

Red River Ramblings

Volume 6, Issue 11

December, 2009

Red River Unitarian Universalist Church
 ...a home for religious liberals in Southern Oklahoma and North Texas.

A Month of Sundays

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December 6

Dianna Niemann-Harris

The morning service will dance with the different spiritual and religious traditions incorporated into our holiday decorations at RRUU. The sermon will waltz through the spiritual aspects of the Jewish-Hanukkah, Buddhist- Bodhi, Christian-Christmas, and Pagan - Yule. Together we will wonder at differences and similarities as we seek after our common threads as spiritual beings in the universal tapestry.

December 14

Megan Dalby-Jones

Daily Acts of Domestic Faith: A Unitarian Universalist Hanukkah Reflection

Ministerial student and frequent guest speaker, Ms. Megan Dalby-Jones brings us a holiday themed service. Her calm, thought-provoking sermons are an on-going source of inspiration and insight to us here at RRUU.

December 20

Reverend Dr. Jeff Lancaster

**Director, Pastoral Care
 Texoma Medical Center**

Reverend Lancaster will fill our pulpit with a look at the significance of Christmas. As a Chaplain who ministers to people of all faiths and people of no faith, his message will be directed to speak to us where we are in a season of love and generosity.

December 24

Christmas Eve Service

The Worship Arts Team

Watch the weekly announcements for the details of this year's Christmas Eve service. The "news" and "differents" are not quite worked out, but expect something nostalgic and magical from our hard-working Worship Arts Team.

December 27

**Reflections on
 Another Year's End**

Our tradition of having an informal time of sharing on the Sunday following Christmas continues this year, as we invite our members and friends to bring a selected reading to share with the congregation. Your literary excerpts and poems will ideally be of a spiritual or contemplative nature, and should be under three minutes long.



Adult Forum
 Worship & Children's RE

10:00am
 11:15am

Calendar of Events

December, 2009

- 4 - Fri, noon - MINDFULNESS, meditation
- 4 - Fri, 7 pm - UUUJAM, music

- 8 - Tues, 6:30 pm - Board Meeting

- 11 - Fri, noon - MINDFULNESS, meditation
- 11 - Channakuh begins

- 13 - Sun, after church - Free Thinkers, humanist circle

- 15 - Tues, 7:30 pm - GREEN TEAM, environmental

- 18 - Fri, noon - MINDFULNESS, meditation
- 18 - Fri, 7:30 - EARTH SPIRIT, nature based spirituality

- 24 - Thur, Christmas Eve service
- 25 - Christmas Day

- 27 - Sun, 12:45 - IT TAKES A VILLAGE, family

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 All January newsletter submissions are
 due to
newsletter@rruu.org
 by December 27th, at
 5:00 p.m.

December Birthdays

- 3 - Matt Schulze
- 4 - Donna Toerper
- 16 - Suellen Davis
- 17 - Nicolas Gould
- 17 - Amy Hoffman-Shehan
- 19 - Brittany Vera
- 29 - Aiden Baker
- 29 - Emi Shaw



New Member Celebration

November 8, 2009



Green Team Tip of the Month October, 2009

Washing your clothes in hot instead of cold for a year, uses more electricity than leaving the refrigerator door open 24 hours a day for a year.

Outcome of Congregational Meeting

November 8, 2009

The minutes were approved as amended to include the submitter's name, remove language which might indicate judgment of proceedings, and correct spelling of names of congregational members - these will be posted on the "Board Board" in the church when available.

Behavioral Covenant - Passed

Green Policy - Changed to Green Guidelines and Passed as amended

Budget - Passed

Bylaws - amended and Passed

Nomination Committee. To abide by the new bylaws the president was required to appoint the two needed members of the Nomination Committee. A straw vote was taken and the top two candidates being Dan Altoff and Shann Schubert are appointed by the President, Marla Loturco to join Marion Hill on the committee - they will select their own chair

Committee on Ministry: Carolyn Cameron and Sue Wells were voted by the congregation to join Elbert Hill on that committee - they will select their own chair.

Logo Committee will continue work on the logos as directed by Congregation.

