



# Red River Ramblings

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 12

DECEMBER 2007

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

## A Month of Sundays

### Inside this issue:

Calendar	2
UU Heritage	4
Social Action News	5
Chalice Circle News	6
Board Highlights	7
President's Letter	8
Minister's Letter	9

### December 2

Rev. Phil Douglas

#### "A Blessing for World Aids Day"

December 1 is World Aids Day. Since it was discovered, AIDS has killed more than 25 million people, more than the combined populations of Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin. Chances are good that you, yourself, know someone who has been affected by this disease. Recently ordained Unitarian Universalist minister, the Rev. Phil Douglas, will lead us in a service of remembrance and of hope.

### December 9

Rev. Dianna Niemann-Harris

#### "Everything I Need To Know"

Robert Fulghum, best-selling author of the "Everything I Need To Know I Learned in Kindergarten", is actually the Rev. Robert Fulghum, a Unitarian Universalist minister, originally from Waco, Texas! RRUU member and ordained UCC minister, Dianna Niemann-Harris, will use Fulghum's wisdom as a starting point for this service.

### December 16

RRUU Worship Arts Team

#### "Festivals of Light"

Lessons from Diwali, Hanukkah, Yule, Christmas and Kwanzaa will all be a part of this inter-generational holiday service, which has become an annual December tradition at RRUU!

### December 23

Rev. Jennifer Innis

#### "A Dream of Peace"

Eleanor Roosevelt said, "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." Come consider what is wished in this day when the songs of the season are filled with the words of peace.

### December 30

RRUU Members and Friends

#### "For Auld Lang Syne"

In his retelling of fairy tales in the Scots language, Matthew Fitt uses the phrase "In the days of auld lang syne" as the equivalent of "Once upon a time". Another RRUU tradition, on the Sunday between Christmas and New Year's, is to have a "Members' Sharing" service in which anyone who wishes can read a poem or short prose selection or sing a song for the group. Those who prefer just to listen are also most welcome. Happy New Year!

### December 24 (4:30 P.M.)

#### "Lessons and Carols of Christmas"

#### A Unitarian Universalist Candlelight Service

Take a moment out of the hustle and bustle for a brief inter-generational Christmas Eve service, followed by cookies and cider, before you get on with the rest of your evening's activities. Our lessons will be from Charles Dickens, Truman Capote, Dylan Thomas, John Henry Faulk, and others; carols will be provided by a brass choir and other special musicians, as well as by congregational singing.



Adult Religious Education & Jr./Sr. High RE 10:00am  
Worship & Children's RE 11:15am

# December 2007

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

## Schedule of Events

### Thursday Afternoons 12:15-1:00

#### Being Peace Meditation Circle

(Not meeting on Dec 27)

### Monday Evenings 6:30-7:15

#### Being Peace Meditation Circle

(Not meeting on Dec 24)

**Dec 2** UUJam!! 12:45

**Dec 2** Board Meeting 12:30

**Dec 5** Safe Congregation Policy Discussion 7:00

**Dec 9** Safe Congregation Policy Discussion 12:45

**Dec 11** The Green Team 7:30

**Dec 13** Board Meeting 7:15

**Dec 14** A Moveable Feast 6:30

**Dec 14** Red River Earth Spirit 6:30

**Dec 16** All-Church Christmas Party 3:00-6:00

**Dec 16** Day Star Gift Giving Deadline

**Dec 20** January Newsletter Deadline

**Dec 24** Lessons and Carols of Christmas 4:30

You are invited to a Holiday Open House  
for Red River Unitarian Universalist Church

Sunday, December 16, 2008  
3:00 – 6:00 p.m.  
4510 Vista Lagos Dr. Sherman  
903-328-0256

Come one and all to enjoy food, singing,  
kids' crafts, and good cheer!

## December Birthdays!



Matt Schulze 12/3

David Lawrence 12/7

Scottie McIntyre Johnson 12/8

Amy Hoffman-Shehan 12/17

Jim Johnson 12/18

Carolyn West 12/21

Aidan Baker 12/29

Chris Butler 12/30

## This Month's Worship Leaders

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**The Rev. Phil Douglas** was ordained this fall as a Unitarian Universalist minister by First Jefferson Unitarian Universalist Church of Ft. Worth, TX. After working for many years as a financial advisor in the corporate world, Phil began attending Perkins School of Theology (SMU) part-time. He received his Master of Divinity degree from Perkins last spring. Phil is currently serving as Interim Director of Religious Education at First Jefferson, while looking for a ministerial position.

