



March 2021 - Vol. 22 Issue 11

RED RIVER To Seek the Truth in Freedom RAMBLINGS

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

Sunday, March 7, 2021

**RENEGOTIATING THE FOUR AGREEMENTS:
READING THE FINE PRINT**
the rev. Dr. Christine Tata, *leading*

Don Miguel Ruiz's little book, *The Four Agreements*, spent a decade on the *NY Times* bestseller list, offering Toltec wisdom to help North Americans see that humans are actually dreaming all the time, and what we think is "reality" is only a set of agreements we have made with the dream world we are in. Ruiz said we needed to break those old agreements and replace them with some better ones, and a lot of people liked that idea. But now... we might need to look at the fine print on those four agreements... because "reality" just sent us some new Terms of Service. And this time I think we better read 'em.

Sunday, March 14, 2021

BEYOND A STAINED GLASS JESUS
the Rev. Arthur Severance, *speaking*

As we approach Spring, we also approach Easter, that Christian holiday so important to tradition and so difficult to translate without resorting to metaphor and myth, but it is at its heart a natural holiday of the changing of the seasons while reprocessing the hope of new birth!

So who is Jesus for Unitarian Universalists? Jesus is supposed to have asked the question to his apostles—"Who do YOU say that I am?"

Sunday, March 21, 2021

BLISTERING HOPE
the rev. Dr. Aija Duelm

A stonemason would tell us that the rock is not easy to shape, it takes time and leaves blisters on our hands. Many other things in life are like that- where the results are not visible right away. How do we engage the work where the only sign of progress are blisters on our hands? Can you handle the blisters? Where do you find hope and beauty in the work that is ongoing?

Sunday, March 28, 2021

**THE TRUTH ABOUT EASTER, PART 1:
UNDERCOVER IN JERUSALEM**
the rev. Dr. Christine Tata, *leading*

Apart from faith or theology, the question of the empty tomb of Jesus is still open: What did happen to Jesus's body? It's as much a mystery as why we love Peeps. Well, the Rev. Dr. Christine can't claim to know the literal truth of what happened to Jesus's body, but she imagines a compelling narrative in her one-act play, "Breathing Together," which she produced at the ILIFF School of Theology and later at a national conference. Now, in a two-part series beginning on this Passion Sunday, Christine opens this lively question again. It could change your ideas about Easter, women, men, death, life, love, and reality. (But not about Peeps.)

Church Re-Imagined ~ What's Behind the Curtain?

Full Report from the February 28, 2021 Special All-Church Meeting on page 2 and 3

Church Re-Imagined ~ What's Behind the Curtain?

On Sunday, February 28th in place of the Online Coffee Hour everyone was invited to Church Re-Imagined – What's Behind the Curtain. It was a rousing success because of all the people participating. We had 18 people participating and it was terrific to see so many faces on Zoom together. We felt whole again!

A lot had happened since we left the building in March of 2020. We wondered at the time if we would still have a church when the time came for us to return. Is the church a building or the people that congregate to support each other? Where was the church?

As Christine Tata said, "The church has left the building." The church (the people) had to be re-gathered. How could it happen?

Fortunately, we had just received a grant from UUA to begin streaming our Sunday services. The process hadn't begun, but Doug, Marla, Jim and Don kicked into high gear and got our first Sunday service Zoomed. Some things worked and many didn't, but it was a good start and they revised. Then after the first month or so, our church's Sunday services became better and more professional than most. Jim manages the Adult Forum and the Online Coffee Hour on Zoom. Don and Jim work the AV desk. Doug and Marla spend untold hours per week in programming and putting together all the components of each service. They stepped up! **Jim, Doug, Marla and Don are the wizards behind the curtain and we are so proud of them.**

Jolene Whitten noticed that people in our church neighborhood needed non-perishable food and supplies and started leaving items in the Little Library. It

became a free pantry. I don't think anyone abused it, but many used it and I'm sure were grateful. Jolene really provided a service. Some church members found out about it and made monetary donations for supplying the pantry, while others just added supplies to the pantry. This became a service project provided by our church.

Lots of people work tirelessly to make our church work and we are appreciative of everyone for continuing their respective duties. We could never manage without your unwavering commitment.



Did you know that since our services have been online, we have averaged 65 viewers per week on YouTube and 40 viewers per week on Facebook? That is a huge increase over the 25-45 who were attending in our chapel on any Sunday!

So, going forward, it has become necessary to Re-Imagine Church in light of these changes. While we want to be able to return to our beautiful building, we also don't want to lose what we have gained through the online streamed services. We came together on Sunday to brainstorm and Jim Zoomed us into 4 breakout sessions.

How could we engage those who participate online and get them to support our online presence?

