

The Ebenezer Star

The quarterly newsletter of the Auburn Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

April - June 2019

After the Tornado: AUUF Springs into Action

As part of a climate-changing pattern, a massive winter storm spread across the country in mid-March this year. Blizzard conditions in at least ten states and tornadoes touching down in unlikely places like New Mexico made national headlines.

For Alabamians, periodic deadly tornadoes are unfortunately more normal in this area called the Dixie Alley. This is the nickname sometimes given to parts of the Southern U.S. that are too regularly subject to these calamitous weather events.

On March 3rd, a series of tornadoes struck Lee County, just a short distance from the Auburn Fellowship, causing at least 23 deaths, close to a hundred serious injuries, and destroying or wreaking havoc on many homes. AUUF member Charlotte Miller was among those who died.

Carolyn Levy, Congregational Concerns chair, contacted Charlotte's son, giving condolences on our behalf and inquiring about memorial plans. Through the e-contact list, Carolyn let us know that Charlotte's funeral would take place the following Saturday at the First Baptist Church in Opelika. Emily and Peter Livant attended, as well as minister emerita, Rev. Diana Jordan Allende.

Immediately following the tornadoes, our fellowship sprung into direct action. Board member, Chris Basgier, let us know what the emergency needs were and then transported our donations from the Busch Center to designated collection sites. CJ Marbutt, who is a longtime lay leader with our sibling First Universalist Church of Camp Hill, located in Lee County, offered to process financial contributions. His congregation worked with AUUF, Auburn Buddhist Fellowship, Providence Baptist Church, and the local food bank to collect 1,000 pounds of food.

In the aftermath of Charlotte's tragic death and the tornadoes in general, we heard words of concern and

offers of help from Kathy McGowan on behalf of the Southern Region staff; the UUA Director of Congregational Life, Jessica York; and from UUA President, Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray, "sending love and deepest condolences," and affirming the leadership, care, and ministry that "the congregation is offering to one another and the larger community at this time."

Rev. Frederick-Gray also reminded us that the UU Disaster Relief Fund might be available to meet the concrete human needs in the aftermath of this disaster. If Charlotte's family had needed financial support for her funeral expenses, for example, that may have been possible. This fund also can be used for damage to congregations' buildings, relocation expenses, and donations to local partner organizations that serve the community at large, particularly those who would not be eligible for other funding.

The application process is simple and can happen at any time during the recovery process, knowing that long after the initial clean up, recovery can take months or years. Perhaps at some point the UU Disaster Relief Fund can be a Second Sunday plate recipient. Or members can make direct donations (<https://giving.uua.org/disaster-relief>).

The congregations of AUUF and First Universalist Church of Camp Hill have risen to the heartbreaking occasion of a major catastrophe in our own backyard, with a commitment to our principles of justice and compassion and the interdependent web of all existence.



Rev. Marti Keller
Consulting Minister

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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[°]Photo credits primarily belong to Noriko Aoi. A few more were taken or submitted by Ayesha Alam and Laura Kloberg.

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.

A Few Words from Our President

Spring has sprung! AUUF is as busy as the bees and flowers these days, and I wanted to share some of what is going on around here. First, the Canvass. Our goal this year was to raise \$122,806. The total as of March 18 was \$128,296. Woohoo! Way to go, everybody! This is our most successful Canvass to date. I am so grateful to everyone for contributing to the place, to one another, and to our UU values.

Speaking of values, this brings me to my second update. We value, according to our first principle, “the inherent worth and dignity of every person.” Well, I looked around AUUF and started thinking that when our buildings are not accessible to “every person,” then we are not really living this first principle. So, I set a goal to make all our buildings accessible to all, beginning with the Busch Center. The quote to renovate the upstairs bathroom was high. Making it accessible would also require making the current ramp to the upstairs ADA compliant. Unfortunately, covering these costs is not feasible currently. So, I began looking at the Busch Center basement.