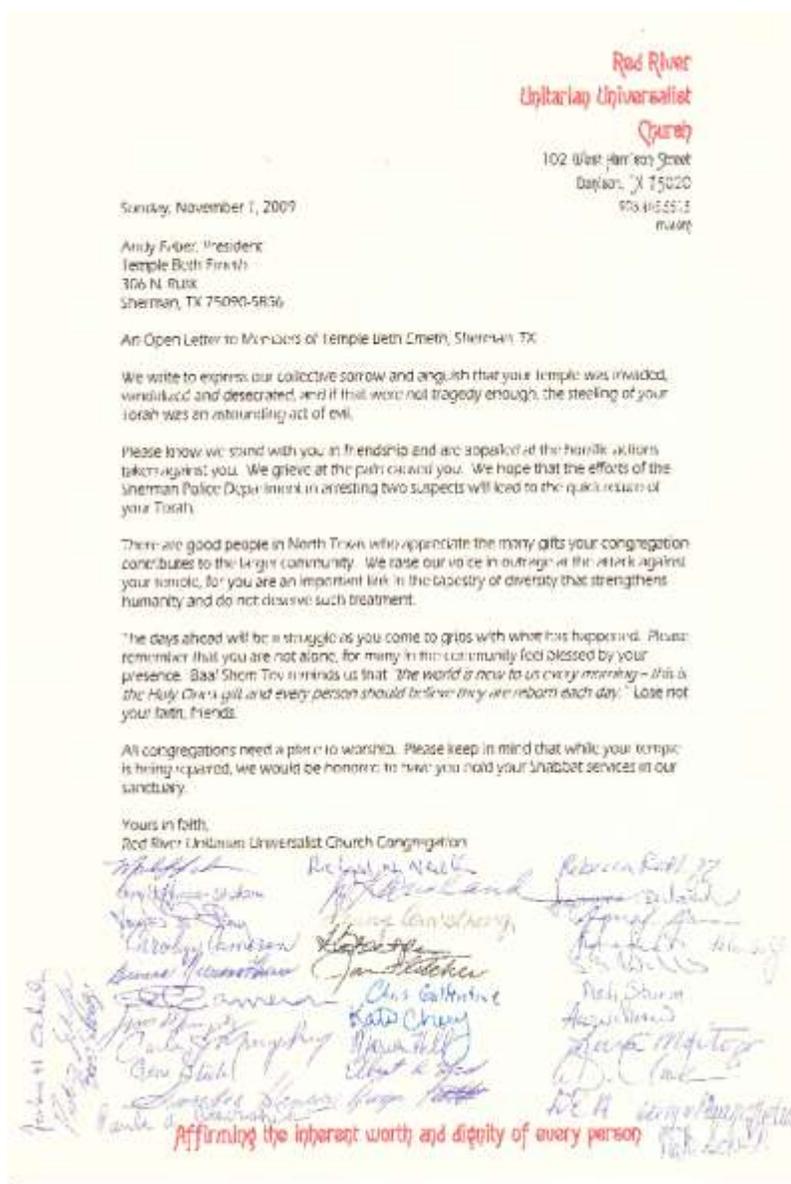


E-mail Etiquette Tip of the Month

Remember the "Rule of Three." If it takes three e-mail exchanges to sort out an issue, it's better to make a phone call to communicate.

Congregational Letter Sent to Temple Beth Emeth

The following is a copy of the original letter sent to Temple Beth Emeth to show our concern and support for them after the vandalism and destruction of their temple. It was suggested that it be reprinted in the newsletter for anyone who did not have the opportunity to sign the letter, but would share the value of its message.





2009 NTAUUS AWARDS PROGRAM

The North Texas Association of Unitarian Universalist Societies (NTAUUS) is formally announcing the creation of its first annual NTAUUS recognition awards. The awards are to be given to individuals in recognition of their contributions to the Unitarian Universalist religion and congregations in north Texas.

There are three categories of awards. These awards are named after three individuals who are recognized within the denomination for their extraordinary contributions.