How do we engage younger people who may only want to participate online because they have small children at home? How do we encourage them to participate, get involved and bring their children?

What should be our method of outreach to this wider community for building membership?

We asked that the groups consider both active and passive methods and they gave us more than we asked. Below are the ideas from these sessions. Please read them and see how you can fit into these to make them work for our Re-Imagined Church.

Revised Religious Education (need RE volunteers to look into this)

Check with UUA to see what videos are available, to attract families with young children.

Create our own videos, for RE age groups, using the UUA RE Curriculum.

We can advertise through social media that we have these videos available in TikTok, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter, which are excellent places to reach young people. We can advertise them to parents of children through Facebook. I can help with any social media and reach out for families with younger children and teens. Making posts, running accounts, etc. Just email me- amandacripe@gmail.com or text/call at 936-671-9131 **Amanda Cripe**

There is a child version of seven principles.

If there are lots of people with kids online now, create a RE session online with collected video content. They could be lined up ahead of time to release or load them on YouTube as you get them done so parents can play for the kids during church or anytime

Revised Brochure(Marion volunteered to work with Doug on this)

We'll need a new brochure for the church that can be placed in waiting rooms or posted as a flyer. It will highlight what we offer in an online presence and especially what we can offer for young families. Marion will write the brochure or help write it.

Develop a new brochure that incorporates info about virtual services and inclusion.

A brochure is better than billboard because it reaches a broader audience and provides more information.

Advertising (Need planning Team for this)

Leave brochures at different places. Create brochures to point out our on-line events.

Leave brochures in the Post Office in Durant, in libraries and on business bulletin boards.

Use Earth Day Festival, Magnolia Fest, events in and around Hugo and other local events (especially with low interest fees) to advertise our church and especially what we offer for children and young families.

Use flyers at farther-out events, such as Deer Festival in Antlers, to advertise our online presence, for people who might not otherwise know about our church.

Put flyers at the church, in a container like those used at houses-for-sale.

Advertise on NPR that we have a liberal religious church and have a collection of on-line clips for children on our YouTube

Use of Technology (Megan will help Worship Team, need dedicated on-line person/Team)

Instead of using an image of the program in the Sunday email, make it active so a download isn't required. That would make it easier for people to use, especially with phones.

Marla says there is new info on how to be live on zoom like for the JAM.

In the program, use embedded links as titles to external content to make it easier to access specific parts of the service, making it easier to share or add to a playlist (**Megan** said she would do this.)

Find a designated person for online presence on social media.

Megan will help with links in program and possibly collecting RE resources and might be able to put together short trainings for tech so more people can participate more easily.

New Spin on Events (Membership to do the once-a-month potluck, AV team to do technical support and work with Worship Team on hybrid services)

Church can succeed in multiple ways: continue the online outreach; allow for earlier re-gathering of the older members; and innovative technology for live jam on the music. Jan is reporting now, and she and Marla have more.

Share a recipe and eat the same meal on-line moveable feast

Have functions at the church, but have computers on each table so other people can take part virtually and join the conversation.

Have a once-a-month potluck in person and at the church, joined by live Zoom participants.

Make all Sunday assemblies hybrid zoom/live and also recorded for viewing later in the week.

Have hybrid meetings with live and zoom people in same meeting.

We are excited to have these ideas and a plan for moving forward to a Re-Imagined Church of the future.

Held in Care

From the rev. Dr Susan Frederick-Gray, *President, UUA*

Dear friends,

In the last year, we have experienced trauma unprecedented in our lifetimes. The assaults on our democracy, the devastation caused by COVID-19, repeated incidents of deadly police violence, the rise in white supremacist violence, and the impacts of climate disasters continue to take their toll. So many lives and livelihoods have been lost. We are exhausted. We are grieving.

To everyone in Texas, we send you our love and care and pray that you and your loved ones are safe. To leaders in communities impacted by these deadly winter storms, if your congregation, members of your community, or local partner organizations are in need, the UUA's [Disaster Relief Fund](#) is a resource for financial grants to help in this time. Please be in touch with Lisa Presley at lpresley@uua.org with any questions about applying for grants.

For those who are able, [your donations to the Disaster Relief Fund](#) will help us respond to the urgent requests coming in.

Over the weekend, we awarded a grant to the San Marcos UU Fellowship to bolster a community effort to house and feed those experiencing homelessness.

Continued on next page

Jim's Jabber

I'm looking for a hitman that can assassinate Punxsutawney Phil. Contact me if you know a guy that knows a guy!

Hope everyone survived the freezing weather without too much discomfort. I panicked because I thought "if we lost power to the church we have busted pipes". Fortunately, all looks good and the church building survived the cold.

