

The Ebenezer Star

The quarterly newsletter of the Auburn Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

July – September 2019



Parting Words: Signs and Symbols

At the end of his last service with a congregation, a venerable interim minister colleague of mine would put on a wide brimmed hat and pick up his bridle—a stick with a cloth to carry possessions. And to the sound of “Keep on Moving Forward,” he left the sanctuary. The evocation of a wandering hobo, a migrant worker, was powerful and strictly metaphoric. He lived on the West Coast, traveled home on a jet plane until his next placement began.

If I were to approximate the same ritual, I would pick up a water bottle, a back cushion, and a canvas bag with my final sermon text and children’s story. I would unlock the door of my Subaru and turn left out of the Fellowship parking lot, headed for 1-85 north for the two-plus hour journey back home to Atlanta. A ride that has become familiar, perhaps all too familiar to me over the year I have served you as a half time minister, bridging the departure of your interim and the calling of your next full-time settled minister.

I can pretty well tell you all the sights along the way, in every season now. The pup tent encampment under the freeway overpass as I entered the interstate near the Georgia State Capitol. Exit signs for the towns along the way I have never visited in the quarter of a century we have lived here in the South. The abandoned Westpoint Stevens linen factory near LaGrange. The Kia factory just before the Alabama border, with its rows of new cars waiting for distribution, the parking lot nearly empty of employee cars on Sunday mornings. The wide Chattahoochee river one exit from the state line.

The Alabama welcome station, with its mixed signs and symbols: The then Governor George Wallace defending country hit “Sweet Home Alabama” sign. A concrete marker with the state motto: “We dare defend our rights.” Adopted in 1939, the rights that were being defended included the right to segregation and Jim Crow in a state that now claims the right to ban all abortions at any stage of pregnancy.

With all of these distressing signs and symbols, there has been the contrasting hospitality of the welcome center staff each and every time I walked through those doors, and the lovely vases of native flowers in the women’s rest room, picked from the garden on the placid, pretty grounds. And then the solid message of equality and acceptance I saw every time I turned the corner into this former African American church. Where you now bear witness to another Alabama: where black lives matter, where women’s rights are human rights, where no human being is illegal, where science is real and love is love; with signs stating these things and welcoming our Muslim neighbors. Where inside on the chalice altar, there is a candle lit each Sunday, reminding us of the continued separation of migrant families at the border with Mexico and the horrors that go along with the incarceration of children.

May these humane and liberating signs and symbols spark action in the years to come.

Rev. Marti Keller

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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.

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

Another fiscal year is wrapping up at AUUF and a new slate of officers, chairs, and trustees has been voted in. As we begin the new year, now seems a fitting time to reflect on the past year and to imagine the year to come. 2018 was challenging. I am hopeful that 2019 will be easier.

Last year our fiscal situation was unusual. Due to a decrease in staff expenditures, the coffers were fuller than usual. This enabled us to invest in ourselves more than usual, too. You may have noticed some of the investments already; you will see more changes in the coming months. I hope these changes add value to our time together, make our spaces safer, and make our services and spaces more accessible to all.

Some of the changes are not obvious (i.e., benefits for the DRE, a small compensation for Martha's commitment), but please know that these incremental changes are intended to reflect our value of being a fair employer and to compensate Martha for years of dedication and hard work to provide quality music on Sunday mornings.

We successfully spent money on the search for a full-time minister! Ministerial searches are expensive and AUUF has been in some type of search process since 2015, so our success in this pursuit equates to monetary savings – always a good thing.

Programmatically, Marti injected enthusiasm and creativity into our time together this year. If you haven't participated in the Second Hour discussions, I highly recommend you try it. Some services just

require a deeper, more reflective, shared conversation. And you get to know some fellow AUUF folks more personally, too.

Looking ahead to the upcoming year, I think I can safely say that we are all sad to see Marti's time with us come to an end. When Peter and I drove to Atlanta this time last year to meet with Marti, I thought it would be a long year. Though I was tremendously grateful to have a half-time minister, I also worried about the other half of our Sundays and how to fill them with lay-led services. But the year flew by and Sundays were filled with hopeful, funny, inspiring, thought-provoking services! Sometimes I wish I could roll back the clock and have 6 more months to work with Marti with my head in a clearer, less grief-stricken place. Regardless, I value the time we've had and the support that Marti provided both to me and to our whole AUUF community.

