



The First Spiritualist Temple of East Aurora

A Member of the National Spiritualist Association of Churches, U.S.A.

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Church business

- By the Numbers
 - October:
 - In 2019, 161 attended worship services, offering \$615.65.
 - In 2020, 114 attended worship services in person, offering \$868.20.
 - November:
 - In 2019, 163 attended worship services, offering \$506.32.
 - In 2020, 125 attended worship services in person, offering \$900.00.
- Upcoming speakers
 - Sun., Dec. 20, Darlene Feskun
 - Thurs., Dec. 24, Robert Lowell Goller (Christmas Eve, 7 pm—only by Facebook livestream, no “in-person” service. Music and healing start at 6:45.)
 - Sun., Dec. 27, Lynette Lex
 - Sun., Jan. 03, Beverly Burke (pet memorial service)
 - Sun., Jan. 10, Cheryl Ziccardi
 - Sun., Jan. 17, Robert Lowell Goller (annual memorial service for people)
 - Sun., Jan. 24, Darlene Feskun (NSAC Founder’s Day is Jan. 25)
 - Sun., Jan. 31, Jeanne Laurel

Remember, many of the Sunday lectures are available on our Facebook page a day or so after the Sunday on which they are presented. To find them, visit <https://www.facebook.com/First-Spiritualist-Temple-of-East-Aurora-NY-762684440559318>. If you’d prefer a shortened link (less typing!) you can use <https://urlnet.xyz/U9IFH>.

- AmazonSmile. You can make micro-donations to First Spiritualist Temple of East Aurora through your Amazon purchases. To set up: in your computer web-browser: (1) Go to <https://smile.amazon.com/> into your browser address window. (2) Log in to your account. (3) Select “First Spiritualist Temple, East Aurora” from the list of charities. Amazon will remember your choice—as long as you log in to Amazon.Smile through your web browser.

If you want to use an iOS or Android app (phone, tablet), you can use Amazon.Smile. Tap the three horizontal lines in the upper left side of the app window. You will have to turn on “notifications”—so Amazon can enthusiastically bombard you with “buy more stuff” advertising. However, you can shop with notifications “on,” and then turn them off as soon as you’ve finished shopping.



- Volunteers Needed

- Audit Committee: The pandemic has side-tracked our regular audit schedule, which should be completed at least four times a year. Several people are needed to compare receipts, handwritten journal entries, and computer-generated Profit & Loss statements to determine that bookkeeping is on the square.
- Technology: We need folks to whip computers and cloud storage into shape, explore the possibility of online contributions, improve our social media presence, and make the best use of available technology for our church.
- Church Secretary: This key board office has been vacant since August this year; we'd welcome volunteers.

Classes and Events

- Thought Exchange: Continues to meet first and third Monday of each month at 7 p.m. Topic for each meeting is decided by participants. On Dec. 21, we'll discuss change. I'm your host and facilitator. We're meeting by Zoom only during the pandemic; no prior attendance or prerequisites; attend any meeting as you have time and inclination. I've established a semi-permanent Zoom meeting ID number to use through the end of April. (Thanks and a tip 'o the hat to Lou Fioretti for this idea!)
 - To join with audio and video, log into Zoom and enter the following meeting ID code: **964 7675 6900**.
 - Even easier, to join with audio and video, click or copy into your browser the following link: <https://zoom.us/j/96476756900>.
 - To join by plain old-fashioned telephone with audio only, dial 929-205-6099, and follow the prompts. Enter meeting ID code **964 7675 6900**; press # to skip entering the password (there isn't one).
- Christmas Eve service: The event will be livestreamed on Facebook, rather than held at the church. Robert Lowell Goller will be our speaker. Join us starting at 6:45 pm for a brief healing-and-music session, followed by a worship service and lecture. A shortened link to our Facebook page is <https://urlnet.xyz/U9IFH>.
- New Year's Eve Ball-Drop Watch Party: As an experiment this year, I'm hosting a New Year's Eve party by Zoom, on December 31. This is a social event—no experience, no expectation that anyone specific will (or will not attend); just an event contrived from a sense of our needing to be connected! We may try to synchronize to a local TV channel, or somehow tune in to one of the East Coast ball drops. I'll turn on Zoom at 11:00 pm, and folks are welcome to come and go as they wish. Be sure to have your libation of choice ready for a toast to the end of 2020!
 - To join with audio and video, log into Zoom and enter the following meeting ID code: **974 9482 8088**.
 - Even easier, to join with audio and video, click or copy into your browser the following link: <https://zoom.us/j/97494828088>.
 - To join by plain old-fashioned telephone with audio only, dial 929-205-6099, and follow the prompts. Enter meeting ID code **974 9482 8088**; press # to skip entering the password (there isn't one).
- Homiletics: I will offer this class online starting in January 2021. I've developed a special course for Spiritualist sermon delivery—everything from finding a topic, to developing an interesting lecture, to gaining comfort in public speaking situations. At the end of the class, students will present full-length sermons for board and pastoral committee members—an audition for becoming a regular Sunday

