



The First Spiritualist Temple of East Aurora

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

*President Jeanne Phoenix Laurel, Ph.D.
president@firstspiritualisttemple.com*

*Pastoral Committee Chair Beverly Burke
pastoral@firstspiritualisttemple.com*

Newsletter January 18, 2021

By the numbers

- December 2019:
 - 1 snow day; 5 worship services
 - 198 attending (40 people average); \$1,751.49 offering.
- December 2020:
 - 1 snow day; 4 worship services (including one on Facebook)
 - 93 attending (23 people average); \$470.00 offering.

Welcome to new roles, new faces!

- Secretary: The board has agreed to the appointment of Sandra Lombardo as our new church secretary. Sandra has a background (and day-job) in medical sales. We'll be working out how to divide tasks over the coming months, and Sandra will be taking over the email address secretary@firstspiritualisttemple.com.
- New Members: Please join us in welcoming the following folks to membership in the First Spiritualist Temple of East Aurora:
 - Darlene Kerr, board approved at Dec. 2020 meeting
 - Jodie Backer, board approved at Jan. 2021 meeting
 - Allen Formholtz, board approved at Jan. 2021 meeting
 - Samantha Winger, board approved at Jan. 2021 meeting

Fare thee well in Summerland

In loving memory of Albert and Charlene Kleinschmidt. For many years, this lovely couple were members of the First Spiritualist Temple of East Aurora. Charlene was an Ordained Minister, National Spiritualist Teacher and Certified Medium; Albert was a Certified Medium and Commissioned Healer. They had been members of the Lily Dale Spiritualist Church, serving the church and Lily Dale Assembly. In their later years, they moved to Kalispell, Montana to be near family; Albert passed in November, and Charlene in December.

We will miss them, and will be holding a memorial service for them in our garden when pandemic and weather conditions permit. Al and Charlene have made a generous donation to the upkeep and improvement of our memorial garden.

Awaiting a welcome

- Audit Committee: Because of pandemic and personal upheavals, our audit committee has not been able to check our financial books regularly during the past year. Here is what our bylaws (article VII, section 8) say about the Audit Committee:
 - It shall be the duty of the Audit Committee to examine and audit the financial books, one or more times, as needed, prior to the annual meeting and to present a report in writing to the members.
 - The Financial Secretary and Treasurer are excluded from participation on this Committee.



Given that Darlene Feskun and I have been involved in processing financial transactions over the past year, we should probably be excluded as well for the sake of propriety.

Julie Braun, Trustee on the board, has volunteered to serve on this committee; we need at least one person, preferably two additional people, to serve. The job consists of comparing ledger entries, receipts, check stubs and “incoming cash envelopes” with each other to make sure information has been properly reported and entered.

The church’s fiscal year ends March 31, to allow time for financial information to be consolidated and presented at the annual member meeting, the first Sunday in June. Members of this committee need to meet in person to cross-check various paper records.

- Technology and Social Media Committee: This is not a “standing committee”—that is, it isn’t yet mentioned in the bylaws. However, the pandemic has accelerated our need to focus on this area.

Of special significance: the board at its January 2021 meeting approved the possibility of offering online Zoom access to services, or offering services by Zoom only. During the shut-down in spring 2020, we did offer Facebook streaming services, with music, a speaker, and a service chair, but without the congregation. The problem with Facebook is that we cannot control who is viewing the service—and we want to keep our congregation and visitors safe from bad actors online. Zoom will allow us to screen those who attend, in much the same way a live service provides accountability.

Anyone interested in figuring out the wiring needed to make this happen, please meet on January 31, 2021 after service, at about 12:30 p.m. We’ll look at our camera upstairs, our closed-circuit feed downstairs, and figure out how to make it all work with Zoom. If we finish up quickly, we can brainstorm other technology needs.

- Pastoral Committee round-up: A number of years back, our church agreed to have a Pastoral Committee (rather than a single pastor). The Board handles business-related elements of church management, and the Pastoral Committee oversees spiritual concerns. (Board and Pastoral work hand-in-glove in practice, but each group has a specific focus and jurisdiction.) A few years after that, we amended our bylaws to set the Pastoral Committee’s term of office at two years.

When we hold our 2021 annual member meeting (we hope, on the first Sunday in May, unless the pandemic intervenes), the two-year term of office for Pastoral Committee members is up. Members may vote the current Pastoral Committee members into office for another two-year term (Beverly Burke, Chair; Beth Heaney; Cheryl Ziccardi, Secretary). They may also vote to elect additional members to the Pastoral Committee.

Bylaws article VI describes the Pastoral Committee in more detail than there is room for here; however, here’s a brief overview:

- Attends to the spiritual needs of the church
 - Committee consists of 5 members who have been members for at least 2 years, and who have knowledge or credentials appropriate for the office
 - The board serves as a nominating committee, inviting applications in January and reviewing those interested in running for office at the March board meeting
- Board positions open for election: In addition to Pastoral Committee members being selected at the annual membership meeting, the following positions will also be completing their two-year terms, and thus available to candidates who wish to run for these offices:
 - President (incumbent Jeanne Laurel)
 - Secretary (incumbent Sandra Lombardo)
 - Financial Secretary (incumbent Donna Bush)
 - Two trustees/odd year (incumbents Lynette Lex, Tom Schickling)

Board positions run for two years. Elections of officers are staggered; in even-numbered years (like 2022), we elect vice president, treasurer, and two additional trustees.