This month we did not hold our annual awards dinner. In its place the February 28 Online Coffee Hour was repurposed for a membership celebration titled "Church Re-imagined: What's Behind the Curtain". Please read the report in this issue of the newsletter. I do want to take time to thank all the people who helped keep the church going with our excellent virtual morning assemblies. A special thanks to Doug and Marla who do all the production work in creating, editing, and uploading the finished videos to YouTube and Facebook.

March kicks off the start of a busy spring for Red River UU. Here is a highlight of some of our key dates.

-  In early March, the Finance Committee meets to discuss what kind of approach do we use this year for our 2021 Stewardship Campaign.
-  April 1 the Stewardship Campaign letter will go out to our members and the online pledge drive will open.
-  April 25 the pledge drive will complete.
-  The Finance team will put together a budget recommendation for 2021-2022 fiscal year based on anticipated expenses, pledge commitments, and any other anticipated funding.
-  April 26 is the DEADLINE to submit reports from various committees to be included in the packet of documents for the spring congregational meeting..
-  May 3 the packet for the Spring Congregational Meeting must be sent to the membership.
-  May 16 is the Spring Congregational Meeting. It will be held virtually using Zoom.

Facilities ordered a new sign for the front of the church to replace the tattered vinyl sign that was peeling. It is now installed and looking good.

The Caring Team needs help. Over the last few months some of our members have been in and out of the hospital and other have had some issues during the severe weather. Please contact me if you are interested in being a part of this team.

Take care, keep safe, and keep on truckin'

Jim Holmes
president

Held in Care

We also organized a shipment of water to First UU Church of Houston to distribute in partnership with neighborhood organizations.. These are small offerings in what will be a long recovery, but they are real ways that UUs make a difference through the UUA's Disaster Relief Fund. During times of grief and loss, we have traditionally found comfort and resilience in gathering together. As religious communities, it is what we do. Yet, we now approach the first anniversary of when, due to the pandemic, the UUA and most of our congregations shifted to all-virtual gatherings. For many, this has been an additional source of grief and isolation. And can make it more difficult to process our grief and pain.

Given the layers of stress and trauma, the need to care for ourselves is more important than ever.

Encourage each other to take time off—and heed this advice yourself. It is critically important to support congregational staff and religious professionals, especially those who hold marginalized identities or who have children, to take time off.

We must recognize the level of trauma that has disproportionately impacted Black, Indigenous and Latinx people and communities of color. Additionally, many of our children are experiencing untold stress and challenges.

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Jan's Virtual Musical Circle

If you enjoy acoustic music and friendship, join Jan's Virtual Music Circle on Zoom each month. We meet on Zoom. You are invited to log on to our zoom meeting to hear singer-songwriter favorites as well as original songs. And there is always some new tidbit shared.

Next gathering will be Saturday, March 20 from 6 – 8 with performance sign-in starting at 5:30. Here's the Zoom link: Meeting ID: 970 4165 1332. Although Valentine's Day will be past, love songs are always popular. Questions? Email me [here](#). Jan.

Common Read Discussion Group

Will meet on Monday, March 15 @ 10 am to discuss Imani Perry thought-provoking book *Breathe: Letters to my Son* via Zoom. If you want to participate, please contact [Marion](#). (You will need to have read the book, however.)

Treasurer's Report

In the month of January, we had total receipts of \$2,830.00, plus other income of \$10,935.28, which included \$2,500 donation in memory of Ronda DeCaire and \$8,435.28 of appreciation in our accounts at the UUA Common Endowment Fund. Expenses for the month totaled \$3,836.73. The result was an excess of receipts over expenditures of \$9,928.55.

As of January 31, 2021, we had \$5,596.93 available in checking, \$16,532.20 in general savings, \$13,581.55 in the Endowment Fund at UUCEF, and \$61,638.13 in the Savings Fund at UUCEF and \$62.07 in other savings, for a total of \$91,813.95 in all savings accounts. We have a total of \$4,171.29 on the renovation loan.

Marilyn Alexander,
Treasurer

Congrats to Ellie

Ellie Dyer has qualified to compete in the Oklahoma All State Academic Tournament.

March Birthdays

12 - Jan Fletcher

14 - Marilyn Alexander

19 - Carole Harner

21 - William Lloyd Fridley

22 - Elbert Hill

25 - Lanan Shelton

Held in Care

Parents are giving all they can to support their kids and their livelihoods.

It matters that we lean more deeply into compassion and care, for these are practices that remind us we are not alone and reinforce our humanity and our interdependence. There is no more important practice or culture to develop in this time.

May you be kind to yourself and others. And may you have space to tend to your heart, your spirit and your well being. Our ministries and leadership will benefit from it.

Yours,

Susan

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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How to reach us:

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

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