lecturer if desired. You don't have to commit to becoming a speaker; you'll also gain an understanding of Spiritualist sermon preparation.

Those who want to take the class are asked to commit to attending each meeting, because we serve as each other's review and commentary providers. I'd like to offer the course on Monday evenings at 7 pm, alternating Thought Exchange—so, starting Jan. 11 or 25 (depending on participants' preferences). I've written a book for the course, available free upon request (whether or not you take the class). We'll probably need between 8 and 10 class meetings, followed by at least one in-person practice lecture, and one in-person "final presentation" session. Please contact me using the information below to sign up and get Zoom details, and let me know about any time constraints you have.

This isn't a class that teaches basics of Spiritualism, so I would prefer you've taken our 101 introductory membership class. I have 30+ years of college English teaching experience—so I can promise this class will be supportive and welcoming to all. Please let me know if you are interested, using phone or email, or by dropping a note at the secretary's desk downstairs (or when you see me in church, of course).

- Carolcade: In case you missed the Village of East Aurora's televised broadcast of a pandemic-special edition of the town's annual Carolcade event, you can watch it at <https://youtube.com/watch?v=XXg3Wst48ZQ>. (Or, if you hate typing all those odd characters, search in your browser for "Virtual Carolcade 2020 Christmastime in East Aurora.")

The Pandemic, How We're Responding, General Safety Concerns

- The Pandemic: The U.S. Supreme Court has struck down states' ability to limit the number of attendees at religious worship services, because such restrictions violate constitutional freedom of religion. However, we're happy to have low attendance numbers at the moment—as long as visitors wear masks properly, have no symptoms of illness, and have not had potential exposures which necessitate quarantine. Please let us know if you have tested positive for Covid19 at any time. You may use email for confidentiality; we won't broadcast names.

I misspoke in an earlier newsletter about the legal capacity of our worship area: it's 108 attendees, not 80. Anyway, we're seeing fewer than 25 people each Sunday, which is a good number for Covid19 safety concerns, and the number recommended as a maximum for Orange Zone worship services.

The Pastoral Committee discussed offering Zoom services every other Sunday (in place of in-person services) as a way of meeting members' needs to have church services safely, and to include those who may need to self-isolate even with our in-person worship service precautions. Although vaccines are starting to become available, we still have a number of months to go before we are relatively safe. Anyone who wants to help work on Zooming a church service, please contact me.

- Weather: 'Tis the season for snow, and closures related to weather. If we close the church for weather, you can find out on our Facebook page (<https://urlnet.xyz/U9IFH>), our website (<http://www.firstspiritualisttemple.com>), or by following closings announcements on local television channels:
 - Channel 2, WGRZ, <https://www.wgrz.com/closings>
 - Channel 4, WIVB, <https://www.wivb.com/weather/closings/>
 - Channel 7, WKBW, <https://www.wkbw.com/weather/school-closings-delays>
- Church Directory: Over the past months, I've had a handful of requests for members' contact information—emails or mailing addresses. I have explained to those asking that I cannot honor their requests, because I do not want to give out information that members might prefer to keep private. The best I can offer is to forward one person's request to another.

Back in the day (10 years ago or so) we had a directory which listed as much as members wished to share, including all members' names at least. That effort fell apart. One problem was that we wanted to include pictures, but folks got camera-shy. Another problem was that many feared their information would be used for advertising: unsolicited pitches, requests to buy kids' school fundraiser items, and so on. (This was about the time the internet was becoming an aggressive data-collection monster.)

Still—we live in unusual times. If you would welcome email, phone calls, or snail-mail contact from other church members, I'll collect information you would like to share.

