, and Diana Eidson. The Committee appreciates the commitment of these individuals to offer the Fellowship’s children a supportive environment in which to learn about UU beliefs and to participate in putting them into action.

Special Thanks. For the generous virtuosity of (1) Pop Koehler for custom-making three sets of sturdy shelving units designed to display and securely store the many materials used in the Spirit Play curriculum, and (2) Brian Wells for reconstructing (during the terribly hot days of summer) the decking around the RE Building.

A Reminder. Access the calendar of class meetings and special events online at <http://auuf.org/learning/re-calendar-page/>. Or, from the home page, click on the *Learning* heading and select *RE Calendar*.



Our Minister and Staff

Consulting Minister

Rev. Marti Keller
minister@auuf.net

RE Committee Chair

Ayesha Alam
yeeshalam@gmail.com

Office Administration

Zenda Davis
officeauuf@gmail.com

Minister Emerita

Rev. Diana Jordan Allende
dallende1010@gmail.com

Teasers for Upcoming Sunday Services

January 13: "What's Love Got to Do with It?"

Rev. Marti Keller

January 20: "A Homecoming Story."

C.J. Marbutt

January 27: "King's God."

Rev. Marti Keller

February 3: Music Service

Music and poetry provided by AUUF members and friends

Find additional info about upcoming Sunday Services on the AUUF.org homepage.

"What, exactly, are we doing when we invite love into our lives? Surely we know that it's much tidier without it, when things stay at a distance. And yet: I'm sucked in every time, seduced by the possibility of an expanded heart. I hope that never changes."

- Amanda Poppei, UUA Brave/Wiser Blog

Ebenezer Star Submission Guidelines

Articles may be submitted to communications@auuf.org (max. 500 words). Poetry, photos, and art work are also welcome. Deadline for the April - June 2019 issue is **March 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.

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

Email Listserv: Connect@auuf.org

To Subscribe: auuf.org/subscribe

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

Newsletter submissions:
communications@auuf.org

**Volunteers are
the Heart of
AUUF**

Please remember to
volunteer to help our
community thrive!!

www.auuf.org/signup