

Red River Ramblings

Volume 8, Issue 2

February, 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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February 6

Exploring the Japanese New Year

Mrs. Mihoko Ishikawa, *speaking*

"Yoi otoshi o omukae kudasai" (I wish you will have a good new year). This Sunday we welcome Mrs. Mihoko Ishikawa of the Dallas Japanese Society. Mrs. Ishikawa will speak on the cultural and spiritual meaning of shogatsu. Shogatsu is without doubt the most important holiday in Japan (on a par with Christmas in the States). The celebration lasts three days and is steeped in traditions, including special decorations, foods and visiting Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines.



February 13th

"Whose Are We?"

Rev. Pamela Wat, Preaching

Rev. Pamela Wat, a minister with the Denton Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, returns to our pulpit today with a service inspired by her recent experience with the curriculum "Whose Are We?" Her sermon will unpack this simple yet complicated question in a faith with a wide diversity of beliefs and orientations.

February 20th

"Standing on the Side of Love"

Rev. Dianna Niemann-Harris, preaching

In support of National Standing on the Side of Love Day, our own Dianna Niemann-Harris will lead us in a service suggested and encouraged by the National UUA, and especially by the Rev. Susan Frederick-Gray of the Unitarian

Universalist Congregation of Phoenix, who writes that "the power of the Standing on the Side of Love campaign, and of those proclaiming it around our country, is that it calls us to love beyond fear, beyond scarcity, beyond divisions, beyond borders." Continue your celebration of Valentine's Day by exploring with us what "agape", or "brotherly" love, really means.



February 27th

"Heaven: Do You Actually Want To Go?"

Dr. Elbert Hill, leading

Dr. Hill, retired professor of English from Southeastern Oklahoma State University in Durrant and a member here at RRUU, will offer some unconventional thoughts about why people--of all religions--might not really find Heaven "heavenly". Sounds heretical to you? How perfectly UU!



Adult Forum
Worship & Children's RE

10:00am
11:15am

Calendar of Events

February, 2011

- 4 Fri, 7 pm - UJJAM
9 pm - Board Reports due
- 5 Sat, 10 am - Worship Arts Team
- 6 Sun, 12:45 - After Church Lunch Bunch
- 8 Tues, 6:40 pm - Board of Trustees
- 12 Sat, TBA - PFFFT
- 15 Tues, 7:30 pm - Green Team
- 18 Fri, 6 pm - Moveable Feast
- 20 Sun, 12:45 - After Church Lunch Bunch
- 26 Sat, 6 pm - Moveable Feast

February Birthdays

- 1 - Charlie Mathis*
- 2 - Jerry Harris
- 11 - Leon Teeter
- 16 - Marshall Reid*
- 19 - Dean Ashworth
- 27 - Dru Thomsom



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



Green Team Tip of the Month

If Valentines Day is an important day for you or the one you love; then you can also show a bit of extra love for the environment by carefully considering what you buy. Here are some ideas:

* Cards made from recycled or [tree-free paper](#) (this will be indicated on the card). * Consider sending an e-card instead using one of the many quality services around.

* [Fair trade](#) and/or organic chocolate. * Choose organic and/or locally grown flowers. * Make a donation to an environmental organization on behalf of the person. * If you wish to give jewelry, consider pre-owned or purchasing from jewelers who are certified to be sourcing precious metals and gemstones in an [ecologically and socially responsible manner](#). Or considering something really offbeat like a [wooden ring](#) - they look amazing. * Buy a gift certificate for holistic therapies e.g. massage, naturopath, health spa. * Arrange dinner at a local restaurant specializing in organic or locally grown food. Eating locally [cuts down on food miles](#).

Perhaps make dinner yourself using locally grown ingredients, accompanied by a nice organic wine. * Book a retreat in a wildlife reserve, park or natural area. Your business will help support the running of such establishments. * Give [natural perfumes and fragrances](#). Popular mainstream fragrances are chemical cocktails. By buying natural fragrances, you'll be showing you not only care for the environment, but the person's health. From: www.greenlivingtips.com.