Robert Raible Award: Leadership (Minister)

Ruth Clark Award: Support (Staff Person)

Marty Robinson Award: Volunteerism

The awards will be given to individuals in recognition of outstanding service in the designated category that has benefited his or her congregation or other NTAUUS congregations, NTAUUS itself, or the cause of Unitarian Universalism in North Texas.

Nominating criteria and procedures are located on line at <http://www.ntauus.org/awards.shtml>. Nominations must be submitted to Pat Davidson, by February 1, 2010.

Pat Davidson

Phone: (214)-361-5638

E-mail: patandmarty@mail.com

Ten Good Reasons for joining a Unitarian Universalist Congregation



1. Because here we join with open hearts and minds to worship together, seeking what is sacred among us.
2. Because here we are a part of a long, liberal tradition of reason and tolerance, of hope and liberation.
3. Because here we honor our Jewish and Christian roots, and also reach out to know the great truths found in other religious expressions.

4. Because here we acknowledge that revelation is never sealed and empower ourselves to search for new truths.
5. Because here we nurture our children's enthusiasms and encourage their questions.
6. Because here we welcome diverse people and views.
7. Because here we join our strength with others to create a more just society.
8. Because here we respect the whole self --mind, body, and spirit working together.
9. Because here we encourage each other to be true to ourselves.
10. Because here we build a supportive community that eases our loneliness and opens our hearts.

(copyright 1995 - Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations)

Children's Religious Education



Teacher Helen Schulze continues the study of the UUA curriculum, *Learning and Living the UU Principles*, with the children of RRUU. Children's RE begins after the children are sung out by the congregation. Snack and a drink are provided, and there is a huge emphasis on having FUN!

Anyone interested in helping should speak with Helen at the church on Sunday morning.

Adult Forum



At 10 a.m. on Sundays, adults meet in fellowship hall to discuss selected topics. All are welcome to attend, meet new faces and old friends, have a cup of coffee/tea, and join the discussion.

Board Bits

What your board did at their last meeting
(November 10, 2009)



We enjoy great participation on the board – all were in attendance except for Dianna who was available by phone. We started at 6:45 pm and went home around 9:00 pm. No other members of the congregation were present.

Jim Murphy acted as our Process Observer and time-keeper for the meeting.

Minutes were approved for the last meeting and reports were accepted.

Again need one more person for Safe Congregation Panel

Three people are attending the SWUUC Fall Leadership Conference from the church, either paying for it themselves or with some scholarship reimbursements. Marla Loturco is taking the Small Vital Congregations Track, Carla Murphy is taking the Beyond Fundraising Track and Penny Armstrong is taking the Religious Education Track.

To do lists are being accomplished by each board member but they continue to keep growing each month.

The Short Term plan was reviewed and we began to work on a plan of action to accomplish the tasks. Each committee is being asked to submit policies & procedures, please consider including: Definition/description of committee, Policies, Estimated time commitments, & skill requirements for membership.

Carla Murphy will be replacing Dianna Niemann-Harris as NTAUUS representative until such time as the number of representatives from small churches is changed to one.

Brief discussion of our response to Temple Beth Emeth and thanks to the congregation for their warm generosity.

Cynthia brought the minutes of the Congregational Meeting for the board to read/discuss for possible additions/clarifications. We reviewed all aspects of the Congregational Meeting to determine which things worked and what we might change for the next meeting.

If you would like to see the full board minutes – they will be **posted on the “Board Board” in the back of the Sanctuary** as soon as they are available. The next board meeting is December 8th, starting at 6:30 p.m. Board meetings are open to all: if you wish to be on the agenda please contact a board member. **Deadline for the agenda is December 4th.** Those wishing a few minutes during the **“open mic” will want to be ready to speak near the end of the meeting.**

Treasurer’s Report

November, 2009



Income, “in kind” giving and fiscal management at RRUU continue in profoundly positive ways. With the revised budget adopted at the special congregational meeting, the effort of the Board to be good stewards of the church resources is greatly enhanced.

It is with GREAT delight I am able to report to you the ChaliceArt Sale held in late November exceeded the income from any previous sale. Many thanks to everyone who made the choice to wear their UU faith and purchased pieces through the sale. Please speak to Carolyn or Bruce Cameron (our incredible ChalceArtists and benefactors) if you would yet like to make a purchase. With some purchases still in progress, a final figure from this awesome fund raiser is not available as of newsletter deadline.

