

Red River Ramblings



June 2015

Volume 12

Issue 12

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Sunday mornings in June: to kick-start your week

Sunday, June 7, 2015

The Shifting Sands of Religion, Even Ours

The Rev. Doug Strong, *preaching*

It all began, religiously speaking, *In the beginning* and ever since religious beliefs have been shifting. Today there are more Baptists than there are flavors of Baskin-Robbins ice cream, fewer Christians, More Muslims and an ever increasing number of "nones". The largest religious group in 22 states is the Unaffiliated.

Given the fundamental goal of any religion is to perpetuate itself to the next generation, it behooves us to look at the shifting sands of Unitarian Universalism. Over the last few years UUs have been exploring new ways to sustain ourselves. New branding, new headquarters, new ways to embrace social media. On Sunday, a look at those who are creating the greatest shift in the UU sand: the Millennial Generation of Free Range Unitarian Universalists. They have a lot to say.

Refreshments: A-G

Sunday, June 14, 2015

A Morning of Poetry

Ron Wallace, *reading*

Back again to share with us some of his poetry is Ron Wallace. He is an Oklahoma Native of Choctaw, Cherokee and Osage ancestry and is the author of seven volumes of poetry published by TJMF Publishing. He is a three time finalist in the Oklahoma Book Awards. His work has been recently featured in "Oklahoma Today", "The Long Islander",

Morning Meditation: 9

Adult Forum: 10

Worship: 11:15

Fellowship Gathering: 12:15

"Concho River Review", "Cybersoleil journal", "Cobalt", "Red Earth Review", "Dragon Poets Review", "Sugar Mule", "Cross-timbers", "Gris-Gris" and a number of other magazines and anthologies.

Share the Plate Sunday: Cash donations will go to the Texoma Earth Day Festival.

Refreshments: H

Sunday, June 21, 2015

June 21

Rules for Being Human

The Rev. Dr. Christine Tata, *Preaching*

Unitarian Universalists may not always like to follow rules, especially when the rules are outdated, irrational, or counterproductive. But rules are what define the game -- and the best game in town is being human. Join Dr. Tata for a fanciful look at seven fundamental guidelines for life. (Note: You Must Be Present to Win!)

Refreshments: I - R

Sunday, June 28, 2015

The Art of Wild Wisdom

John Beckett, *speaking*

Contemporary Druids take their name from the ancients, but their practices are a direct response to the modern disconnection from Nature, the source of Life. Who were and who are the Druids, and what can the art of wild wisdom teach us here and now?

John Beckett is a Druid in the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids, the Coordinating Officer of the Denton Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans and a former Vice President of CUUPS National. He served two terms as President of Denton UU Fellowship and currently serves on the Worship Committee.

His blog "Under the Ancient Oaks" is part of the Pagan Channel of multi-faith website Patheos.

Refreshments: S-Z

Red River Unitarian Universalist Church ♦ Denison, TX

We are a sanctuary for religious liberals celebrating compassion, diversity and spiritual growth.

Dan's Dispatch



My great thanks and appreciation to all who participated, whether in person or by proxy, in our May Congregational Meeting. Congregational autonomy and the democratic process are hallmarks of Unitarian Universalism.

This makes me reflect briefly on how different this is from the Catholic tradition from which I came. Governance in that church is strictly from the top down, with the pope as Supreme Pontiff—with the emphasis on Supreme. (And as likeable and progressive as Pope Francis may be, have no doubt that he's still very much in charge!) Any participation from the laity in the Catholic Church is granted by the upper echelon as a concession and as a favor. In Unitarian Universalism, congregational decision making is our right and is part of our covenantal relationship. It's the only way we "do church." And I think that's a good thing.