Candidates must have been members of the church in good standing for two years prior to standing for election. However, if no candidates are elected, the President (upon advice from the board and the members) may appoint an individual to serve in a vacant office.

Events

- Pastoral Committee will meet with the congregation on **Sunday, March 02, 2021** immediately after service, upstairs in the worship area. Student healers and message workers are encouraged to attend. These meetings offer a chance to discuss concerns, issues, reasons for celebration with the pastoral committee; all are welcome.
- Thought Exchange continues to meet the **first and third Monday** of each month. We meet at **7 p.m.** by Zoom only, and focus on a topic agreed upon at the previous meeting. Anyone may attend. We're using the same Zoom log-in information through the end of April:
 - In the Zoom portal, enter meeting ID 964 7675 6900; or
 - Open this link in your web browser: <https://zoom.us/j/96476756900>; or
 - Use any phone for audio only; dial 929-205-6099, enter the meeting ID above.
- Board Meetings are held every month, on the second Sunday of the month, starting at 1:30 p.m. (If we need to vary from this schedule, we'll announce the alternate date well in advance.)

I've scheduled a single Zoom address for the three board meetings before our annual member meeting in May—February 14, March 14, April 11—using a single Zoom meeting ID. This way, you don't need to find new information for each meeting. Members are welcome to join any board meeting. Here's how:

 - In the Zoom portal, enter meeting ID 999 6382 1153; or
 - Open this link in your web browser: <https://zoom.us/j/99963821153>; or
 - Use any phone for audio only; dial 929-205-6099, enter the meeting ID above.
- Quilt: Trustee Lyn Batt has purchased a bunch of sunflower fabric, and will be taking up her needle to make us a fabulous quilt to be raffled off. You can see samples of the fabric she'll be using at the end of this newsletter.

Good news: more cushions

The Northern Lights spiritualist church in West Seneca, New York, has closed its doors. However, one of the leaders in charge of distributing various furnishings of the church thought of us. As a result, we are now in possession of a few dozen cushions. Most have sunflower coverings; a few have maroon covers. They are slim and portable, and each has a set of ties which will attach firmly to a folding metal chair seat for a little extra padding and warmth. (Those metal chairs can get cold in the summer air conditioning!)

They're kind of jumbled up in the food service area downstairs right now (we'll tidy up soon). Meanwhile, when we get back to serving brunch, you can help yourself to a little extra comfortable padding for your seat.

Good people, doing good

First Spiritualist Temple members participate in a number of charitable activities, including the following. If you want our local contacts for these groups, please let me know.

- Buffalo Dream Weavers. Warm clothing for Buffalo winters for folks who need it. Search Facebook for "BuffaloDreamWeavers." You can drop off gently used clothing, preferably bagged and labeled, at church.
- FISH of East Aurora. Ecumenical resource in East Aurora for various forms of assistance, including food pantry. Search Facebook for "FishofEastAurora." You can drop off unexpired nonperishables with us, clearly labeled.
- St. Matthias Pet Food Pantry. Cat & dog food, cat litter, for pets in need. Search Facebook for "Smcpetpantry." You can bring in donations, label them and leave them with us.

Useful links and places online

- National Spiritualist Association of Churches
 - Our church is a member of the NSAC. More about the NSAC can be found at <https://nsac.org/>.
 - To request a copy of the NSAC newsletter, email nsacinfo@nsac.org, with subject line “NSAC News request.” In the body of your email, include your name, and the name of your church. To download directly, go to the NSAC website, click on “News and Events,” and select the newsletter(s) to download.
 - If you want to find out more about Spiritualism online, consider these resources, with presentations from NSAC Spiritualists, and from aligned individuals and organizations:
 - Lily Dale internet radio station, <https://www.blogtalkradio.com/lilydaleradio> (or search for “Lily Dale Radio” on your podcast app)
 - Listings on Facebook, “NSAC Online Services and Classes” at (search Facebook for “NSACOnline”).
- First Spiritualist Temple of East Aurora:
 - Our church website is at <http://www.firstspiritualisttemple.com/>. You can find information on upcoming speakers, the latest newsletters, and contact information.
 - Find us on Facebook by searching for “Firstspiritualist.”
 - MeetUp announces workshops and classes folks outside our church might want to attend; find us at <https://www.meetup.com/FirstSpiritualist-Temple/>
- Weather: When we’re closed for weather, you can find the information on our website and Facebook pages. You can also check local television news media:
 - 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>

With love, light, and laughter—as well as big (virtual, because pandemic) hugs, and prayers for everyone’s safety and sanity as we head into a brighter new year – Jeanne Laurel, President, First Spiritualist Temple of East Aurora

jeannelaurel@gmail.com; president@firstspiritualisttemple.com

716-208-0624 (cell, voice or text); 716-876-4805 (home/land)

Bonus to whet your appetite for an upcoming raffle:

Here are sample of the fabric Lyn Batt will be using to make a stunning quilt to be raffled off to benefit the church!