**The Rev. Jennifer Innis** has served UU congregations in Illinois, Massachusetts, Maine, Alabama, and South Carolina. She currently serves as Consulting Minister for both RRUU and for the UU Fellowship of Midland, Texas. Jennifer was raised as a Unitarian Universalist, granted a Master of Divinity degree from Harvard Divinity School and ordained by the Unitarian Universalist Church of Worcester, Massachusetts. She now lives in Plano, Texas, with her spouse, the Rev. Patrick Price, minister of Community Unitarian Universalist Church. Jennifer has recently started taking piano lessons for the first time.

**The Rev. Dianna Niemann-Harris** is an ordained United Church of Christ minister and Associate Chaplain at Texoma Medical Center in Denison. She holds a Bachelor of Social Work degree from The University of Missouri-Columbia and a Master of Divinity from Eden Theological Seminary in Webster Groves, Missouri. Dianna joined the staff of the Alzheimer's Association, Greater Dallas Chapter, in 2005 and is currently Manger of Family Services in Cooke, Fannin and Grayson Counties. She is also a proud member of Red River Unitarian Universalist Church.

## Green Team Tips from November

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11/04/07 ***Fill the Dishwasher***

Run your dishwasher only with a full load. Save 100 lbs. of carbon dioxide and \$40 per year.

11/11/07 ***Use Recycled Paper***

Make sure your printer paper is 100% post consumer recycled paper. Save 5 lbs. of carbon dioxide per ream of paper.

11/18/07 ***Adjust Your Thermostat***

Move your heater thermostat down two degrees in winter and up two degrees in the summer. Save 2000 lbs of carbon dioxide and \$98 per year.

11/25/07 ***Check Your Waterheater***

Keep your water heater thermostat no higher than 120°F. Save 550 lbs. of carbon dioxide and \$30 per year.

**\*\*Be sure to check the Green Team's bulletin board for a new tip weekly\*\***

## Our Unitarian Universalist Heritage...

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Who was Clara Barton? She was the founder of The American Red Cross, and one of those wonderfully active Unitarian and Universalist women who played major historical roles in transforming the social institutions of the United States during the 19th century.

Born on December 25, 1821 in Oxford, Massachusetts, the youngest of five children in a middle-class family, Clara Barton was educated at home, and at age 15, started teaching school. Her most notable antebellum achievement was the establishment of a free public school in Bordentown, N.J. Though she is remembered as the founder of the American Red Cross, her only prewar medical experience came when for 2 years she nursed an invalid brother.

In 1861, Ms. Barton was living in Washington, D.C., working at the U.S. Patent Office. When the 6th Massachusetts Regiment arrived in the city after the Baltimore Riots, she organized a relief program for the soldiers, beginning a lifetime of philanthropy.

When Clara learned that many of the wounded from First Battle of Bull Run had suffered, not from want of attention but from need of medical supplies, she advertised for donations in the Worcester, Massachusetts, Spy and began an independent organization to distribute goods. The relief operation was successful, and the following year U.S. Surgeon General, William A. Hammond granted her a general pass to travel with army ambulances “for the purpose of distributing comforts for the sick and wounded, and nursing them.”

For 3 years she followed army operations throughout the Virginia theater and in the Charleston, South Carolina, area. Her work in Fredericksburg, Virginia, hospitals, caring for the casualties from the Battle of the Wilderness, and nursing work at Bermuda Hundred attracted national notice. At this time she formed her only formal Civil War connection with any organization when she served as superintendent of nurses in Major General Benjamin F. Butler's command.

She also expanded her concept of soldier aid, traveling to Camp Parole, Maryland, to organize a program for locating men listed as missing in action. Through interviews with Federals returning from Southern prisons, she was often able to determine the status of some of the missing and notify families.

