

Red River Ramblings

Volume 8, Issue 1

January 2011

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



A Month of Sundays

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January 2nd

Wendy Gruber, speaking
 "Reflections on Rosh Hashanah"

Wendy Gruber, a member of Temple Beth Emeth in Sherman will join us to share some of the history, traditions and the basic tenets of the Jewish New Year, Rosh Hashanah. Her remarks will be a part of a special New Years service as we celebrate 2011 and learn more about the Jewish new year, 5772 which begins next September.

January 9th

Reverend Pamela Wat, preaching

The recently ordained Rev. Pamela Wat, who has preached for us several times, returns to our pulpit this week. Watch the weekly announcements for further details about her service.

January 16

Worship Arts Team, leading
 "As You Like It"

This special service promises to be both unique and meaningful. Each element of the order of worship, including hymns and readings, will be individually chosen by members of the RRUU congregation. The selections will then be put together to create a serendipitous worship service which celebrates our diversity and our community.

January 23

Worship Arts Team, leading
 "Sanctity of Life"

As churches all over our community commemorate Sanctity of Life Sunday, RRUU will explore what this topic means to our liberal faith. As part of our service we will have a New Member Recognition ceremony.

January 30

5th Sunday Forum
 Callie Clinic

On the occasional 5th Sunday in a single month, we forgo a regular worship service and have a presentation/Q and A session which focuses on a particular social or political issue. For January's 5th Sunday forum, we will welcome a representative from The Callie Clinic, which serves those infected with HIV/AIDS in Grayson, Cooke and Fannin Counties. They provide clients with Outpatient Medical, Food Pantry, Transportation, Dental, Case Management, Housing Assistance and free HIV testing.



Adult Forum
 Worship & Children's RE

10:00am
 11:15am

Calendar of Events

January, 2011

- 1 – HAPPY NEW YEAR
- 2 – Sunday Activities
Mission, Vision, Planning Team, 12:15 pm
After church lunch bunch, 12:45 pm
- 6 – Board Reports due, 5 pm
- 7 – UUJam, 7:00 pm
- 8 – Worship Arts Team, 10 am
PFFFT, TBA
- 9 – Sunday Activities
- 11 – Board of Trustees, 6:30 pm
- 16 – Sunday Activities
- 17 – Martin Luther King Holiday
- 18 – Green Team, 7:30 pm
- 21 – RREarth Spirit, 7:30 pm
- 22 – **“Growing Into The Future” workshop, 9-5**
- 23 – New Member Recognition Sunday
After church lunch bunch, 12:45
- 29 – Deadline for February Newsletter, 5 pm
- 30 – Fifth Sunday Forum, 11:15 am

January Birthdays

- 7 - Cynthia Evetts
- 10 - Anna Shaw *
- 11 - Ruth Ann Snider
- 19 - John (JD) Green *
- 26 - Matthew Rawson *
- 31 - Lura Moitozo



Green Team Tip of the Month

Here are a few quick tips for reusing coffee grounds: 1) Use coffee grounds as a plant fertilizer. Sprinkle the grounds around the base of the plant then dig them in a little. They can also be sprinkled directly on your lawn. 2) Add the grounds to compost piles to enrich nutrient content - the grounds contain Nitrogen, Phosphorus, Potassium, Calcium, Magnesium and Sulfur. 3) Add water to the grounds and allow to stand for a day or two. Drain off and then use as a liquid plant fertilizer - cold coffee that you'd usually toss down the sink can also be used in this way. 4) After drying the grounds thoroughly, add them to an old stocking. Tie off the ends and then use in cupboards and your refrigerator as an odor absorber. Alternatively, you can just place the dried grounds in a container of some sort.

The E-Flat Porch Band Will Open the 2011 Harmony House Concert Series

If you are suffering from "jet lag" from the holidays or a "let down", you need to treat yourself to an evening that will boost your spirits and start off your New Year with fun. Harmony House Concerts will host the musical duo, the E-Flat Porch Band, to start your year "angst-free" (to quote one of the eflaters description of their music) on Saturday night, January 15, '11 at 7 pm. Make your reservation early.....you won't be sorry, as you grin and listen to these guys play tunes from legendary folk musicians and some of their own original songs.