Harmony House Concert Series

On Friday evening, February 11, 2011, at 7:30 pm, Harmony House Concerts welcomes back Jonathan Byrd....no longer a new songwriter on the block, but a very seasoned songwriter with a large following!! Please make reservations by calling 903/583-2661, leaving your number of seats desired and contact information (reservations confirmed by e-mail). The requested donation is \$15 per person, and all reservation monies go to the performer. To prepay, make a check to Jonathan Byrd and mail to Faye Wedell; P.O. Box 812; Bonham, TX 75418. Refunds will be made, if cancellations are received by Tuesday, February 8th.



Member News Once Upon A Time...



...Once upon a time at Red River Unitarian Universalist Church there was a need for leadership and energy in the form of a Board of Trustees President. A member of the congregation who had been on the Board only a few months faithfully and humbly stepped forward. The North Texas Association of Unitarian Universalist Societies (NATUUS) chose this year to honor our own *Marla Loturco* for her bold and wise leadership among us as President the past 18 months. Marla received the *Marty Robbins Volunteer Award* at a celebration luncheon on January 29, 2011 with a respectable group of RRUUians present. All are encouraged to congratulate and thank Marla personally for her leadership. Everyone is also invited to look, watch and see things that are right with RRUU and feel welcome to communicate positive feelings to leadership on the journey!

...Our congregation also received a *grant from NTAUUS* to fund a board retreat and leadership development workshop.



Hats Off To... Central America

I want to thank everyone that has brought a ball type cap or sunglasses for me to take to the doctor that works with the field workers in Central America. We still have a few more weeks before I will take our box to him, so if you have a cap or some glasses you would like to donate to this cause please bring them to church before the end of January. For those of you that hadn't heard about this collection, it came about when I was seeing a dermatologist in Sherman and saw photographs in his office from his trip to Central America. He said that many of these field workers have lost their vision by their 30s due to so much sun exposure. I asked him if I could collect some hats or glasses to help protect their eyes and he was delighted in the interest. I will put them in our RRUU recycle bags and send them with him when he returns to Central America this spring.

Suzanne Durland

"Growing In To Our Future Together" Dinner

Who: The Ways and Means Committee

Presents To: Members and Friends

What: Our RRUU Annual Fund Drive Kick -Off Dinner

When: Saturday, March 26, 2011, from 6:00 - 9:00 PM

Where: to be announced (a surprise!)

Celebration: wine, dinner, music, entertainment, readings, laughter, bonding

Why: To celebrate being together and sharing a common goal.

Needed: 6 hosts/hostesses

Your Job: Sign up to attend soon so plans can get underway.

"The most important event in the RRUU church year."



Camping, Anyone?



One way to get to know UU's from other congregations in a relaxed setting is to go camping with them. RRUU has been asked to join Community UU and Horizon UU Church for a camp out at Eisenhower State Park on April 8-10, 2011. More information is available at: http://communityuuchurch.org/pages/outdoor_adventure

Children's Religious Education



No information was available at the time of this printing.

Adult Forum



The Fourth Quarter (of life). Last week's Forum (1/31/2011) triggered an intriguing and thoughtful conversation. We will continue looking at the future for those West of Sixty, focusing on **the question:** "What do you want to give meaning to the "Fourth Quarter" of your life?"

Birthday Blast-Off



Back before you were around,
I watched you on the sonogram
and felt like I was on the countdown
to a launch of a space program.
A newborn's milestones come fast,
first teeth are not meant to last.
Before you know it, those days are past.
But like a controlled explosion, we had a blast.
A toddler is often terrible or tender.
Though memory fades, still I remember
of what it was like before kinder,
when days, like a rocket, moved in a blur.
Elementary days passed much too quick,
new hobbies, new interests, take your pick,
from the earth-bound to the celestial.
This time comes soon to leave our orbit.
Middle school is that time in between
the play of the youth and the toil of the teen.
Escape velocity will soon be seen
as you travel to your own dream.
Now high school's end is drawing near
and you'll depart from our atmosphere.
So as you leave the stratosphere,
think of us earthlings who live back here.