The horizon here looks good! Reverend Chris and Calvin will arrive soon. Ingathering is just around the corner. Julie will be warmly welcomed back and another RE year will begin. Exciting opportunities for a good "start up" with our new settled minister are in the works, so stay tuned to find out how you can be a part of this next leg of our shared journey in our shared ministry!



Warmly,

Amy Phillips
Board President

president@auuf.net

Spring RE Programing, in Photos

Easter Cooperative Egg Hunt



End-of-Year RE-Led Service



The Board at Work

Being the Past President means I preside over The Past. It is my domain. My bailiwick. The Past is the alley up which I am. Alley up. Alley oop! Let me allay your thirst for Board news, even if the news is old. *Allez!!*

As the Settled Minister Search Committee went into high gear in March for the home stretch of The Search, the Board did its bit to support the process. We reviewed a variety of methods for evaluating a minister as part of evaluating ministry overall at AUUF. As Rev. Marti emphasizes, we all minister to each other. Transforming the Canvass results into a draft budget by early March was necessary for the job of negotiating a compensation package with the prospective Minister. Once the negotiations were complete in May, the Board had to modify the FY2019-2020 budget to include new (since March) items and amounts. That budget was voted on at the June 16 Business Meeting. The Board participated in “candidating week” by meeting with Rev. Rothbauer. Now that Rev. Chris has been called by our membership and has accepted our call, the Board has begun planning the transition period.

Much Board attention was paid to our physical space(s). Renovation of the bathroom on the lowest level in the Busch Center is underway and should be complete by the end of July. At that time the bathroom will be wheelchair accessible. To make the building that houses the wheelchair accessible bathroom itself wheelchair accessible, the Board has been chewing over various designs for an ADA-compliant ramp leading from the front of the Busch Center around the building to the lower level entrance.

“The chewing over is not over, Chewie,” Han Solo remarked. And the chewing has just begun on plans for making the RE building and bathroom wheelchair accessible. Also on the “physical space to-do list” are repairs to windows and fascia in the Busch Center and RE building, shoring up a weak beam under the Sanctuary floor, finding space for the RE teens, and finding space for parked cars.

The “usual suspects” are routinely rounded up for discussion at all our meetings: the lack of a Playground/Nursery Committee, the lack of a Safety Committee (folks, please don’t do anything unsafe, e.g., don’t set the Sanctuary ablaze until we figure this one out), the lack of a Personnel Committee, the lack of a Committee on Ministry....

Although I’m writing this before the Business Meeting, if the nominees for Board positions beat the long odds and get elected, we will begin the new AUUF year (on July 1) with the loss of an old, wizened, tired, shipwrecked, exhausted President of the Past, and the addition of a fresh, vigorous, forward-thinking President of the Future in the person of Chris Marbutt. Welcome, C. J.!

An email sent to auufboard@auuf.net will go to all Board members. To get the President’s attention email president@auuf.org. Tell us your best ideas.



Peter Livant
Past AUUF Board President

Announcements and Events

Welcome to Reverend Chris Rothbauer!

Our ministerial search came to a successful conclusion with the calling of Rev. Chris Rothbauer and their acceptance to be AUUF's full-time settled minister. Rev. Chris begins leading our Fellowship on August 1. (Please contain your excitement to contact them until on or after that date.)

Rev. Chris grew up in the suburbs of Louisville, Kentucky, in a working-class family in the hills of southern Indiana. Having completed undergraduate and graduate degrees in English and Philosophy, Rev. Chris earned a Master of Divinity and a Master of Arts in Leadership Studies from Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago. As a parish minister, Rev. Chris has served congregations in Kentucky, Michigan, and Alberta, Canada. Most recently, they completed a chaplain residency (a period of intensive pastoral care training) at the University of Louisville Hospital in Louisville, Kentucky.

See photos and read more about Rev. Chris and their partner, Calvin, on the AUUF webpage (for online readers, shortcut to [this link](#)).

Heads Up: Healthy "Start Up"

As part of the Fellowship's transition to settled ministry, the UUA will facilitate a healthy "Start Up" workshop at an autumn date to be announced (tentatively, late September or October). It will consist of two days of workshops on goal-setting and understanding shared ministry – one day with AUUF leadership and one day with the entire congregation.

August Happenings to Put on Your Calendar

- Rev. Chris Rothbauer will lead their first service as AUUF's new settled minister on August 11.
- Sunday, August 18, is the date of our Ingathering Service, which traditionally recognizes our coming back together after the adventures of summer.
- Keep an eye out for important dates related to the resumption of our children's Religious Exploration (RE) programming. Likely locations for these announcements will be the AUUF listserve, our webpage (www.auuf.net), and the Order of Service insert on Sunday mornings.