To make reservations, please call 903/583-2661 and leave your name, contact information, and the number of seats needed. Read more about the E-Flat Porch Band by visiting their website, www.eflatporchband.com.



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

Member News Once Upon A Time...



Once upon a time at Red River Unitarian Universalist Church there were two people who needed some unexpected and exceptional help... and you were there!

With very little notice the word was passed, a member who was out of work needed a large storage unit emptied. She had nowhere for her belongings to go. A few people began to talk and work on a plan. It looked like **maybe this mission might be accomplished... then the second call came.**

Actually it was wonderful news... a young Momma and her four boys who had been living in the shelter for a full month had a home to move in to! They would be able to get moved and at least a bit settled before **Christmas. It was time to rejoice and be glad... then to panic!** Word came down and as fate would have it, the unpacked toys, clothes, household goods and furniture of the young family needed to be moved THE SAME DAY as the storage items of the other person.

Now one way to look at the situation would have been to own that we are a small church of less than fifty members. The majority of us, shall we say past our prime in the moving business. The RRUU family could have simply said we feel your need but cannot manage assistance. **It didn't happen that way at all.**

The scrappy "little church that could" began to mobilize.... One, two, three people with trucks emerged and volunteered to work on the storage move. A cost-free location was offered, along with another small truck. Someone arranged to pay a young, strong friend to come help with the heavier items. The pieces began to **fall into place for Thing 1... now time to tackle Thing 2.**

It began with organizing the various needs for **moving a family... boxes, packing, stacking, washing linens and clothes, arranging food and drink for workers, child-care, unpacking, basic food needs to set up a new household.** One after another supervisors were **recruited for each of the essential needs... and people willing to help in various ways shot emails in and made calls.** Boxes appeared seemingly from nowhere and willing souls came for one or two hours or days to load them up. A cooler of food and drink was dropped off **one day... the next day's lunch was pizza delivery.**

RRUU folk of all shapes, sizes, abilities and talents did all they could to accomplish what was needed. The church

nursery became kid central with rotating child care providers working to lovingly amuse the smaller three kiddos.

Suddenly, with it was nightfall on December 11, 2010. Every item from that tightly packed storage unit was safe in garage or barn, covered well and snug for the night. At the new home, beds were assembled and made up with fresh linens, unpacked boxes gathered in a back room while those still full were stacked for later attention.

Babies fed and bathed snuggled down in their own warm beds, familiar furnishings and toys surrounding them again in a safe and secure home provided by a **loving Momma. Bone weary "past our prime" movers** rubbed in a bit of Ben Gay, took a couple Tylenol or Aleve and dropped exhaustedly into bed. The next morning at church a pantry shower produced some 10 large reusable shopping bags and three good sized boxes of food, diapers, paper products and even some special treats to fill the cupboards in the new home.

It was finished (more or less)... with the generous giving of all and the above-and-beyond effort of 20-25 "Past our Primetime" Movers from RRUU, what was needed was accomplished. Often there is reason to feel wonderment and pride at being a part of this unique community that is Red River Unitarian Universalist... and perhaps never more than on December 11, 2010. From those who were the beneficiaries of the work, a heartfelt thanks. From those who were able to give of time and self to accomplish the seemingly impossible, a heartfelt thanks. This beloved, this is what being a spiritual family is all about.

Children's Religious Education



No information was available at the time of this printing.

Adult Forum



Penny Armstrong reports that the programs for adult forum for January are titled "Deep and Simple." We have covered seasonal celebrations and traditions for the month of Dec. with our forum gatherings averaging 12 folks on any given morning.

NEW MEMBER RECOGNITION...



Sunday, January 23rd will be the next time we officially welcome all those who have signed the membership book during the last six months (since June 27, 2010). We hope those who have joined the congregation will be with us on that Sunday so we may rightly welcome you in a brief ceremony.



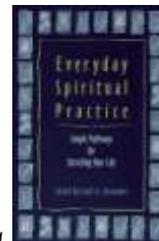
JOINING THE CONGREGATION...