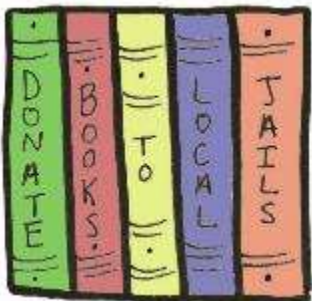
Our own in-house democratic process has the benefit of revealing shortcomings that sometimes escape the attention of those people or committees making proposals to improve how we do things. Such was the case at our meeting last month. During our discussion on May 17, it became clear that some more work was needed on the proposal to revise our Safe Congregation Policy. I appreciate the feedback I have already received and I will incorporate those suggestions and present them for consideration and more

feedback at the next Board Meeting. I consider a revised Safe Congregation Policy to be key in reviving children's religious education. And welcoming families with children into the congregation by having programs for them will in turn be key to securing the long-term health of this little oasis of liberal religion in north Texas and southern Oklahoma.

Another piece of unfinished business from last month is the church budget for the fiscal year 2015-16, which begins on July 1st. Because of our small size, we don't regularly make a big hullabaloo about our financial status. As a community of mature adults, we all are aware of the need to pay the bills and keep the lights on. Our proposed budget is very modest, with very little change from last year's. Nevertheless, prudent financial practice tells us we must prepare a budget that reflects only the amount of money that has been formally pledged. Unfortunately, the pledges received by May 17 did not quite equal the amount of our proposed budget. If you haven't yet done so, I hope you will take a moment to let our treasurer, Robert Shelton, know how much your own personal budget will allow in support of the church's financial health. We know our congregation is full of discreetly generous people, and we appreciate that so much, but the Board's fiduciary responsibility means we must plan only on the basis of official or formal pledges. A heart-felt "thank you" to all who have pledged and we do look forward to another balanced budget in the year ahead.

Finally, many thanks and hearty congratulations to those people who have agreed to serve or serve again in our leadership positions. It is impossible to overstate how important and how appreciated you are!

Thank you, thank you, thank you!



My name is Clare and I'm the founder of Texas Book Bounty. My organization donates books to local jails, currently focused on Denton County Jail. Through partnerships with local libraries and businesses we have donated over one thousand books.

I am currently looking to expand to other North Texas counties and am in need of help. I am reaching out today to see if Red River Unitarian Universalist Church would be interested in holding a book drive for Fannin and/or Grayson County Jails? I contacted both jails and Fannin accepts paperbacks, Grayson accepts paperback and hardback. We would need a volunteer to deliver the books to the jail. I would love to contact some local businesses to see if they would be willing to donate as

well. My major obstacle is having a volunteer to pick up the books and deliver them.

My best friend is a jailer and she tells me that the inmates are SO appreciative of books and ask for them all the time. I took a tour of Denton County Jail with their Education Coordinator and saw first-hand how books really make a difference.

If you are interested in participating or have any questions please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Sincerely,
Clare Graham-Riecke
Texas Book Bounty
940.382.5952

Click the picture to visit their Facebook Page.



Red River UU Church Endowment Fund ~ Some background information



RRUU has recently revived its Endowment Fund, which was set up for the purpose of accumulating money to support long-range needs of the church (not to be used for short-term goals such as day-to-day operating expenses). Congregants are naturally curious about how the Fund works, and as one who has been on the Endowment Fund Committee since the Fund's inception, I'm giving a bit of background here:

Gifts to the Fund other than cash (real estate, stocks and bonds, or other items of value) are acceptable according to the Fund's by-laws, which state specifically what types of gifts may be accepted. The by-laws also charge the Endowment Fund Committee with performing due diligence regarding any offer of a non-cash gift. The committee may decline to receive a particular gift if the members determine that accepting it wouldn't be in the best interest of the church. Understandably, if a gift is declined, the would-be donor may feel hurt by that decision. For that reason, I suggest that congregants consider selling such non-cash items themselves and donating the proceeds to the church. A bit of history will illustrate how problems can arise with non-cash donations:

Two pieces of real estate have been offered to

The Yard Sale - Some day!

We have massed boxes of donations. We have a garage full of furniture. We have ample tables. We have signs to put out. We have scheduled a yard sale and we have postponed it.

Our problem is the weather! Both scheduled days we would have been rained out, so rather than doing all that work and not have many people wander in, we canceled the yard sale.

Someday it will be sunny and we will have a yard sale. In the meantime, don't forget to bring in your donations. We have room for more goodies.