I’ll be honest that two other considerations prompted my thinking about expanding our ADA accessible meeting space: (1) The Board voted last year to allow community groups to use our spaces as part of our outreach ministry; having the spaces fully accessible to all seems like a worthy goal. (2) We ourselves have a greater need for additional meeting spaces, especially as our RE program grows and our adult programming (*Second Hour*) gets off the ground. So, with the guidance of someone who knows ADA compliance, the quote for the downstairs bathroom was considered reasonable. The Board voted to approve the bathroom renovation, and the work began two days later. Hopefully, this project will be fully completed by the end of April.

Now, I realize that this only makes the downstairs of the Busch Center accessible, but we will have doubled our ADA accessible space when the project is complete! As for making the whole Busch Center accessible, putting in an elevator where the spiral staircase is would be one solution. However, after receiving a quote of \$46,000 from an elevator company representative, this idea is off the table! A \$12,000 elevator (ameriglide.com) seems like an attainable Capital Campaign goal for the future, especially as our congregation continues to age. (Next up is the RE building, but I get ahead of myself if I get too far into those plans!)

The final topic I want to update you on is our search for a full-time settled minister. Many of you probably know that this process is entrusted to the members of the search committee that we all voted on. As such, very little information is shared with anyone outside the search committee. However, what I do know is that we are still in Round One of the search which means that we could have a candidate who will come for a “candidating week” in April or early May. This person would take the pulpit for two Sundays and mix and mingle for the week in-between. (All you party goers need to unite and start planning a week of festivities!)

If we go to Round Two, the *candidating week* would take place in May or June. It’s important for all of you to be here at the end of the *candidating week*, because all AUUF members will vote on whether or not to hire this candidate as our next full-time minister. I hope this column has provided some useful updates to you about the goings on at AUUF. Feel free to snag me at coffee hour if you have any questions or comments as we continue onward and upward together!



Amy Phillips
AUUF Board President

Announcements and Events

Our Record-Breaking 2019 Canvass

Completed earlier than ever (in March). More canvassers than ever before (40 plus). Pledge total highest ever (over \$128,000). Bravo, y'all! Your love for this place is showing!

Second Hour Adult RE

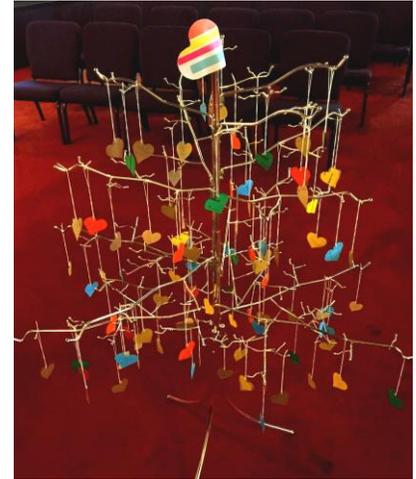
Second Hour is a new program intended to support lifelong UU learning and development as well as further deepen relationships among AUUF members and friends. *Second Hour* takes place following regular Sunday services, coinciding with youth RE. Chris Basgier and Jim Bradley are organizing this initiative in consultation with Rev. Marti. They encourage members to look into being a "service associate," that is, someone interested in co-facilitating a *Second Hour* discussion. They're also hoping that many of you will decide to lead your own *Second Hour* programs. Pretty much any topic goes if it connects to one of our seven principles and/or the AUUF mission statement. If you have an idea, please [fill out this form](#) (or follow this URL: <https://bit.ly/2JBo1xv>). Questions? Talk with Marti, Chris, or Jim.

Diana's Pantry

Diana's Pantry helps provide food and household items to AUUF members and friends in need. Our current recipients appreciate paper products (bathroom tissues, paper towels), cat food, and Kroger gift cards. Laundry detergents will be in low supply come May. Please place non-monetary items in the basket; hand gift cards directly to Eddie or Noriko. If you know anyone who can benefit from this program, please encourage them to see Eddie for an application. Thank you for being a part of our caring community.