Don Mathis, for my son Charlie on his 18th birthday!

Concerns Among Us



- * Penny Armstrong's mother suffered a heart attack and is recovering from cardiac surgery in the New Orleans area.
- * Jan Fletcher has progressed in recovery from her shoulder surgery and is now sans sling (but needs reminders to not use that arm too much)!
- * Don Durland underwent gall bladder surgery in January and is working his way back to 100% in the

journey of "in sickness and in health" he and Suzanne have been on.

- * Jim Gauthier's mother has also been struggling with ill health and is in the hospital.
- * Bruce Cameron is doing wonderfully after his cataract surgery.
- * Dianna Niemann-Harris "birthed some kidney stones in January"... it's good to have her back.

January brought some nasty viruses and infections with it and most in our church family have had one or more in the household down with illnesses. We look forward to renewed health, energy and vitality in February!

CHALICE FACILITATORS NEEDED!!!!

If you have an interest in current but inactive chalice groups, or would like to start a new group of a different interest, please contact Chalice Coordinator, Jan Fletcher. Small Groups are vital for the life of RRUU.



How the UUA is Serving You and Your Values

How do you benefit from your congregation's membership in the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)? The UUA's mission is to serve congregations and the wider community in many ways. Here is one way:

Connecting UUs: The UUA helps Unitarian Universalists (UUs) connect with each other beyond their congregation's walls. Our [email lists](#) are places to discuss a wide range of topics with other UUs and non-UUs. [UUA districts](#) offer a range of conferences to the congregations that they serve. And [General Assembly](#) is the annual meeting of the UUA, held each June, with workshops and events for every UU.

Reprinted from:
<http://www.uua.org/members/howuua/index.shtml>

Board Bits

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



The board meeting was canceled on January 11 due to the excused absence of multiple board members. The next board meeting is February 8th, starting at 6:40 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 and reports to the board is February 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 December Profit and Loss statement shows income of \$1,854.09 and expenses of \$2,887.68. This results in a shortage of \$1,033.59 for the month of December. We had some annual expenses paid out in December as well as insurance due and bringing **our “Fair Share” up to date. Additionally we paid 2 months on Orders of Worship and Custodial costs to have all debts for calendar 2010 paid by December 31st.** Overall for the first half of FY 2011 (that is July to December 2011) we have averaged a \$150 shortage per month. The Board will be discussing this at our next meeting and considering avenues to trim the budget for the second half of FY 2011.

IRS form 1099 MISC forms have been filed on each of the ten individuals who were paid \$600 or more during 2010 by Red River Unitarian Universalist. A second mile gift covered the cost of electronically filing these required documents for the church and copies were emailed to each contract person for their records. Because we had no **“regular” employees in 2010 the church was exempt from filing any W-2 forms for 2010.**

End of the calendar year financial statements will be available as soon as possible. My goal is to have

these to you by mid February. When you receive your giving statement please look it over carefully to insure it agrees with your own records. Some weeks the names of contributors were inadvertently omitted 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.