By the end of the war, Clara Barton had performed most of the services that would later be associated with the American Red Cross, which she founded in 1881. In 1904 she resigned as head of that organization, retiring to her home at Glen Echo, outside Washington, D.C., where she died on 12 April, 1912.



Source: Historical Times Encyclopedia of the Civil War edited by Patricia L. Faust

## Social Action—"One More Step!"

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Since many of our members come from Oklahoma, it was suggested during the Social Action Committee meeting of October 21, that we undertake some projects that will benefit the Bryan County area. Marion Hill has reported that the food pantries are experiencing great difficulties with increased need and lowered supply. In response, we have decided to hold an end of year canned food drive during the month of December. This will benefit Loaves and Fishes in Durant. Please bring any shelf stable food items during any Sunday in December. There will be a donation box located by the Social Action bulletin board in the church foyer. The donations will be delivered to the food bank on Dec. 27th. An additional project to aid the Bryan County Youth Center will be scheduled for April of 2008.

It has become an RRUU tradition to give small Christmas gifts to the clients of Day Star, the sheltered workshop program for disabled adults with whom we share our building. We will be posting individual sheets with the name of one client and a gift he or she has requested. You are invited to choose one or more names, purchase, wrap and label the gift with the person's name, and return it to church no later than Sunday, Dec. 16, so the presents can be distributed to the clients the week before Christmas. If several people or families would like to "share" a client, that would be fine, too.

The Alternative Holiday Gift Program information is now available. (See article below.) For those of you who are not familiar with this project, it enables you to make a gift donation to a number of charitable groups instead of receiving more "stuff" that you really don't need nor have room for. These also make great gifts for friends that have everything.

A calendar of Social Action activities for the coming year is now posted on the bulletin board.

In light of the success that the Cowboys are having, let's don't forget the Souper Bowl of Caring that will be held Feb. 3, 2008.

## Choose Alternative Gifts for the Holidays!

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"One More Step" Social Action Committee is again offering you the opportunity to "give the world a present" during this holiday season!

Every Sunday in December, before and after church, a table will be set up where you may make a donation in the name your loved ones in support of any of over 30 charitable projects, overseas or in impoverished areas of our own country, through Alternative Gifts International.

Each year since 1980, AGI has developed a "global shopping list" for hungry, sick, homeless, or exploited people and our endangered planet. AGI chooses nonprofit agencies with excellent reputations to feature in their Alternative Gift Catalog. Choose from among such worthy projects as support for food pantries and the homeless in the US, watershed restoration in Afghanistan, reforestation projects in Haiti, therapy equipment for children with cerebral palsy in Vietnam, scholarships for nomadic children in Kenya, refrigerators for dairy farmers in Peru, and many more. Gifts to projects can be as little as \$5 to help one family join a rice cooperative in the Philippines, or as much as \$220 to purchase a fuel-efficient stoves for an entire village in Haiti.

Complete catalogs will be available at church or you may check out their website at [www.altgifts.org](http://www.altgifts.org). But please do not purchase gifts on-line since we would like to send all our church's orders in together.

## "Coffee and Conversation" - December and January

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The RRUU Hospitality Committee (Elbert & Marion Hill, Coordinators) would like to thank in advance the people that have agreed to provide refreshments for our coffee time after the December Sunday worship services. The sign-up list for January is in the foyer, and you are invited to contribute to the life of our congregation in this way. Your help is much appreciated!

December 2—Jerry Harris, December 9—Ken & Jan Fletcher, December 16—Sylvia Mitchell,

December 23—Elbert & Marion Hill, December 30—Lisa Cates

## 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, Scottie McIntyre Johnson (903-892-4751; [scottieone@cablone.net](mailto:scottieone@cablone.net)).



**BEING PEACE, A Mindfulness Meditation Circle (Afternoon Session)** Facilitator: Nell Evans. Meets every Thursday afternoon from 12:15 to 1:00 p.m. @ the home of Nell Evans in Sherman. **WE WILL NOT MEET ON DEC. 27.**  
NEW MEDITATORS WELCOME! JUST SHOW UP.