Nominations, Please!

It's that time of year when the Nominations Committee seeks members to serve on the AUUF Board of Trustees and to fill one-year terms as Committee Chairs. Most positions have been filled as of this writing, but four unfilled positions remain: President-Elect, Communications Chair, Congregational Support Chair, and RE Chair. Learn more about these positions and consider how you could contribute by talking with Nanette Chadwick (Chair), Terry Rodriguez, Becki Retzlaff, or Jamie Harrison.



Canvass Participation Tree



Diana's Pantry Shelves

The Board at Work

The Board marches on! Through thick and thin, through fair weather and foul, with a stiff upper lip and head unbowed, the Board – single step by single step on its journey of one thousand Board meetings – progresses!

Even though the Board's role in AUUF's search for a settled minister is nothing compared to the Augean endeavors of the Settled Minister Search Committee (the names of whom you will find listed on page 11), matters related to the search occupied the Board's time and attention. The task of figuring out by early March how much money is available to pay a new full-time minister falls to the Board. The Canvass was wrenched from its usual time slot in March and April and rocketed forward to January and February this year. This sounds easy enough, but it meant we had to sign up a bunch of canvassers before everyone evaporated over the Christmas holidays; not so easy! But the AUUF never ceases to amaze: We signed up over forty canvassers, an all-time record! Shazzam! The Board decided that this year the Canvass would be entirely face-to-face; no internet pledging. The unofficial total a day after the Canvass ended was, in a word, historic. (Historically high, not historically low!) Kudos to our VP for Finance, Laura Kloberg, and to the rest of the Board, the canvassers, and certainly to everyone who pledged generously. Well done!

The Board began working on a Personnel Policies Manual in October of 2017. On and off in the intervening 15 months we wrestled with knotty problems. Finally...FINALLY! it was adopted by a unanimous vote at the January Board meeting

Those who had worked on the Personnel Policies Manual subcommittee (Darrell, Laura, yours truly) did a happy dance, if not in physical space, then certainly in psychological space.

Speaking of physical space, the Board authorized a project to renovate the bathroom in the ground floor of the Busch Center to make it ADA compliant. Previously, of our three buildings, only the Sanctuary had a bathroom capable of accommodating a person in a wheelchair. Other changes to our physical infrastructure are under consideration.

The *Second Hour* program has kicked off! Second hour refers to the hour after the Sunday service ends. The idea is to use this time to discuss various topics in small groups. If the leader of the Sunday Service (the minister, or someone else) is willing, *Second Hour* could be a time to discuss the sermon/presentation in greater depth. If you have ideas about a potential second hour topic or activity, tell Jim Bradley or Chris Basgier. They are the *Second Hour* impresarios. You are the creative force.

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

Valentine Express. RE children and youth delivered valentines (hand-made by all ages) on February 10. Well over \$500 was raised from their sale. A portion of these funds will be used to support the RE program, and the rest will be donated to a social justice project of the children's choice. The RE committee thanks all who participated or donated to this fundraiser. Special thanks go to Amy Kaiser, Becki Retzlaff, Lacey Basgier, Ellen Abell, Robert Zabawa, Jason Pratt, Billye Welburn, and Jan Newton, who enthusiastically contributed their time, effort, and many talents in logistical support for this incredible event.



YouthCON. On March 8-10, AUUF RE Ambassadors Aryana Pratt and Monty Retzlaff-Taylor represented AUUF at the Elementary YouthCON for the Southern Region at The Mountain RLC in Highlands, NC. Becki Retzlaff and Jason Pratt served as chaperones. Returning for a second year, Aryana and Monty enjoyed every minute of this opportunity to learn and form lasting friendships with UU youth from all over the southeastern United States. For information on upcoming retreats, including Music Week, Family Camp, Counselor Training, and Stewardship weekends, talk to an RE representative or visit <https://themountainrlc.org/retreats/>.