Offering OWL Classes this Fall

Our Whole Lives (OWL) is a comprehensive lifespan sexuality education curricula. The RE committee is working on getting a few more OWL teachers trained, with the goal of offering it in the fall. OWL provides accurate, developmentally appropriate information about a range of topics, including relationships, gender identity, sexual orientation, sexual health, and cultural influences on sexuality. For more information contact Becki Retzlaff, beckibecki@gmail.com

Gratitude

The Buildings and Grounds committees express a sincere thank you to those who attended the Spring work party: Shawn, Ralph B., Eric, Jim N., Kirk, Ralph & Connie R., Becki, Monty & Locklin, Temesgen, Brook, Laura, Emily, Peter, Carolyn L., Richard, and others we may have forgotten to mention! The Grounds committee also would like to acknowledge Kirk (Camilla, blueberries, mulch, and Busch Center backyard) and Patrick K (mowing). Thank you all for making our fellowship physically and spiritually such a special place!



Fundraising: Annual Auction Planning

Mark your calendars for December 6, the date for this year's Annual Auction. About 10% of AUUF's annual budget comes from our auction, so we need everyone's efforts to make it a success.

First, consider donations of items you could make.

Original artwork pieces, vintage valuables, or collector's items that don't fit your style anymore are possibilities. Or perhaps the carved antique headboard you were thinking of selling. Set them aside for the auction. Also, consider offering the things you enjoy doing or making as a service others can bid on. Between August and October, you'll be able to enter descriptions of your donated items and services using our on-line process. Be thinking. Be creative.

Second, sign up now for one or more of the many tasks that make the auction go smoothly. Pre-auction preparation and auction-night management activities are critical. Getting volunteers lined up early really makes a difference. Don't have any experience with a task? No problem. The "old hands" will gladly share with you what they know. The more people who know about how a task is done, the more flexibility there is when it comes to job-sharing or finding a last-minute replacement.

The task list that follows offers a general picture of what goes into pulling off a successful auction. Look for a task you can do or would be willing to learn. Then talk to Auction Wranglers, Laura Kloberg or Cathy McVay.

Pre-Auction Preparation

- Collect donated items
- Photograph donated items
- Online database set-up and management
- Divide donated items into silent and live auctions
- Bar Keep (recruit liquid refreshment donations for bar)

- Kitchen Manager (recruit food donations and food servers)
- Childcare coordination
- Number items for silent and live auctions
- Review/edit auction program for online and print display
- Produce printed auction programs
- Produce bid cards
- Silent auction table set-up
- Transfer auction items from storage to Fellowship Hall
- Auction space set up

Auction-night Management

- Greeters
- Bid registration workers
- Food servers
- Bartenders
- Live auction item display-ers (our "Vannas")
- Auction bid spotters
- Silent auction closers
- Bid recording software manager
- Backup bid (hand) recorder
- Collection of money from bid winners
- Collect and resolve unclaimed bid items
- Bar clean up crew
- Kitchen clean up crew
- Silent auction clean up crew
- General clean up (vacuuming) crew

Laura Kloberg
VP of Finance
finance@auuf.net



Making Room at the Table

By Erika A. Hewett

<https://www.uua.org/braverwiser/come-talk-us>

I spend a lot of my Saturday evenings feeling awkward at wedding receptions, because most guests don't want to talk to The Minister. Are they worried that I'm boring, or that I'll look them deeply in the eye and ask about their relationship with God? Either way, being alone with a plate of hors d'oeuvres is preferable to going home to finish my sermon.

A few weeks ago, though, I was delighted when a table of wedding guests—obviously friends, who'd traveled in from two states away—waved me over.

"We're therapists," one of them explained, "so nobody ever wants to talk to us, either." Upon learning that I'm a Unitarian Universalist, the entire group—not all of them white, not all of them straight, not all of them gender conforming—exchanged knowing looks.

"What?" I probed.

"That means you're safe," one of them announced as the others nodded. They're not religious, they elaborated, but they trust UU communities to accept them without judgment.