**BEING PEACE, A Mindfulness Meditation Circle. (Evening Session)** Facilitator: Kathy Whisman. Meets every Monday evening from 6:30 to 7:15 p.m. @ the church. **WE WILL NOT MEET ON DEC. 24.**  
NEW MEDITATORS WELCOME! JUST SHOW UP.



**EVENSONG, A Circle for Sharing Our Stories.** Facilitator: Scottie McIntyre Johnson. Meets the third Tuesday of the month. **WE WILL NOT MEET IN DECEMBER.** Next meeting: January 16, 2008.  
NEW MEMBERS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!



**THE GREEN TEAM, An Environmental Action Circle.** Facilitator: Linn Cates. Meets the second Tuesday of the month from 7:30 to 9:30. @ the home of Linn Cates in Sherman. Next meeting: Tues. Dec. 11.  
ANYONE WHO LOVES OUR PLANET IS WELCOME!



**IT TAKES A VILLAGE, A Circle of Parents Supporting Parents.** Facilitator: Dianna Butler. Usually meets the last Sunday of each month, after church @ the church; **HOWEVER, THIS MONTH WE WILL MEET ON DEC. 9** to hear about the Safe Congregations Policy.  
FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!



**A MOVEABLE FEAST, A Cooking and Eating Circle.** Facilitators: Elbert & Marion Hill. Meets at moveable times and moveable places! Next meeting: Friday, Dec. 14 @ 6:30 p.m. @ The Metropolitan Café in downtown Sherman.  
RESERVATIONS ARE NECESSARY, so contact Elbert or Marion Hill.



**RED RIVER EARTH SPIRIT, A Nature-Based Spirituality Circle.** Facilitator: Penny Armstrong. Meets at various places on various dates but usually on a Friday. Next meeting: Yule Celebration on Dec. 14, 8:00 p.m. @ the home of Kris Riek.  
NEW MEMBERS AND GUESTS WELCOME!



**THE REEL DEAL, A Movie Watching Circle.** Facilitator: Linda Woytasczyk. Usually meets the last Friday of the month from 7:20 to 10:00 @ the home of Linda Woytasczyk in Sherman. **WE WILL NOT MEET IN DECEMBER.**  
NEW MEMBERS & GUESTS ALWAYS WELCOME!



**UUJAM!! A Music-Making Circle.** Facilitator: Jan Fletcher. Meets the first Sunday of the month after church @ the church. Next meeting: Dec. 2. Bring your own brown bag lunch, your musical instruments and a song to sing!  
MUSICIANS AND LISTENERS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!

## RRUU Board Meeting Highlights--November 8, 2007

After very busy September and October meetings, the agenda for the November Board meeting was relatively short. Possible proposals for NTAUS grant requests were discussed, and a committee of Tom Rawson, John Ockels, and Mary Larkin-Baker was charged with considering options and making a recommendation to the Board at the December meeting. At that time, Kathleen will also be presenting a proposal for a joint campus ministry project with the Denton congregation.

Plans were made to post the draft of the Safe Congregation Policy on the RRUU web site for members to review. (It is now available at [www.ruuu.org](http://www.ruuu.org).) Meetings will be held for those who wish to discuss the policy with members of the Board and the task force. Please see below for the schedule of those meetings.

The Committee on Ministry recommended that the Board adopt the UUMA ministerial guidelines as policy for RRUU. These guidelines address many aspects of ministry, including the conduct of UUA ministers and their relationships to their congregations and colleagues. Our relationship with our quarter-time minister, the Rev. Jennifer Innis, is guided by this document. The board is currently reviewing those guidelines and will consider them at a meeting December 2nd.

### RRUU BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Kathleen Campbell, President

Tom Rawson, Vice-president

Jim Johnson, Treasurer

Dianna Butler, David Lawrence,  
Mary Larkin-Baker, John Ockels

RRUU Board of Trustees will meet on Sunday, December 2, after coffee hour, at the church and again on Wednesday, December 13 at 7:15 PM at the church. Meetings are open and anyone may attend. To place an item on the agenda, contact the president, Kathleen Campbell, at 903-892-0576 or [kcampbell@austincollege.edu](mailto:kcampbell@austincollege.edu)