Children's Egg Hunt. Calling all young'uns to participate in the annual cooperative egg hunt on Sunday, April 21. Older youth will gather from 4-6 p.m. on Saturday, April 20, to hide eggs and eat pizza afterward. On Sunday morning during playground time, children will decorate the bags in which they'll stash the goodies they'll get when they find the eggs. During the RE hour, youth will pair up with younger children to help them hunt down those cleverly hidden eggs. Fun for all!

RE Service and Picnic. The annual RE service is currently scheduled for May 5 with the RE picnic later that afternoon. However, due to the need to accommodate the schedules of visiting ministerial candidates, this date may change. Stay tuned for finalized dates, times, and locations! Our children benefit from the interest, support, and engagement of adults in their wider AUUF family, so we hope you will try to attend one or both events.

Earth Day (at AUUF) Is Every Day (But Especially April 14)

Yes, AUUF has chosen to make every day Earth Day by becoming a UU Ministry for Earth (UUMFE) Green Sanctuary congregation. We try to make everything we do individually and as a congregation as environmentally friendly and sustainable as possible. Our mission: “To engage in an ambitious Environmental Justice and Climate Justice movement that seeks to live fully our seventh principle and achieve our vision of a viable and just world for all.”



EMPOWERING BOLD, ACCOUNTABLE, FAITH-GROUNDED ACTION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

That mission statement is UUMFE language. I would revise it to say, “...live fully *all of our seven principles*.” The poor and indigenous frontline communities always get hit first and hardest, but climate change poses an existential threat to that entire interdependent web of the 7th principle (yes, they are coming for us too!) and thus, at its deepest roots, constitutes a justice issue. It also occurs to me to suggest revising our 7th principle, to read “Respect *and defend* the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.” Which brings me to our especial AUUF Earth Day, April 14, 2019.

The AUUF program committee chose April 14 for a “Climate Change Is Real” service, and I was fingered to lead the program. With advice and consent from the AUUF Board and other persons of green interest, I have drafted a plan that includes a Sunday Service program titled “Earth Day and Climate Change: What Does Love Have to Do With It”; a *Second Hour* program titled “Climate Change: What Then Must We Do?”; and an afternoon public-invited program titled “Celebrating Earth Day Here and Now.”

Program details are (as I write this on March 10), are still under construction. I/we will be trying to make it both informative and inspiring, in keeping with our fundamental UU values and principles. Emphasis will be on possible climate change actions and solutions on personal, local community, and state/national/global levels. The afternoon public-invited program is to include short video clips of national and global efforts to address climate change threats and stories of communities happily organizing themselves to lower their carbon footprint as well as to be better prepared for probable climate change-induced economic and social disruptions.

In addition to Ministry for Earth, UU faith-based actions on climate change include *UU Young Adults for Climate Justice* (<https://www.uumfe.org/get-involved/uuyacj/>); the *Environmental Justice Practitioners Network* (<https://www.uumfe.org/get-involved/environmental-justice-practitioners-network/>); and the *UU Climate Action Network* (<https://www.uumfe.org/get-involved/climate-action-network/>).

The seriousness of national UU concern is shown in both UUA and UUMFE, along with other faith-based groups, asserting our “right of conscience” (5th principle) by signing on to a Statement of Climate Civil Resistance: “We assert our right to non-violently resist the fossil fuel system and those actions of federal, state, and local governments that support it. Our assertion is justified by the extreme and existential threat of climate change to all human and non-human life. Our right of resistance is further grounded in justice, morality, and the right of the people to withdraw their consent from a government that works against its interests.”

<https://www.uumfe.org/2018/10/17/uua-and-uumfe-sign-statement-of-climate-civil-resistance/>

If you are seeing this before April 14 and have suggestions, let me hear them! Otherwise, see ya next (AUUF) Earth Day!