Have you been flirting with the notion of becoming a member of the congregation? If so, you may want to join during January as we will hold our next new member recognition ceremony during worship on Sunday, Jan 23. It has always been our tradition that membership is open to all who are in sympathy with Unitarian Universalism. One joins by signing the membership book and making a contribution of record in support of the church (this can either be financial or a time commitment, according to our bylaws).

Perhaps you have been looking for a church where:
 Your doubts are not ridiculed.
 Your guilts are lightened.
 Your griefs are comforted.
 Your joys are celebrated.
 Your children are taught all religions.
 Your talents are nurtured.
 Your concerns are shared.
 Your reason is honored.
 Your friendships are deepened.
 Your love of art and beauty is expanded.
 Your need to serve others is fostered.
 Your need to laugh is encouraged.
 Your individual decision is treasured.
 Then you have been looking for the Unitarian Universalist Church. These are our aspirations. If they are yours, come join and help us achieve them.

The membership book is available each Sunday. Speak with the board representative if you want to become a member.

Nurturing Your Spiritual Life



In the now classic book *Everyday Spiritual Practice: Simple Pathways for Enriching Your Life*, the Rev. Scott Alexander makes this seemingly simple statement: "In our faith every individual is expected, with the help of clergy and community, to nurture and tend the garden of his or her own religious life each and every day." There's a lot in those thirty-one words—ideas of expectation, the involvement of others, and daily discipline, for example—that might surprise some Unitarian Universalists (UUs) and yet which others have greeted with gratitude. Certainly there is nothing there that is not recognized by the other great religious traditions we humans have developed to respond to, as Forrest Church put it, the challenges of being alive and having to die. The "spiritual life" takes work, and we cannot do it alone.

THE AFTER CHURCH LUNCH BUNCH...

During January the A.C.L.B. - a free-flowing gathering of anyone and everyone who enjoys breaking bread together after church twice a month - will return to a favorite haunt and venture to try out a new place. **We'll start out on January 2nd** at Rancho Grande Mexican Restaurant (2119 Texoma Parkway Sherman – just north of the intersection of Texoma Parkway and North Grand) and again enjoy some fine Tex-Mex fare (at a really fair price) and then on Sunday, Jan 23rd **we'll** check out De Happy Cajun Restaurant in Pottsboro which features hush puppies, jambalaya, steaks, chicken-fried steak, crawfish, fried oysters, stuffed crab along with other goodies. The place is at 5005 N. Fm 120 in Pottsboro (take Fm 406 from Hwy 75 and turn South on Fm 120). Their phone is 903.786.4909. Plan on arriving each Sunday by 12:45 pm and because we each pay for our own lunch, you can eat as inexpensively as you wish. We always strive to select less costly places.



Board Bits

What your Board did at their last meeting, December 14, 2010



If you would like to see the full board minutes – they will be **posted in the “Board Book” in the Sanctuary Office as soon** as they are available. The next board meeting is January 11th, starting at 6:40 p.m. Board meetings

Board Members in attendance included Don Durland, Amy Hoffman-Shehan, Dianna Niemann-Harris, Marla Loturco and Jim Murphy. The meeting began at 6:40 pm and finished around 9:00 pm.

In addition to the standard agenda the board addressed/discussed:

- Sanctuary Art and other Ascetics – a task for will be selected to look at donations from congregation and determine if we need them and how to use the current artwork.
- Committee Chairperson Term Length – Determined that 3 years would be a good term for all appointed team leaders. Two years as chair and one as co-chair and trainer of next chair.
- Hospitality Chairs(s) & discussion of fellowship – Carolyn has volunteered to continue until June and Joyce on a month to month basis. The board is concerned with the lack of a gathering immediately after church.
- Hi Speed internet vs. Burning DVD for service – A suggestion was made to get an internet connection for having some Sunday services use streaming video from other churches. The board has determined at this time we will burn services to DVD and bring to church if we want to use this method – that way the services may be previewed first and better incorporated into our style of worship.
- Clarification of Board Rep Duties for Sunday Morning
- Discussion of Pastoral Concerns – without a Caring Committee the board has set aside time at each meeting to discuss the pastoral concerns of the congregation.

