



January 2021 - Vol. 22 Issue 9

Red River Ramblings

Grow your soul and serve the world



Virtual Worship Sundays @ 11:15 am on both our [YouTube channel](#) and [Facebook page](#)

Sunday, January 3, 2021

A RITUAL FOR THE NEW YEAR

The Worship Team,
Marla Loturco leading

For five thousand years, or more, more than fifteen thousand generations of human beings have been invoking spiritual power. We will be touching that spiritual power by letting go, metaphoric cleansing, setting of intentions and celebrating new beginnings. It is a service of words, music, and ritual. At each stop around the circle of flame, water, oil, and light each one of you becomes your own healer, priest/priestess, minister, and teacher. It is your circle of release, cleansing, intention, and hope to walk. Come join us as we begin the New Year with a ritual of celebration.

Sunday, January 10, 2021

ANOTHER FINE APOCALYPSE

the Rev. Dr. Christine Tata

Well, here's another fine apocalypse we've gotten into! An "apocalypse," from the Greek *apokálypsis*, just means disclosure and revelation, as when the events of 2020 "revealed" how our society was built on toxic racism, violence, and inequality. But here's a twist: apparently this isn't our first apocalypse. Let's just take it one epiphany at a time.

Sunday, January 17, 2015

RESPONSIBLE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

the Rev. Dr. Mark Y.A. Davies

In this discourse, I will be looking at the ways in which our lives are enhanced by religious freedom while noting the ways religious freedom has been misused and abused throughout history and in the present day.

Sunday, January 24, 2020

**HOW I'D FIX THE WHOLE SHEBANG IN MY FIRST 100 DAYS
AS PRESIDENT**

the Rev. Dr. Christine Tata

Come on, admit it—deep down, we all believe that if they'd just put us in charge, for crying out loud, we could cut through the nonsense and *fix* this mess the world is in! Maybe it's a fantasy. But let's just indulge it for once and see what happens. Join us as Rev. Dr. Christine, with no training whatsoever in government, science, or political science, lays out a comprehensive plan for setting the entire world to rights, once and for all. What could go possibly wrong?

Sunday, January 31, 2021

TOM NEILSON: MUSIC AND JUSTICE

With singer/storyteller Tom Neilson

Singer-songwriter and political activist, Tom Neilson was last with us in February 2017. He returns virtually this Sunday to perform some of the hundreds of songs he has written in support of truth, love, and justice. Tom was nominated for the 2015 UN Nelson Mandela Award for "*work that has spanned decades and continents sharing comprehensive and sobering interpretations of sociology and history with an easily digestible and entertaining format designed to inform and inspire peace.*" The UN Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela Prize recognizes the achievements of those who dedicate their lives to the service of humanity in the promotion of reconciliation and social cohesion, and in community development, guided by the purposes and principles of the United Nations. We are delighted to welcome him back!

What we did last year

JANUARY: The Indivisible Immigration Initiative, a new community-wide non-political advocacy effort gets support from the church.

A letter to the editor (the second in ten years) is received in appreciation of a shift where people can read the newsletter in their browser rather than trying to do it on a cell phone (66% of our subscribers read *Red River Ramblings* on their cell phone).



FEBRUARY: Jim Holmes receives the *Marty Robinson Volunteer Award* during the annual NTUUC Award Luncheon.



A new, more intentional approach to membership is approved by the congregation and launched in February. Sadly COVID-19 put Pathway to Membership on hold until we again return to the building.

James E. Smith, the funeral director whose business resided in our building returns one Sunday to tell us about his work and living in the building. He had not been inside since the Smiths sold it in 1979. He loves what we've done to his former home and business.



David Dyer receives the Bruce Cameron Distinguished Service Award during the 8th Annual Appreciation Dinner.

Jim's Jabber

Let us all welcome 2021 and hope that this new year leads us back to normalcy. Looking back over the last 12 months I can't help but think how much I miss our in-person Sunday gatherings at the church, our Sunday Conversations and Calories and especially Marilyn's deviled eggs, and even our not so in harmony singing (especially me). I expect that this will all return sometime in 2021.

There were some good things that happened to us during this last year. We now do Sunday worship as a recorded presentation that is available on YouTube and Facebook. The quality of these recordings gets better and better thanks to the hard work of the Worship Team, the AV Team, and our pre and postproduction team of Marla and Doug. While we were seeing an average attendance of 32 people when we met in the building, we are now seeing a weekly average of 60 plus viewers on our YouTube and Facebook channels. Sometimes that number exceeds 80. In addition, our virtual morning assemblies stay as a permanent recording on these channels for anyone to view, any time! Not bad for a little UU church in Texoma land.