Following is a synopsis of the most recent treasurer’s report to the Board.

For October we had total revenues of \$1,798.28 and our expenses were \$3,075.81 for an (anticipated) net loss of \$1,277.53. October included three weeks of **workshop honoraria plus a double payment of our “fair share”** to SWUUC and NTAUUS to bring us up to date. These expenditures were made based on the September net profit of 1,136.50. In addition to these figures, a special offering was received in response to the desecration of the Beth Emeth Synagogue in Sherman. The \$440 collected was forwarded to our sisters and brothers at Beth Emeth who graciously received our gifts.

If you have questions I might respond to as your treasurer, please send email to routreasurer@hotmail.com or call 903-327-2069 and I will get back to you as soon as possible.

Respectfully submitted,
Dianna Niemann-Harris
RRUU Treasurer

Message from Marla

Marla Loturco,
President, RRUU



What a wonderful Congregational meeting we had on Nov 8th. With over 50% of the membership participating – an impressive number by any standards, we did good work together. Bylaws are dynamic - they continue to grow and change to reflect the church growth and change. We passed a new set of by-laws, reducing the number of pages from 23 to 9 and **couldn't have done it without the extensive labor of love done** by the by-laws committee: Jim Murphy, L.D. Clark, Gerry Shehan and Don Durland who reviewed a number of by-laws from UU churches across the country. None were 23 pages long! Thanks also to the congregation input for some fine tuning.

We also approved a revised budget for the remainder of the **fiscal year (through Jun 30); endorsed the Green Team's** Guidelines regarding sustainability; and approved a Congregational Behavioral Covenant.

Carolyn Cameron and Sue Wells were elected to the Committee on Ministry and will join Elbert Hill who has one year remaining on his term. Our by-laws state that openings due to resignation on the Nominating Committee shall be filled by appointment, but because the Nominating committee is normally elected by the congregation, I asked for a straw vote on a slate of people who were presented by the board. Dan Althoff and Shann Schubert were the final recommendation from the meeting and were appointed by me to join Marion Hill.

We also looked at various designs being considered to update our church logo. The general feeling is to incorporate a flaming chalice and a river in a design that can become uniquely Red River UU Church. I have been told by the Logo Committee that you will find the final designs elsewhere in this issue of the newsletter.

I must admit I was somewhat nervous about presiding at my first-ever congregational meeting and want to express a sincere thank you to everyone. We managed to wade through a series of important issues, engage in lively conversations and finish in a bit over two hours. The atmosphere was friendly, cheerful, informative, supportive and encouraging. What a tremendous group of kindred spirits we are!

Three members of the congregation attended the Southwestern Unitarian Universalist Conference (SWUUC) Leadership Training in November. Penny Armstrong, Carla Murphy and I ventured to Glen Lake Conference Center in Glen Rose for a week-end of concentrated training. Carla Murphy brings back lots of valuable information on Church Funding - stewardship drives, fund raisers, and money management. Penny Arm-

strong found lots of helpful information for Religious Education, Safe Congregations and to assist her in co-facilitating the Adult Forum along with Suzanne Durland. I attended the Small Vital Congregations and learned various approaches for growing a church, working with conflicts and making ourselves known in the community. Each of the churches represented in my session made a brief presentation on their church and what we do in the community. Our church received high praise for our Earth Day Festival as a way that small numbers may make a big difference in a community. (On that note and as an aside - the new Earth Day 2010 website address is <http://rruu.org/EarthDay2010/earthday2010.html>).

The whole congregation benefits from such training programs that are offered throughout the year. It not only is a great way to glean valuable information, it is wonderful to meet **other UU's and learn what they do in their local congregations.** Conferences will be posted in the church foyer as they are announced and anyone interested may attend.

If there is anything that all Unitarian Universalists enjoy, it is breaking bread together and our Thanksgiving Feast for 54 people was a splendid ending to a moving Thanksgiving worship celebration centering on gratitude. I will always be awed by the culinary talents that culminate in such delicious selections. I am equally awed by the bonds of fellowship we create and am honored to play a part in what it is that brings each of us to the church.