Perhaps some Saturday later in the summer.

the Fund over the years of its existence, the first soon after the Fund began. The committee accepted that property without looking it over first, and it proved to have several undesirable characteristics that made it almost impossible to sell. It ultimately sold for a very low figure, with RRUU realizing only a few hundred dollars after much hassle and some expense.

After that first experience, the committee was more cautious when a second property was offered and looked it over with a realtor experienced with sales in that area. After consideration, she recommended against accepting the donation because, although it didn't have the huge disadvantages of the first property, it had characteristics that she felt would make it hard to sell. She also noted that she had seen several instances of churches accepting real-estate donations and then spending more to maintain the property (mowing, tree-trimming, etc.) while awaiting a sale than they realized from it. The committee regretfully declined that offered donation with thanks to the would-be donor.

Donations of either cash or other property proceed from a generous spirit and a desire to help the church, and for that reason it's difficult to turn down any offer of a donation. However, the Endowment Fund Committee has a responsibility to evaluate any offer of a non-cash item and decline it if, after investigation, the members conclude that accepting it wouldn't be in RRUU's best interest. Doing so doesn't mean that the proposed gift and the would-be giver aren't valued and appreciated, only that the committee members are doing their best to carry out their duties under the Endowment Fund by-laws.

Marion Hill,



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Board Bits

During the May 15th Board meeting, the Board:

- A review of the results of the commitment campaign indicated there are several people who have not yet returned their pledge card. The board decided to wait until the spring meeting to see if those still outstanding might turn their pledge in.
- Agreed to purchase two Standing On The Side of Love banners (in English and Spanish) and because there is no budget for such, agreed to ask at the spring meeting if people would help in the purchase.
- Agreed to promote the June 13th "Breaking Down Walls ~ Building Bridges" NTUUC leadership conference
- Accepted with much gratitude a donation of \$5,000.00 to the church
- Discussed the idea of holding a church-wide Convocation to enhance our community and discuss ways we might become more involved in our immediate neighborhood
- Spoke about several pastoral concerns including ill members and family members

Treasurer's Report

In the month of April, we had income of \$2,722 from general operations. After operations expense of \$2,019 for the month, we had a net income from operations of \$702.

In April, we received a donation to the Wi-Fi fund of \$90. We spent \$50 from the Musicians Fund for a guest musician.

For the year to date period of July 2014 through April 2015, we had net income from general operations and of \$703 and principal payments of \$1,370.

At the end of April, 2015 we had total cash of \$4,799. Our cash includes a restricted amount of \$4,493. Our unrestricted cash totals \$48,649 and our debt is

\$31,241.

We donated \$150 from the Share the Plate program to the Earth Day Festival.

Robert Shelton, Treasurer

The Adult Forum for June

June 7th – Astronomy: Hubble Telescope image of the star factory inside the Eagle Nebula
Part 1, Interstellar clouds, newly developing stars, and molecules of formaldehyde and alcohol make for a stunning Hubble photo taken in 1995.

June 14th – Astronomy: Hubble Telescope image of the star factory inside the eagle Nebula
Part 2, Wide-field camera shows Eagle Nebula to be wider than our full moon. This nebula exhibits a 20-light-year window into its interior.

June 21st – American Unitarianism: Part 1, 18 minute video and discussion
Joseph Priestly immigrates to America. Thomas Jefferson credits Priestly with converting him to Unitarianism.

June 28th – American Unitarianism: Part 2, 22 minute video and discussion
Freedom of conscience professed by William Ellery Channing, but denounced Priestly's beliefs and said he wasn't a "true Unitarian."

The Spring Congregational Meeting

The spring meeting involved 24 members, in person or by proxy. The membership elected the following folks:

To the Board of Trustees

Helen Schulze - member at large

Gil Alexander - Vice President

Doug Strong - Secretary

To the Nominating Committee

Lanan Shelton

Kat Walston

Amy Hoffman-Shehan

To the Committee on Ministry

Carole Harner

L.D. Clark

The congregation selected several goals for the year:

- Get Out The Vote project
- Grayson County NAACP participation (RRUU is a life member of the local chapter)
- The Bikes-For-Kids project
- Hispanic Heritage outreach
- Wi-Fi and the Community
- NTUUC Participation Expansion

The congregation voted to accept a gift of the Sneller Window, a 100+ year old stained glass window to be placed in the chapel.