Board meetings are open to all, if you wish to be on the agenda please contact a board member. Deadline for the agenda and reports to the board is January 4th. Those wishing a few minutes during the “open mic” will want to be ready to speak around 7:00 pm.

Treasurer’s Report

The November Profit and Loss statement shows income of \$2,046.69 and expenses of \$2,316.08. This results in a shortage of 269.39 for the month of November.

Despite cutting costs as per congregational recommendations made at our fall meeting, our monthly income and expenses continue to be very close or in deficit ranges. It is likely the Board will seek input of the congregation again in the near future for recommendations concerning continuing to use savings to make up the deficit vs. members taking on some volunteer roles to accomplish things we are currently paying for.



End of the calendar year financial statements will be available as soon as possible. My goal is to have these to you by the end of January. When you receive your giving statement please look it over carefully to insure it agrees with your own records. Some weeks the counters have inadvertently neglected to list names on our deposit slip therefore that giving could not be recorded to credit the giver. Also those who make cash contributions without using an envelope with their name and the amount given written on it cannot be credited for the contribution.

One last thing on giving records; Please let me know in **writing as soon as possible of any “in kind” gifts you have given in the past year. Gifts “in kind” are things you have purchased for and/or given to RRUU.** This includes food for fellowship time, stamps, miles driven **for service projects or doing church “business” (i.e. mileage is a donation to go to say a Worship Arts Team meeting (church business) but not for say going to RRUUJAM (church fellowship).** If in doubt on something, write it on your list and I will let you know if it is **allowable or not. It is so important to report “in kind” as charitable giving!** For those who itemize deductions on taxes, every bit of charitable giving recorded is less cash to taxes and more in your hands. My conviction says the folk of RRUU make wiser decisions about spending and giving than the government will ever **hope to...so do let me know what you have given so I**

The good news on the Treasury front is Treasurer Apprentice Marie Bellman will begin her training in January! The plan is to start with learning to use Quick-Books first then expand the training to include other **aspects of the Treasurer’s job. Marie is enthusiastic and eager to begin learning, which is a rich blessing to her church family!**

Respectfully submitted,
Dianna Niemann-Harris, Treasurer

Message From Marla

Marla Loturco, President, RRUU



A new year is beginning and the board at RRUU is looking to the future. We want to wish you a Happy New Year and encourage you to attend the January 22, Mission, Vision, and Planning Workshop which you will find details of in this newsletter. The board cannot work in a vacuum - we need your participation in the democratic process of our church.

Hope to see you there!

Marla Loturco,
President

Voices of our Liberal Religion: Close friends at church equal happiness



The number of friends you have at your place of worship has more to do with how happy you are than does theology or spirituality, says Chaeyoon Lim, an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who led a study, **“Religion, Social Networks, and Life Satisfaction.”**

The [study](#) is reported in the recent book, [American Grace](#) by David Campbell and Robert D. Putnam. Lim and Putnam, of Harvard University, found that people who have three to five close friends in their congregation are more likely to report they are extremely satisfied with their lives than those people who attend a **place of worship but don't have close friends there.** The full report is available as a PDF [here](#).

“To me, the evidence substantiates that it is not really going to church and listening to sermons or praying that makes people happier, but making church-based friends and building intimate social networks there,” Lim said.

People like to feel that they belong, Lim said. **“One of the important functions of religion is to give people a sense of belonging to a moral community based on religious faith,”** he said. **“This community, however, could be abstract and remote unless one has an intimate circle of friends who share a similar identity. The**

friends in one's congregation thus make the religious community real and tangible, and strengthen one's sense of belonging to the community.”

Posted in [Growth, Resources](#) on December 17th, 2010 by Don Skinner – Comments Off

Shoveling Snow With Buddha

In the usual iconography of the temple or the local Wok you would never see him doing such a thing, tossing the dry snow over a mountain of his bare, round shoulder, his hair tied in a knot, a model of concentration.

Sitting is more his speed, if that is the word for what he does, or does not do.

Even the season is wrong for him. In all his manifestations, is it not warm or slightly humid? Is this not implied by his serene expression, that smile so wide it wraps itself around the waist of the universe?