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 QuickBooks 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

In-Kind Gift Receipts

PLEASE REMEMBER to turn in your list of gifts in kind to the treasurer **monthly.** 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”, or any expert or professional services you have given without remuneration.** You are welcome to email your list including the value of each item to treasurer@rruu.org or **place it in the treasurer's mail box in the church office.**



We did not weave the web of life. We are merely a strand in it. - Chief Seattle

Message From Marla

Marla Loturco, President, RRUU



Love, kindness, respect, appreciation, compassion and forgiveness, six golden words. We have worked very hard this last year and a half to save Red River Unitarian Universalist Church and we have been successful. We have created and nurtured a phoenix, growing from the ashes. This effort has taken its toll. People have at times become short tempered and inclined to take comments personally. All of us need to take a few steps back and remember how important we are to each other. I truly believe we are all doing our best. **Sometimes things don't work out exactly as we would have liked.** Now as we move forward we need to show our love, kindness, respect and appreciation of everyone in the congregation. For those whom we have felt wronged us, we need to feel compassion and forgive. It is through this process we will be able to grow into our future.

Receiving the Marty Robinson Volunteer Award from the North Texas Association of Unitarian Universalist Societies is a great honor. There is no way I could have even begun to be eligible for this honor without every single person in the RRUU congregation behind me. This award is really a celebration for all of us and a promise of our time to come. Thank You, RRUU.

On that note, I would like to begin a "thanks and appreciation" campaign at the church. I believe it is important that all of us consider how we can let others know what we appreciate about them. We need to say "Thank You" for other's efforts, no matter how big, or small. The board will be considering how to forward this campaign at the next board meeting. Come and join us if you would like to participate in the discussion.

Marla

Voices of our Liberal Religion: Lobbying for the Dream Act on Capitol Hill

Posted in Immigration Justice on December 10th, 2010
by Kat Liu

Buoyed by the historic passage of DREAM in the House of Representatives on Wednesday evening, and mindful that the prospects for a Senate vote are much more uncertain, several members of the Interfaith Immigration Coalition

(IIC), including yours truly representing the UUA, decided to visit some key senators yesterday morning, before what was scheduled to be the 11 am vote on DREAM. The DREAM Act would provide a pathway for earned citizenship to millions of undocumented young adults who were brought to this country by their parents as children and have since grown up in this country. The U.S. is their country in every way except for legal status.

The senate offices that we visited were those on this target list. **I won't bore you by describing every office visit. And the few juicy tidbits about who is leaning in what direction, I'm not at liberty to say publicly.** But there are two really strong impressions that I would like to share with you.

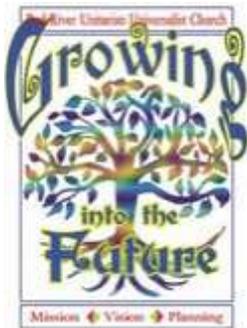
One was the fact that in every office we visited the phones were ringing off the hooks. As we waited in the seating area of various offices to see if a staffer could/would come out to see us, we could hear that the majority of the calls were about the DREAM Act. The poor folks answering the phones looked like they had been going at this rate for days. I almost felt sorry for them, but at the same time I know that this is democracy in action. The phone call to your elected official is many times more powerful than the vote you cast in the ballot box in terms of influencing what becomes our national laws. **In the few cases where the receptionist's ear was not glued to the phone, we asked what direction the calls were going in. '50/50' or 'pretty even' was the answer.** With things so tight, every phone call that we make to stand on the side of love counts.

The second impression I had was when we walked into **Senator Lugar's office. As you may or may not know, Sen. Lugar** of Indiana was one of the original sponsors of the DREAM Act and had long been a proponent, but in these crazy partisan times, the Republican senator is now threatening to vote against his own bill. A group of roughly a dozen young adults, many wearing colorful graduation mortar boards made out of construction paper, were gathered in a circle on the office floor, praying. They looked like they had been there for a while. They were so quiet and unobtrusive, and yet so persistent and impossible to ignore. I wish to God I had a camera then and could have shared their presence reminded me of why I am doing this work.

In truth, I was originally against the DREAM Act, having the same reservations that many Unitarian Universalists and other progressive people of faith have. From the provisions, **it's clear that one of the motivations for DREAM was to attract more recruits to the military.** What changed my mind was the DREAM Act activists (or DREAMers, as they are called). These young women and men are publicly stating their undocumented status and going directly to elected officials to ask them to support their dream of being productive U.S. citizens. They are willing to risk everything. How could I not support that?