We are also working at keeping our UU community together using Zoom. Several church teams use Zoom to hold their meetings as does the Adult Forum, Online Coffee Hour (formally Conversations and Calories), and Jan's Music circle. Information on these is available on the website Events column, our mobile app, and is also published in the Wednesday UPDATE.

Because of the success we are having with our online presence, I expect that once our doors open, we will be doing a combined live in-house worship while also streaming it to YouTube for our new remote viewers. We may even incorporate Zoom to allow viewers to attend the live service. This sounds exciting, but it does come with some technical challenges that the Worship Team and AV Team will need to overcome. I have complete confidence that these teams will make it happen.

Financially, we are strong. Currently pledge income is tracking within budget expectations. Thank you everyone for this, especially during these difficult financial times. Once we do reopen we will have some additional expenses that we will need to cover but I look forward to that challenge as we put this pandemic behind us.

Take care, keep safe and keep on trucking.

Jim Holmes
President

What we did last year



The Adult Forum listens to a 5-part NPR podcast exploring the murder of UU minister Jim Reeb in 1965, and their investigation

of the murder that exposed the lies that kept the murder from being solved and uncovered a story about guilt and memory that says as much about America today as it does about the past.

MARCH: Because of the Pandemic, the Board of Trustees votes to close the church building for as long as necessary to protect ourselves and those visiting.

March 15: Our first Virtual Morning Assembly is streamed on Zoom from Doug's living room.

APRIL: Church gets a professional Zoom account (thanks to a contract the UUA made with Zoom).

Online Adult Forum starts.
Online Coffee Hour starts.

MAY: The Spring Congregational Meeting is rescheduled to June 28 and will be conducted on Zoom.



Three Dudes (Dick, Jim, Doug) develop the 2020 Stewardship Campaign which raises more in pledges than they had anticipated. The church remains financially secure despite being closed.

The Worship Team creates our own YouTube channel. Virtual Flower Communion is held.

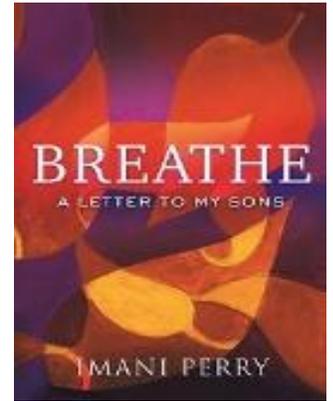
Our Little Free Library adds canned food and TP to help people in the neighborhood, thanks to Jolene, who started it.

Church starts "Need Help | Give Help" to connect one another and support congregation.

Common Read Discussion Group

Staying connected to other people during this pandemic is more difficult than when life is "normal," but doing so seems especially important. One way UUs can connect with others of our faith is by reading and discussing the UU Common Read for 2020-21: *Breathe: A Letter to My Sons* by Imani Perry.

The book is addressed to Perry's two African American sons, advising them on how to navigate this often-racist society, but many of its observations can apply to everyone, not only people of color. Imani draws upon her own family anecdotes—sometimes funny, always insightful—as well as the writings of such disparate figures as James Baldwin, Emily Dickinson, Ida B. Wells, Toni Morrison, and Ralph Waldo Emerson. The "UU Common Read" page at uua.org calls the book "a broader meditation on race, gender, and the meaning of a life well lived," as well as "an unforgettable lesson in Black resistance and resilience."



The book is available in hard cover from inSpirit - the UU bookstore for \$18.00, (10% less if 10 of us order). Discussion materials for UU congregations, groups, and individuals will be available online, at no charge, by the end of January 2021.

Marion Hill has volunteered to lead one or more discussions of the book and asks anyone interested in participating to email her [here](#). Discussions will be held via Zoom, and Marion will set up two or three (depending on demand) Zoom meetings in February. This will give time for participants to get copies of the book and to receive the UU discussion materials.

"This promises to be an interesting project," Marion says, *"and it will be a great way for us to check in with each other, share our opinions (which UUs love to do) and tell stories of being Covid captives. I plan to set up meetings on different days of the week and at different times, and I'd love suggestions from participants about time and day that would work well for them. If you're all like me, my schedule is relatively open. But I do have doctors' appointments, other Zoom meetings, etc., so I'd appreciate guidance on when to set up meetings.*

Once I have a slate of people who plan to participate, we can do a book order to get the group discount. We'll get the discussion materials from uua.org, and then have a casual, free-wheeling talk about the book and whatever else seems relevant (or not).