But here we are, working our way down the driveway, one shovelful at a time. We toss the light powder into the clear air. We feel the cold mist on our faces. And with every heave we disappear and become lost to each other in these sudden clouds of our own making, these fountain-bursts of snow.

This is so much better than a sermon in church, I say out loud, but Buddha keeps on shoveling. This is the true religion, the religion of snow, and sunlight and winter geese barking in the sky, I say, but he is too busy to hear me.

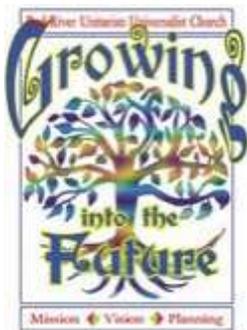
He has thrown himself into shoveling snow as if it were the purpose of existence, as if the sign of a perfect life were a clear driveway you could back the car down easily and drive off into the vanities of the world with a broken heater fan and a song on the radio.

All morning long we work side by side, me with my commentary and he inside his generous pocket of silence, until the hour is nearly noon and the snow is piled high all around us; then, I hear him speak.

After this, he asks, can we go inside and play cards?

Billy Collins
Retrieved from <http://www.poemhunter.com/>

“Growing Into The Future” Workshop, January 22nd.



Everyone in the congregation is invited (and urged) to attend a one-day workshop on Saturday, January 22nd from 9 – 5 with UU consultant, Joe Sullivan who will lead us in creating a new mission and vision statement, and help us focus on a five-year long range plan of action.

Over the last several weeks, and continuing through the first 20 days of January, members of the congregation have been (or will be) participating in small group gatherings where the Mission, Vision, Planning Team are collecting information about what our individual **core values are and what experiences we've had which we felt were inspirational, or spiritual, or religious.** This information will be given to Mr. Sullivan as he prepares for the Saturday workshop.

The importance of this work is well articulated by Mr. Sullivan:
Connected and articulated together, core values, mission and vision are considered the foundation for good governance and healthy congregational life. These intentional, community-created aspirations are given life through the ministries of the congregation and sustained through healthy congregational practices, particularly behavioral covenants, and through accountable organizational practices such as ongoing connection to moral ownership, leadership role clarity, strategic planning, and ongoing monitoring and assessment.

In the free faith tradition, it is our right and our responsibility to determine the purpose, direction and future we wish to hold for our church. Only we can create our mission, our vision and our future plans, therefore it is important that everyone who calls Red River UU Church their religious home participate in this one-time event. This whole process is supported through a special grant we received from the North Texas Association of UU Societies.

We will meet at Hampton Inn (on Highway 75, just south of Hwy 82 in Sherman) on Saturday, January 22, 2011 starting promptly at 9 am and concluding by 5 pm. Lunch will be provided. The full schedule and details of the day will be announced in the e-news, but you can register to attend now (there is no charge for the

workshop or the lunch) by emailing announcements@rruu.org. Together we will continue the work of our church as we “Grow Into The Future!”

The Mission, Vision, Planning Team
Penny Armstrong, Amy Hoffman-Shehan, Doug Strong,
Kat Walston

Social Action Committee

The Social Action Team sponsored our congregation participation in the Unitarian Universalist Association Guest at Your Table project. Collection boxes were turned in the end of December so we will have a total to report out in the February newsletter.



“Share the Plate” offerings of \$50.00 in December went to the Youth Connections Transition Program to help meet the needs of young people turning 18 years old and “aging out” of foster care.



Our January 9th cash offering for “Share the Plate” are designated to the UUA Service Committee.

Donations of cash and non-perishables are always needed at local food pantries. If you are able please join in this ongoing, all church social action project. You are welcome to bring non-perishable foods, paper products and/or hygiene items and leave them in the green plastic bin in the rear of the sanctuary any Sunday. A lock box is in the same area for your gift of cash or check as food pantries are able to buy food for cents on the dollar making gifts of money very appropriate.

“Being in diverse community is essential to making broad-based change in the United States. To enjoy the privilege and responsibility of being in diverse community, people are called to recognize that we share both a common humanity and particular social identities, which accord power in unbalanced ways. Bridging this power divide is at the heart of healing divisions. . . . Although we may share similar visions, the realities of living in a structurally inequitable society shape the attitudes, behaviors, and interactions of us all. In order to confront the power, privilege, and oppression that grow from social identities, we who seek a better world are called to do our own personal change work.”