It makes you want to cheer, doesn't it, when outsiders praise the people you call home? I *so* wanted to gather up their affirmations to dole out back at the UU ranch... but I couldn't. As I smiled politely, I called to mind the UUs in my life who are queer; who live with a disability; who are people of color. I thought about their countless stories of their lived experience being painted over with the brush of privilege, and the harm inflicted upon them by people with good intentions. I remembered my colleague Sean Parker Dennison's reminder that

there are many people in the world who are never completely safe—and don't expect to be.

Those of us inside the Unitarian Universalist fold know that when it comes to living our expansive, inclusive, anti-oppression faith, we fall short (sometimes in 3-D, technicolor ways). I do. And every time my privilege and I cause harm, I get to decide whether my arrogant decision that I'm enlightened or woke outweighs evidence to the contrary.

It was a gift, on that early summer evening, to be received by a group of strangers as if I belonged, and to hear them call my UU kindred a haven. While I know there's a gap between who they say we are and who we are in practice, those seven therapists gave me a second gift: they fortified my commitment to keep closing that gap, and to transform our UU communities into havens: a home for all who need us.

Erika A. Hewitt

Erika Hewitt is the UUA's Minister of Worship Arts and Editor of Braver/Wiser, a weekly spirituality series. In addition to serving the UUA half-time, Erika also serves as a Unitarian Universalist parish minister and wedding officiant in Maine.

Braver/Wiser

Braver/Wiser offers a weekly message of courage and compassion for life as it is. It delivers an original written reflection by a contemporary religious leader, and brief prayer, grounded in Unitarian Universalism. Join the Braver/Wiser community and [sign up today](#).

Transitions



Over the last two years, I have learned to see the community life of our Fellowship through a seasonal lens, thanks to taking on the role of Communications Chair and the transition from a monthly newsletter to one published quarterly. I've enjoyed the close-up view of the goings-on among us and gained new respect for the many moving parts of the ministry that is our Fellowship. With this issue I pass the editorial baton on to Becki along with the pleasure of compiling words and pictures that reflect our community's values put into action.

The change in communications leadership is just one of several transitions that take place this time of year. With each July-September issue of *The Ebenezer Star*, we begin anew. A new group of Trustees and Committee Chairs take their places for the upcoming year (see the next page for the complete list). Many familiar faces are returning, and it's always a delight to see new folks willing to dip their toes into the leadership pool. All hail and a hearty pat on the back to each and all – “retirees,” repeaters, and newbies – who have chosen to serve in these roles!

In July, we also move from the end of one fiscal year to the beginning of a new one. This year's transition, happily, comes on the heels of a brilliantly successful canvass permitting our Fellowship to make long-hoped-for changes and additions a reality. Among the most important of these is the transition from Rev. Marti's part-time consultant ministry to full-time settled ministry, when Rev. Chris joins our Fellowship on August 1. In addition, we joyfully welcome back from her year's leave of absence our Director of Religious Exploration, Julie Meadows.



Changes – even the ones we consciously choose, the ones we've longed for, the ones we await with eager excitement – sometimes come with a share of unease. Transitions demand contact with the unfamiliar. Some of us revel in such novelty, embracing the challenge of becoming acquainted with the unknown. Others of us tend to approach newness with caution, perhaps fearing a misstep or misunderstanding. Awareness of the mixed bag of thoughts and feelings that change can provoke is important because, when we recognize them, we are better able to choose our responses with care and respect.



Among all the changes, however, our UU principles and valuing of this Fellowship remain steadfast across every season. So, here's to new beginnings and another year's worth of opportunities to continue growing and becoming the community we aspire to be.

Ellen Abell
Former Communications Chair
communications@auuf.net



Our Minister and Staff

Minister (starting August 1)

Rev. Chris Rothbauer

(334) 246-9313

minister@auuf.net

Director, Religious Exploration

(resuming August 1)

Julie Meadows

auufdre@gmail.com

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Zenda Davis

officeauuf@gmail.com

Minister Emerita

Rev. Diana Jordan Allende

dallende1010@gmail.com

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<i>Green Sanctuary</i>	Jan Newton	green@auuf.net
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<i>Religious Exploration</i>	Ayesha Alam	re@auuf.net
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<i>Sunday Services</i>	Amy Kaiser & Robert Zabawa	sunday@auuf.net
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Connect with Us

Sunday Services always at 10:00 a.m.

Web Site: www.auuf.org

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To Subscribe: auuf.org/subscribe

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

Newsletter submissions:
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**Volunteers are
the Heart of
AUUF**

Please remember to
volunteer to help our
community thrive!!

www.auuf.org/signup