Happy 2021, everyone! Something tells me it will be better than 2020, at least."

What we did last year

JUNE: The UU World magazine announces it is reducing publications from 4 a year to 2 a year.

Clara Barton Parlor is renamed Gil Alexander Room.

Elected are Jim Holmes, President; Jan Fletcher, Treasurer; Marla Loturco, Committee on Ministry; LD Clark, Nominating

Darlene McKinnell joins the congregation.

Marion Hill and Doug Strong attend the General Assembly, a virtual gathering of 4,000+

JULY: Worship Team takes a survey asking for feedback regarding our online presence. Those who watch are satisfied and appreciate the format and quality. Most in the congregation are not watching, however.

Visiting clergy are asked to produce a less than one-minute promotional video about their upcoming morning worship with us. The promo is posted on our various platforms along with being attached to the morning program for the week prior.

AUGUST: Long time member L.D. Clark dies unexpectedly.

The Rev. Dr. Christine Tata agrees to provide worship programs twice a month through June 2021.

SEPTEMBER: Our Little Free Library/Food Pantry is well used by the community. Several donate canned goods and paper supplies.

Virtual Water Communion worship created by the Worship Team.

A tribute Zoom Music Circle held to remember L.D. Clark with 20+ people sharing music. A video of his song "Rapture" is shown (The Video is on our YouTube Channel).

The church calendar is retired as most people turn to the Events list on our website for details.

Guest Minister's Column

*Editorial Note: The Rev. John Gibbons has been the minister of First Parish, Unitarian in Bedford MA for 30 years. He calls his monthly column **Common Thoughts**.*

Common Thoughts, December. 2020

Lately, I spend a lot of time lamenting all the things I don't do, can't do, forget to do, do badly...it's a long list. We can't greet one another in church. You have no idea what pleasure I used to get scanning the congregation on Sunday mornings before the service would begin, spotting someone familiar or unfamiliar in a far or near pew, then greeting them with glee, a friendly familiarity, a smart-aleck remark, or a smile. Our current thing of "smiling with one's eyes" is over-rated.

I so lament the absence of connection, contact, touch. In a place like Carleton-Willard (sometimes to Annie's chagrin) I used to brag about "drive-by pastoral care," how I could make 20 pastoral visits in 10 minutes, just by walking down Main Street, greeting, glad-handing, small-or-big-talk, smiling. Now there are people I haven't spoken with in months: long-term parishioners as well as those new and curious, people who I know are hurting, lonely, sad. People who'd appreciate even a small acknowledgment. Whatever they may or may not need or want, there are so many people I miss. I've let a lot of people down. I'm not brimming with clever sermon topics. I can't even keep up with my email.

Guilt and regret are part of the human condition, and lamentation can be a good thing. I must, however, share these good things with you. Oh, I know you have plenty of trouble without my adding to your woes. But the time has come for me to remind you – and remind myself – that this ministry is a shared endeavor. Of course, I'll still do what I can, however lamentably. What I need from you now is for you to reach out – not so much to me, please! – but to one another. We are not a collection of individuals reliant on a few ministers; rather we are a congregation of shared ministry.

Let us turn again to the words of Jane Addams: We are traveling, she said, "not a sequestered byway, but by mixing on the thronged and common road where all must turn out for one another, and at least see the size of one another's burdens."

It's familiar but very true: we need one another. All can give and all can receive. Please make a call to someone. **May I beseech each of you to contact TWO people? (OK, just one for you lazybones.) EXTRA POINTS** for people you don't or hardly know. Email or call the church if you need a list of contact info. Contacting just ONE or TWO people will make a HUGE impression. You have no idea how much your simplest greeting may mean. Love...

John

(The above also reminds me of a Stephen Crane poem, *There Was a Man with a Tongue of Wood*):

*There was a man with tongue of wood
Who essayed to sing,
And in truth it was lamentable.
But there was one who heard
The clip-clapper of this tongue of wood
And knew what the man
Wished to sing,
and with that the singer was content.*

What we did last year

OCTOBER: Church shows the "UU the Vote" National Worship Service and encourages people to participate until the election.

Fall congregational meeting held via Zoom. Congregation votes to transfer church endowment along with church savings accounts from local bank to the Unitarian Universalist Common Endowment Fund. Interest raised in the Savings Account will be transferred to the church endowment fund annually on May 1.

Congregational Meeting votes new annual goals for the remaining fiscal year (thru Jun 30, 2021) that are specific, attainable, and measurable.