For more information on the Dream Act, go to: www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2010/12/01/get-facts-dream-act

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



Over the past few months, a team of leaders of Red River Unitarian Universalist Church has conducted a listening campaign of congregants. Conversations were held in small groups, person to person, by telephone, by email, whatever means worked. Participants were asked to speak about their core values (not what we find valuable, but rather our personal value systems) and profound religious experiences and where we find a sense of spirituality or being connected. The data collected during the listening campaign was used as the focus of the January 22 workshop.

Joe Sullivan, church consultant with Unity Consulting, traveled from Houston to spend the day with 22 members and friends of RRUU. The day long workshop was held at the Hampton Inn in Sherman. Lunch was catered by Feast on This! of Sherman. Mr. Sullivan is past president of the Southwest District of the Unitarian Universalist Association and now works with congregations to help them develop and grow. He is currently working with UU congregations in Tyler and Oak Cliff on developing their long range plan and will consult with RRUU as we develop our plan.

The workshop attendees were divided into 4 groups, and together we went through three exercises that helped us define the direction RRUU will take over the next three to five years. Each exercise included a time of personal reflection and journaling. After a few minutes of reflection and writing our thoughts about the topic at hand, we came back together in groups to discover the things we had in common, to prioritize, and to assimilate. The exercises were:

#1: Our Core Values. We reflected on spiritual experiences that were spoken about during the listening campaign and then identified two core values that reinforced the spiritual experiences. The group discussions focused on finding common values that we identified.

#2: Personal Visions. We reflected on our personal dreams and goals for RRUU, then came back together as groups to discover and prioritize the common dreams.

#3: Group Possibility Statements. We focused further on our common dreams and goals to create statements of where we see RRUU in five years.

A team of three members of the congregation will write RRUU's new Mission and Vision Statements over the next month or so. The members of the team are Elbert Hill, Carla Murphy and Charlotte Teeter. They were appointed by RRUU President Marla Loturco, as directed by the Board of Trustees. The work of the team and data from the listening campaign and workshop will be used to write the new Long Range Plan. The Board of Trustees plans to present Mission and Vision Statements for congregational approval this Spring, and the new Long Range Plan should be ready for congregational approval by Fall.

Social Action Committee



The Social Action Team's sponsorship and the generosity of the RRUU family resulted in a significant gift from our congregation to the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) Guest at Your Table project. Our "Share the Plate" offerings of \$24 in January also went to the UUSC as designated by the team. February 13, 2011 is our next "Share the Plate" offering.

Some additional gifting through and in the name of RRUU has made a difference in the lives of those who are struggling. Over the holiday season three families were provided with everything to prepare complete meals for the household for the celebration of their choice. In January safety enabled space heaters were provided for two disabled persons with inadequate heat in their homes and a rick of wood was given to an older couple whose wood stove needed fuel during the frigid weeks early in the month.

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.

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.



MINDFULNESS, a Meditation Circle, is currently without a host location and facilitator. If you are interested, please contact Jan, the Chalice Coordinator.



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



GREEN TEAM, an Environmental Action Circle, meets February 15, 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. Feasters may choose dinner for 12 on February 18 in Pottsville, or dinner for 12 on February 26 in Durant. Both of these Feasts are at 6:00 p.m. There will be various months this year hosting the full group as well as months with 2 or 3 small dinners with limited seating. 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. February plans are to meet at the 2nd Saturday lecture **at Hagerman's on February 12. 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 TBA. Facilitator is Penny Armstrong. **NEW MEMBERS AND GUESTS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!**



UUJAM, 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, February 4. 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!**



LAID 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!**



SPIRIT WITHIN, 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 have been suggested and 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

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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: Marla Loturco (acting)
 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