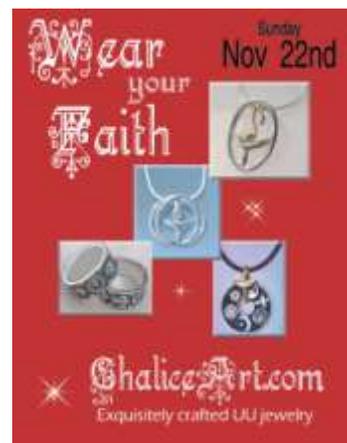
I was also overwhelmed by the response to our fundraiser. I want to thank Carolyn and Bruce for hosting the Chalice Art Fund Raiser and everyone who purchased jewelry in support of RRUU. We made \$3265 for RRUU which is the largest Chalice Art Fund Raiser yet!

The Holidays of December are upon us. The Season of the **Heart is a precious time and isn't it wonderful that we have a** church family with which to share it?

Happy Holidays.

Marla

Many, Many
THANKS
to
Chalice Art



Please remember that you are part of the RRUU caring circle. It doesn't take a committee to care; it takes each of us. Spread your love; share your joy! Send an email to encourage someone who might need it today.



*Greeters
Needed!*



RRUU needs your warm, friendly smile! Each Sunday, various members and friends stand at the door to welcome each of you to our Sunday Service. Those GREETERS welcome our visitors and assist them with name tags, filling out Visitor Information Sheets and direct them to the information forms about RRUU. They also distribute the Order of Worship. GREETERS have the opportunity to see everyone who comes that day. What a wonderful service for both GREETER and RRUU! Sign up for the remaining two Sundays in December and see the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board for 2010. Become a GREETER and let your smile shine!

LOGO TASK FORCE

Your church logo task force continues its work toward creating a fresh symbol to represent RRUU that we can wear, carry, stamp, mail, and use in innumerable ways to identify ourselves as a community.

Thank you for your dedication to this task!

WELCOMING CONGREGATION PROGRAM

The following excerpt from the UUA website briefly describes the welcoming congregation program. The idea of establishing RRUU as an official welcoming congregation has been mentioned and may be brought up as long-range planning gets underway. The Board would like to know if you have thoughts on the matter.

History

In 1987 the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) established the Common Vision Planning Committee. This committee found many negative attitudes, deep prejudices, and profound ignorance about bisexual, gay, and lesbian people, which resulted in the exclusion of bisexual, gay, and lesbian people from their churches. As a result of these findings, the delegates of the 1989 UUA General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to initiate the Welcoming Congregation program to educate its members. Each congregation adapts the program to best meet its goals and each unique situation can bring positive changes to individuals and congregations.

What's Ahead

Our vision goes beyond the Welcoming Congregation Program. By taking this first step, we hope to explore more issues than those presented here—like sexism, racism, ableism, to name just a few. Becoming a Welcoming Congregation will act as a catalyst to learning more about ourselves and to ending exclusion. Only when we are truly open to the wealth of diversity in our world will the inherent worth and dignity of every person be affirmed with a large voice.

[from: <http://www.uua.org/leaders/leaderslibrary/welcomingcongregation/index.shtml>]



RRUU Chalice Circles: Which Small Group Is Right For You?

Chalice Circles are small groups of people who meet regularly for the purpose of getting to know one another while learning, discussing, and acting on topics of common interest. All members and friends are welcome! If you are interested in attending a particular circle, contact Circle Coordinator, Jan Fletcher, at chalicecircles@rruu.org.



MI NDFULNESS, a Meditation Circle, meets every Friday at noon at the home of Sue Wells in Whitesboro. Facilitator is Richard Newlin. **NEW AND EXPERIENCED MEDITATORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME.**



FREETHI NKERS, a Humanist Circle, meets the second Sunday of each month in Fellowship Hall at 12:45. The next meeting will be December 13 for a discussion on the nature of attractiveness. Facilitator is Jim Gauthier. **ALL FREETHINKERS ARE WELCOME!**



GREEN TEAM, an Environmental Action Circle, meets the Third Tuesday of each month at 7:30 pm at the home of Amy Hoffman-Shehan in Sherman. Next meeting is Dec 15 to continue preparations for Earth Day April, 2010.