Adult Forum starts themed monthly presentations using videos followed by discussion.

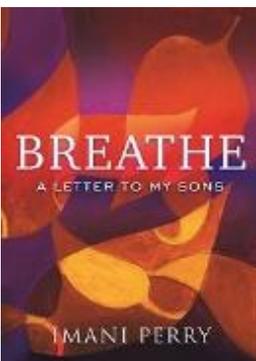
Earth Day Festival planning committee holds a hugely successful Recycle Event in Sherman.

Jan's Music Circle restarts after a few years' hiatus, using Zoom for monthly playing and listening.

NOVEMBER: Church parking lot is used for Share the Warmth distribution.

UUUA reports the UU the Vote reached 2,797,552 registered voters urging them to make sure their registration was valid and to vote.

DECEMBER:



The UU Common Read for 2021 *Breathe - a Letter to my Son* will become the focus on a church-wide discussion group to start in January 2021.

Adult Forum

Is a belief in a God that created life on Earth more logical than the concept that Earth was seeded by contamination of interstellar objects or that hominid evolution was modified by more advanced other world entities to produce homo sapiens?



Join with us in Adult Forum each Sunday in January as we ponder this question. **The Adult Form** holds forth every Sunday morning at 10:00 via Zoom. The Zoom Meeting ID is always the same: **911 5549 7586**.

Jan. Birthdays

05 - Joe Combs
09 - Kelly Cofield-Dyer
26 - Megan Hutchinson

Treasurer's Report

In the month of November, we had total receipts of \$3130.00. Expenses for the month totaled \$1387.95. The result was an excess of receipts over expenditures of \$1742.05.

As of Nov. 30, 2020, we had \$3817.22 available in checking, \$18,025.74 in general savings, \$12,058.50 in the Endowment Fund at UUCEF, and \$54,725.90 in the Savings Fund at UUCEF for a total of \$84,872.21 in all savings accounts. We have a total of \$6,779.39 remaining on the renovation loan.

Marilyn Alexander,
Treasurer



Our Leaders

Board of Trustees

Jim Holmes, *President*
Lisa Cates, *Vice-President*
Marilyn Alexander, *Treasurer*
David Dyer, *Secretary*
Sabra Jones, *Trustee*

Committee on Ministry:

Dan Althoff, Elbert Hill, Marla Loturco

Nominating:

Kelly Cofield Dyer, Amy Hoffman-Shehan,

Team Leaders/Members:

Adult Forum: *Sabra*
Aesthetics: *Carol, Doug, Joyce*
Caring Circle: *Kelly*
Communications: *Doug*
Endowment: *Carolyn, Dick, Doug*
Facilities: *Jim (until we find someone)*
Finance: *Jim, Dick, Jan, Marilyn*
Grounds: *Marilyn*
Long Range Planning: *Jim, Marilyn, Robert, Ronda*
Membership: *Marion*
NTUUC Rep: *Marla*
RE Team: *Tommi*
Safe Congregation Panel: *Dan*
Social Action:
Welcoming Congregation: *Adrian, Amy, Lisa, Marla, Thomas*
Worship: *Dan, Doug, Keller, Marla, Robert*

Contact Us

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- Phone: 903.231.3232
- [Mobile App](#)
- [Email](#)
- [Website](#)
- [Facebook](#)

The church calendar is now merged with the EVENTS listing on the church website home page

Thirty Days of Love 2021

[Thirty Days of Love](#) is our annual celebration that runs approximately from Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in January through Valentine's Day in February. It is an opportunity to lift up the ways Unitarian Universalists and many of our partner organizations are building and organizing by taking bold, courageous action for intersectional racial justice.



In 2021, 30 Days of Love will focus on four themes from [Widening the Circle of Concern](#):

-  Living Our Values in the World (January 17 – 23)
-  Hospitality and Inclusion (January 24 – 30)
-  Educating for Liberation (January 31 – February 6)
-  Restoration and Reparations (February 7 – 13)

The 30 Days will culminate with a livestreamed Side with Love Sunday worship — our 12th annual! — on February 14.

Materials will be posted in the first week of January. [Follow Side with Love on Facebook](#) for updates!

Get Out the Vote in Georgia



Help UU the Vote Get out the Vote in Georgia!

UU the Vote is partnering with Black and LGBTQ-led groups and organizing a coalition of UU congregations and organizations to mobilize and support Georgia voters. Phonebank

events will run through the January 5th election. [Learn more and sign up for an event today!](#)