## Safe Congregation Policy

In October, the Board approved a draft of a Safe Congregation Policy for RRUU (see the Board highlights and President's letter in the November newsletter for details). This policy is now available for review on the RRUU website ([www.RRUU.org](http://www.RRUU.org)). Members are encouraged to study the document and send comments to Board President Kathleen Campbell at [kcampbell@austincollege.edu](mailto:kcampbell@austincollege.edu), to Task Force Chair John Ockels at [ockels@mac.com](mailto:ockels@mac.com), or to Rev. Jennifer Innis at [revjinnis@earthlink.net](mailto:revjinnis@earthlink.net). Written comments may also be sent to Red River Unitarian Universalist Church at P.O. Box 1806, Denison, TX 75021 or handed to Kathleen, John, or Jennifer at church.

In addition the Board has scheduled three meetings for members who wish to discuss the policy with members of the task force and the Board. These will be on Nov. 28 at 7:30 at Linda Woytasczyk's house (1902 W. Shields in Sherman), on Dec. 5 at 7:00 at Kathleen Campbell's house (1104 S. Travis in Sherman), and on Dec. 9 at the church following the coffee hour. Childcare will be provided for the meeting at the church.

All comments will be considered by the task force and the Board and a final draft will be brought to the board for approval before the finished document is presented to the congregation for adoption.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to study the draft of this policy carefully. Its adoption will be one important step in the Board's efforts to attempt to address more deliberately and systematically the various issues which will arise as our congregation grows.

## Letter from the RRUU Board President

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October and November were very busy months for our church. We finished off October with the visit of Carole Czujko, the UUA financial consultant who will be working with us as we move toward ownership of our own building. We have not received her formal written report yet; when we do, it will be distributed as widely as possible among our members. But we already know some of the work we need to do. At her final session with some of our church leaders (particularly those involved with finances and the new building research), she gave us some good advice on building the membership, participation, and financial commitments we need to support the purchase and occupation of a new building. She pointed out then, as she did in the congregational workshop, that we needed to focus on the membership development portion of our five-year plan. Actions we need to take include everything moving pews to developing written materials for visitors and new members to improving our stewardship campaign. To get the job done, every member of the congregation will be called upon at some time. As someone said during the workshop—there is no “they” who will do all of these tasks, there is only “we.”

Although we have already begun working on some of these tasks, December will be a less busy month at the RRUU. I hope that this will be a time during which you can relax a little, attend our special holidays observances, and enjoy being with our RRUU community. We hope to see you at church throughout the season, and encourage you to bring family and friends who may be visiting. Our Festival of Lights service on the Dec. 16th and our Lessons and Carols service on Christmas Eve might be an excellent opportunity to invite friends you think would find RRUU a meaningful part of their lives. We will be participating in the Alternative Christmas Gifts program again this year, collecting food for a Bryan County food bank, and providing gifts to the DayStar residents—consider being part of these opportunities to extend your holiday giving. If you haven’t already picked up your copy of *The Better World Shopping Guide*, please do so, and you might want to buy an extra copy or two for Christmas gifts. And be sure to put the all-church holiday party hosted by the Viki Reeder and Roger Gregory-Allen on your calendars—and come prepared for an old-fashioned carol sing.

The winter holidays are a time for both festivity and reflection at RRUU. Enjoy them—and be prepared to get back to work in January.

Kathleen Campbell

## Building a Better World Shopping Guide

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Money is power. And wherever large amounts of money collect, so also new centers of power form...As citizens, on average, we might vote once every 4 years, if at all. As consumers, we vote every single day with the purest form of power: money... The average American family spends around \$18,000 each year on goods and services. Think of it as casting 18,000 votes every year for the kind of world you want to live in. - Excerpt from *The Better World Shopping Guide* by Ellis Jones, PhD.

This book is a comprehensive guide for the socially and environmentally responsible consumers, which grades companies by product category from A to F.

The Green Team has purchased enough of these books to give to each household in our congregation. If you can afford to donate \$10 to cover the cost of your book, we would appreciate it. If not, we still want you to have one of these books. Beginning in November, these books will be found on the Green Team table in the foyer along with a donation bucket.

And check out their website at [www.betterworldshopper.org](http://www.betterworldshopper.org).

Let’s all use this little book to take back our power!