From *Spirit in Action: Facilitating Circles of Change Curriculum Guide*, 2005, Spirit in Action, Inc.

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, is currently without a host location and facilitator. If you are interested, please contact Chalice Coordinator. **NEW AND EXPERIENCED MEDITATORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME.**



FREETHI NKERS, a Humanist Circle, is currently on temporary break. Facilitator Jim Gauthier will resume in the coming months.



GREEN TEAM, an Environmental Action Circle, meets January 18, the Third Tuesday of the month, at 7:30 pm in Sherman. Plans continue for the 2011 Earth Day Festival. Facilitator is Amy Hoffman-Shehan. **ALL THOSE WHO LOVE THE EARTH ARE WELCOME!**



MOVEABLE FEAST, a Cooking and/or Eating Circle, meets on moveable dates at moveable locations. The January Feast began Dec 31 at the home of Jim & Carla Murphy in Whitesboro to celebrate the New Year with food, fun, & favors! Looking to February, Feasters can choose between dining options with the Hills in Durant or the Camerons in Pottsville – details announced in January. Facilitators are Elbert & Marion Hill. **ANYONE WHO LOVES COOKING AND/OR EATING IS WELCOME!**



PFFFT, an Outdoor Activities Interest Circle, meets each month on a Saturday. January plans to meet at the 2nd **Saturday lecture at Hagerman's** on January 8. Watch the weekly E-News for info. Facilitator is Suzanne Durland. **ANYONE WHO LOVES THE OUTDOORS IS WELCOME!**



RED RIVER EARTH SPIRIT, a Nature-Based Spirituality Circle, meets seasonally at the Church. The next meeting is Friday, January 21 at 7:30 at RRUU. Members will participate in Drumming. Facilitator is Penny Armstrong. **NEW MEMBERS AND GUESTS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!**



UJJAM, a Music-Making Interest Group, meets the first Friday of each month at 7 pm at the home of Jan Fletcher in Sherman. The next meeting will be Friday, January 7. The group meets in an informal session circle with guitars, dulcimers, flutes, keyboards & voices to share favorite songs of all genre and all musicians and listeners are welcome. Bring your instruments, songs and snack/drink 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, discusses the selection via email. Facilitator is Suzanne Durland. **ALL WHO ENJOY THOUGHTFUL LITERATURE ARE WELCOME!**



SPI RIT WI THIN, a New Thought Chalice Circle, is currently taking a break. The group will continue to study *Spirit of Life: Exploring Spirituality for UU's*, a new UU Tapestry of Faith program when it resumes. Facilitator is Richard Newlin.

Two new Chalice/Interest Groups suggested need to hear from you. If you are interested in helping form a group to share videos & desserts in a member home or attend live theatre as a group, please respond to the Chalice Coordinator email above.



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

102 West Harrison Street
 PO Box 1806
 Denison, Texas 75021

Phone: 903-465-5515
 E-mail: info@rruu.org

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.RRUU.ORG

Church Leadership

Board of Trustees

Marla Loturco,

President

Don Durland,

Vice-president

Dianna Neimann - Harris,

Treasurer

Amy Hoffman-Shehan,

Trustee-at-Large

Jim Murphy,

Trustee-at-Large

Vacant

Trustee-at-Large

Penny Armstrong

Trustee -at-Large

Safe Congregation Panel

Jim Gauthier, Suzanne Durland,

Marla Loturco, Helen Schulze,

Penny Armstrong

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:

Social Action: Dianna Niemann-Harris (acting)

Building and Grounds: Doyle Adams

Communications: Doug Strong

Caring:

Finance and Endowment: Marion Hill

Hospitality: Carolyn Cameron & Joyce Peak

Historian: Open

Newsletter: Cynthia Evetts & Shann Schubert

Website: Open

Ways and Means: Don & Suzanne Durland

Committee on Ministry

Jim Gauthier, Carolyn Cameron, Peter Schulze