- I will not list any information from those who do not contact me; this is “opt-in” only. (It won't be a complete membership list.)
- I will not post this list anywhere online. You are welcome to ask me for it at any time; and I'll send it around once I get enough material, along with this newsletter.
- I ask that anyone who wants the list promise (1) to use it for social contacts only; and (2) not to share it with folks outside our circle of members and friends of the church. Please keep in mind that I have no power to enforce this request; this is on the honor system.

If you're interested, please send me an email (“church directory” in subject line), or call or talk with me in church. I will only include what you specify—email, phone, address, however much or little you wish.

Congratulations and Thank You

- Beverly J. Burke, MPI Graduate: As of October 20, 2020, Beverly J. Burke, the chair of our Pastoral Committee, has passed her MPI (Morris Pratt Institute) studies with flying colors! Bev is now eligible to seek certification as a Commissioned Healer, a Registered Medium, and/or an Ordained Minister through our national organization, NSAC. Bev says that completing this work took her nine years—but she's delighted to further her Spiritualist education as a way of serving spirit and our church. Congratulations! Bev joins Tom Schickling, one of the board Trustees, as our most recent MPI graduates.
- Warm Heart, Warm Heads: Back in the good old days, pre-pandemic, we would be blessed several times a year with a visit from a dear friend of this church, Tom Hartigan. He lives in Maryland for work, but has family in the Western New York area and keeps close ties with our church. He would show up bearing scrumptious pastries and treats, often making substantial monetary donations—although to tell the truth, his big smile and bear-hugs have always been enough.

Like most of us this year, Tom has had to forego in-person visits to loved ones. And he can't bring us treats. But he has remembered us nevertheless. Beverly Burke was doing a mail-run and found a box from him containing 50-some-odd Buffalo-weather grade hats! We've passed along Tom's thoughtful, generous donation to DreamWeavers Donna Bush, Tina Chlewicki and Beth Heaney, for distribution to those in Buffalo who don't have warm clothing on these cold days. Thank you Tom Hartigan!

To find out more about “BuffaloDreamWeavers,” search for that term on Facebook, or visit the shortened link I've created: <https://urlnet.xyz/9Sm1U>. You can also call church member all-star Tina Chlewicki at 716-308-0780.

NSAC (National Spiritualist Association of Churches)

- NSAC News: The NSAC wants to encourage all church members to read their monthly newsletter. In the past, we've posted on the downstairs lunch-area bulletin board. With the pandemic, electronic access might be more feasible.
 - To request an emailed link each month, send an email from the address to which you want the link sent. Address your email to: nsacinfo@nsac.org. Put the following in the subject line: “NSAC

News Request.” In the body of the email, include your name, and the name of your church (First Spiritualist Temple of East Aurora).

- To download your own copy directly, (1) Go to <https://nsac.org>. (2) Click on “News & Events” (second item from the right in navigation bar toward top of page. (3) You’ll see a list of newsletters (or archives) which can be downloaded to your computer by clicking the link.
- Prayers for Peace: The following event from the Dec. 2020 NSAC News may be of interest. “Prior to this year, Love of Spirit Spiritualist Church provided a special [interfaith] candlelight service to remember those who had transitioned due to violence... Dec. 27 at 5pm central time [6 pm Eastern time], Prayers for Peace will be presented through Zoom... We invite any NSAC ordained minister to offer a prayer during this service... Others who wish to join may inquire by contacting Bonnie Crosier, OM • Love of Spirit Spiritualist Church, NSAC • info@yourloveofspirit.com, 309-830-2259.”
- NSAC Online Offerings: To find out more about Spiritualism online, consider these resources, with presentations from NSAC Spiritualists, and from aligned individuals and organizations:
 - Lily Dale now has an internet radio station. Visit <https://www.blogtalkradio.com/lilydaleradio> to play podcasts from your computer, or download the “Google Podcasts” app and search for “Lily Dale Radio.”
 - The NSAC has listings on Facebook of “NSAC Online Services and Classes” at <https://facebook.com/groups/340569476910210>.

With love, light, laughter to all—and wishes for a safe Christmas and a delightful New Year—Jeanne Laurel, president@firstspiritualisttemple.com, 716-876-4805 (home/land), 716-208-0624 (cell)