The theme will be "Green For Health" exploring the link between the health of our planet and our physical health. Plans for Earth Day are progressing. They'll work with Grayson County Homebuilders, Austin College, and other organizations to coordinate and promote multiple events around Earth Day. This is an opportunity for RRUU members to become involved and give our church a public face. Facilitator is Amy Hoffman-Shehan. **ALL THOSE WHO LOVE THE EARTH ARE WELCOME!**

I T TAKES A VI LLAGE, a Circle of Parents Supporting Parents, meets on the fourth Sunday of each month in Fellowship Hall at 12:45. Next meeting is December 27. Gerry plans to schedule a trip to the Science Place museum. Facilitator is Gerry Shehan. **ALL FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN ARE WELCOME!**



A **Christian Chalice Circle** is in the planning stages. More information will be available next month.

MOVEABLE FEAST, a Cooking and/or Eating Circle, meets on moveable dates at moveable locations. Next dinner is December 5 at 6:30 p.m. at the Sherman home of Amy Hoffman-Shehan. Members will contribute finger foods, hors d'oeuvres, tapas, or other munchies.

Everyone is welcome, but anyone desiring to attend should let Amy and facilitator Elbert Hill know beforehand. Facilitators are Elbert & Marion Hill. **ANYONE WHO LOVES COOKING AND/OR EATING IS WELCOME!**



PFFFT, an Outdoor Activities Circle, meets each month on a Saturday. Next meeting for a possible trip to Fort Worth or Dallas art museums is TBA. Facilitator is Suzanne Durland. **ANYONE WHO LOVES THE OUTDOORS IS WELCOME!**



RED RI VER EARTH SPI RI T, a Nature-Based Spirituality Circle, meets seasonally at the Church.

Next meeting for Winter Solstice will be Friday, December 18 at 7:30 at the church. Facilitator is Penny Armstrong. **NEW MEMBERS AND GUESTS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!**



UUJAM, a Music-Making Chalice, meets the first Friday of each month at 7 pm at the home of Jan Fletcher in Sherman. Next meeting is December 4.

The JAM meets in an informal circle to share favorite songs and all musicians and listeners are welcome. Bring your instruments and songs to share. Facilitator is Jan Fletcher. **ALL MUSIC MAKERS AND LISTENERS ARE WELCOME!**



LAI D BACK BOOK GROUP, a Book Reading and Discussion Interest Group, meets periodically to discuss the selected reading and share insights. Next meeting is TBA. Facilitator is Suzanne Durland. **ALL WHO ENJOY THOUGHTFUL LITERATURE ARE WELCOME!**





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 ...a home for religious liberals in Southern Oklahoma and North Texas

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 PO Box 1806
 Denison, Texas 75021

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 E-mail: info@rruu.org

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.RRUU.ORG

Church Leadership

Board of Trustees

Marla Loturco,

President (2010)

Don Durland,

Vice-president (2010)

Dianna Niemann-Harris,

Treasurer (2010)

Amy Hoffman-Shehan,

Trustee-at-Large (2010)

Jim Murphy,

Trustee-at-Large (2010)

L. D. Clark,

Trustee-at-Large (2011)

Cynthia Evetts,

Secretary (2011)

Safe Congregation Panel

Marla Loturco, Helen Schulze,

Jim Gauthier, Suzanne Durland

Team Leaders

Worship: Darrah Dunn

Chalice Circles: Jan Fletcher

Adult Forum: Penny Armstrong & Suzanne Durland

Children's Religious Education: Helen Schulze

Youth Advisor: Open

Membership: Carla Murphy

Social Action: Dianna Niemann-Harris (Acting)

Building and Grounds: Doyle Adams

Communications: Open

Caring: Kris Riek

Ways & Means: L.D. Clark (Acting)

Hospitality: Open

Historian: Open

Newsletter: Cynthia Evetts & Shann Schubert

Website: Open

Committee on Ministry

Elbert Hill, Carolyn Cameron, Sue Wells