## Minister's Letter

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### *On the Journey*

Any day now I expect to hear the good news of a new baby. This is not such a surprise right now – after all, the focus of this month in the Christian world is the coming of the newborn child. As a tradition both originating from and continually inspired by the Christian faith, Unitarian Universalists all over the land are hanging the church with greens, squeezing in pageants and holiday parties, and counting the candles for Christmas Eve services. I, too, plan on enjoying the month with the chance to dream of what it means to welcome a new life right after enduring the darkest night of the year, and to imagine what can begin anew with such a life.

But today, the only child I am waiting for is the one who will be my new niece. Some time in the next week or so, my brother and his wife expect to welcome the birth of their first child. This child will be my parents' first grandchild and my first niece (or nephew, for that matter) from within our original nuclear family. (If gifts of baby clothes could count as currency, then this baby-to-be has a good start on college.)

As I try to summarize one of the many family units that include this child before she is born, I am struck by how hard it is to talk about the groups to which we are most connected, if we have or desire such communities at all. Is family the people we see a few times a year or the people we see every day? How does this include the people we know well or who know us well? All the while realizing that one's biological family and the people who know us best are often not one and the same. In fact, the lack of understanding within what most of our society counts as "family" leaves scars and wins and losses on most of us and helps make this month one of the least wonderful times of the year. Family is not for the faint of heart. May all of us seek the care we need from the sources in our lives that know us best.

One of those sources for me is the Unitarian Universalist church. I have a chance to explore one such source when Patrick and I visit my family in Massachusetts for the New Year. On December 30, I will preach at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Worcester where my brothers and I grew up, where I was

the interim director of religious education, and where I was ordained to the liberal ministry. People in the pews will include my former Sunday school teachers, some of who were on the Board when I was on staff. I confess I am both excited and anxious. I have not led the service there in about 8 years. And much of my family will attend too on this rare occasion to fill a pew and see me in the pulpit. Along with the greetings from long-time members and meeting first time visitors, I may hear something more of who I was way back then and ponder what is or is not the same for me today. Whether our travels take us far from home or keep us close to the heart, may each of us hold our hearts open to receive the news we need to hear as we await a new life among us.

Namaste,

Jennifer

## Where in the UU World is Rev Jennifer?

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The best ways to contact me are by my cell phone: 972-639-7900 and by email: [revjinnis@earthlink.net](mailto:revjinnis@earthlink.net). My day off is Monday. I will return general calls or email after my day off is over. In case of emergency, I will respond as soon as possible.

When I am working with the Unitarian Universalist church at Midland I may take a little longer to return calls and email due to my responsibilities there. I ask that you let me know if a matter needs my immediate attention. For this month, I am in Midland during December 7-16. If you do not reach me directly, please let me know how to get in touch with you.

After Christmas, Patrick and I have a chance to spend time with my family in Massachusetts. I will be available for emergencies only for December 27-January 3.

Bowing to the light within,

Jennifer

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PO Box 1806  
Denison, Texas 75021  
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E-mail: info@rruu.org

A home for religious liberals in  
Southern Oklahoma and North  
Texas

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

[WWW.RRUU.ORG](http://WWW.RRUU.ORG)

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## Church Leadership

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### Minister

Reverend Jennifer Innis

### Board of Trustees

Kathleen Campbell, President (2008)

Tom Rawson, Vice-president (2008)

Jim Johnson, Treasurer (2008)

Dianna Butler, Trustee-at-Large (2008)

David Lawrence, Trustee-at-Large (2008)

Mary Larkin-Baker, Trustee-at-Large (2009)

John Ockels, Trustee-at-Large (2009)

### Committee on Ministry

Darrah Dunn, Elbert Hill, Linda Woytasczyk

### Team Leaders

Worship and Chalice Circles:

Scottie McIntyre Johnson

Adult Religious Education:

John Ockels

Children's Religious Education:

Linda Woytasczyk

Youth Advisors:

Viki Reeder & Roger Gregory-Allen

Social Action:

David Lawrence

Hospitality:

Elbert & Marion Hill

Communications:

Kathleen Campbell

Historian:

Dianna Butler

Newsletter:

Lisa Cates

Website:

Nell Evans