The congregation also voted to postpone a discussion and vote on the new budget. A special congregational meeting will be held of July 12 at which time the budget will be adopted.

NTUUC is helping to promote local UU Congregations

The idea is to help promote each of the 13 UU congregations in North Texas. NTUUC asked us to submit pictures that help to tell our story to visitors. The half page card will be printed on both sides. We can also give them to people we know who might enjoy visiting some Sunday. Here's what the RRUU flier looks like:



Red River Unitarian Universalist Church

515 N. Burnett Dr., Denison, TX 75020
903-231-2322
rruu.org

Handicapped Access



Whoever you are, whomever you love, you are welcome here. We do not ask what you believe, nor expect you to believe as we do. Rather, our community encourages its members to pursue the deepening of their own religious convictions. We are united, not by creed, but by a common purpose to stand on the side of love in all aspects of our lives.



North Texas Unitarian Universalist Congregations

4015 Normandy Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75205-1750 469.682.8870 NTUUC.org



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rruu.org

We are a sanctuary for religious liberals celebrating compassion, diversity and spiritual growth.



Join us Sunday mornings: Meditation - 9
Adult Forum - 10
Worship - 11:15



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4015 Normandy Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75205-1750 469.682.8870 NTUUC.org



Leaders

Board of Trustees

Dan Althoff, *president*
Gil Alexander, *vice president*
Robert Shelton, *Treasurer*
Doug Strong, *Secretary*
Paula Blackshear, *Trustee*
Elbert Hill, *Past President*

Committee on Ministry:

Carole Harner, Gerry Shehan,
Peter Schulze

Team Leaders/Members:

Adult Forum: *Gil*
Aesthetics Team:
Bruce, Joyce, Maura, Paula
Building & Grounds: *Marilyn*
Communications: *Doug*
Finance: *Open*
Good Times:
Carole, Marilyn & Marion
Long Range Planning:
Amy, Gil, Marilyn
Membership: *Marion*
Nominations: *Helen, L.D., Marla*
NTUUC Rep: *Marla*
RE Team: *Carolyn, Dan, Tommi*
Safe Congregation Panel: *Dan*
Social Action: *Gil*
Ways & Means: *Open*
Worship:
Dan, Doug, Faye, Marla

Standing on the Side of Leadership June 13, 2015

8:30 am – 4:30 pm • First Unitarian Church, Dallas



Are you familiar with cultures other than your own?
Are you aware of your own biases and cultural assumptions?
How many languages are spoken in your congregation?
Are you comfortable talking about race with people of color?
Have you found yourself embarrassed because of cultural differences
or misunderstandings?

“Breaking Down Walls ~ Building Bridges”

is the theme of this summer’s
Standing on the Side of Leadership Conference

Everyone is invited to participate.
Just click the button below.



Contact Us

Red River UU Church
515 North Burnett Ave
Denison, TX 75020

mail to:

PO BOX 1806
DENISON, TX 75021-1806

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How to reach us:

Email: [info\[+suffix\]*](mailto:info[+suffix]*)
Phone: 903.231.3232
Web: www.ruuu.org
E-News: [announce\[+suffix\]*](mailto:announce[+suffix]*)

Facebook:
RedRiverUnitarianUniversalistChurch

*Church email suffix: @rruu.org

Chalice Circles / Interest Groups

GREEN TEAM, an Environmental Action Team. Facilitator: Amy Hoffman-Shehan.

MOVEABLE FEAST, a Cooking and/or Eating Circle is not meeting in June. Look for a gathering in July.

BOOKED FOR LUNCH, is an informal book discussion group which usually meets the second Thursday of the month at 1 p.m. in the Barton Parlor. The group is on summer break (happily reading). They return in September. Facilitator Carole Harner.