Jim Allen
vineyfig@knology.net

AUUF Climate Activism

On March 15, 2019, AUUF RE youth, family, and friends were well-represented at the AL Youth Climate Strike in Montgomery, held in solidarity with the International Youth Strike. In attendance were Monty Retzlaff-Taylor, Locklin Retzlaff-Taylor, Aryana Pratt, Gabriel Alam-Pratt, Jebban Meadows, Jacquell Newton, Conar Rochford, Becki Retzlaff, Jan Newton, Judy Collins, Jim Allen, Carolyn and Gene Hunter, and Ayesha Alam. Youth and concerned citizens from all over the state of Alabama gathered on the front steps of the state capitol in Montgomery with the following demands:

- A Green New Deal
- A halt in any and all fossil fuel infrastructure projects
- All decisions made by the government be based on the best-available and most-current scientific research.
- Declaring a National Emergency on Climate Change
- Compulsory comprehensive education on climate change and its impacts throughout grades K-8
- Preserving our public lands and wildlife
- Keeping our water supply clean

Additional details on the mission of this movement, the demands, and proposed solutions can be found at <https://www.youthclimatestrikeus.org>



Fellowship at Work & Play



Dishing Up at the Chili Cook-off



Choosing Valentines



Men at Work – Busch Center Basement Repairs



Unitarian Universalist College of Social Justice

The UU College of Social Justice was founded in 2012 as a collaboration between the UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association) and the UU Service Committee. Its mission is to inspire, equip, and sustain spiritually grounded activism. The Rev. Kathleen McTigue has been the Director of UUCSJ since its founding. The following is an excerpt from her remarks from a recent General Assembly meeting.

The UU College of Social Justice programs rest on the power of proximity, the idea that when we move closer to injustices and the people on whom they fall most heavily, it changes us. We connect in alliance and solidarity with people we suddenly recognize as kin. And when it's family whose well-being is threatened, we become bolder and more creative in our actions for justice than we might ever have dreamed possible.



Our programs are grounded on two truths of our UU faith. The first is our interdependence, which demands that we be mindful of our place in the web, mindful of how it connects us to every other being. The second is that no person's life is inherently worth more than another's: no one is disposable.

The winds of injustice are blowing at hurricane force these days. They can make us feel scattered or helpless because there's so much under attack at once. But our core truths -- that we rise and fall together, and that we are all of deep worth -- ground us like mountains against the wind. In that grounding, we see where we can best resist degradation and suffering, where we can best act for life and love.

This is what UUCSJ programs support. Wherever your congregation is on its social justice path, we have entry points: study guides, workshops, webinars, and toolkits. And we have a powerful array of immersion journeys. For details on all our programs, visit our website. Find powerful new ways to harness your passion for social justice!



Our Minister and Staff

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Settled Minister Search Committee

Many (many, many) hours of service have been given by the members of this committee in the search for our next settled minister. Marcia Rossi (Chair), Tom Hodges, Jan Newton, Eddie Peek, Temesgen Samuel, Ivan Schmidt, Jay Schryer, and Robert Zabawa – we appreciate all you have done and are doing on the Fellowship’s behalf. Thank You!

Join Us for Flower Communion on April 21

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

We Light a Candle Each Sunday Morning....

At the beginning of each Sunday Service, we light our chalice candle. For many UUs it is a symbol of the light of reason, the warmth of community, and the flame of hope. We also light a second candle each Sunday. It serves as a reminder of the families forcibly separated at our southern border who have yet to be reunited.

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 July - September 2019 issue is **June 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.

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Connect with Us

Sunday Services always at 10:00 a.m.

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To Subscribe: auuf.org/subscribe

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Newsletter submissions:
communications@auuf.org

**Volunteers are
the Heart of
AUUF**

Please remember to
volunteer to help our
community thrive!!

www.auuf.org/signup