



# Red River Ramblings

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2008

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	8
Board Highlights	9
President's Letter	10
Minister's Letter	11

### January 6

Rev. Jennifer Innis

#### “Grace is the Word”

Grace is the word, is the word that you’ve heard.

It’s got groove, it’s got meaning.

Grace is the time, is the place, is the motion.

And Grace is the way we are feeling.

*Come hear about the Word.*

*(As inspired by Barry Gibb.)*

### January 13

Dr. Kathleen Campbell

#### “Tragedy, Comedy, and Unitarian Universalism”

Tragedy and comedy, the great dramatic genres, offer, as Jose Ortega y Gasset says, “wide vistas seen from the main sides of human nature.” These literary forms capture important but sometimes contradictory truths about human experience. Tragedy we tend to take seriously; tragedies are about life and death, the heights and depths of human experience. But it is comedy that, despite its light-hearted tone and improbable plots, more clearly reflects our Unitarian Universalist principles.

### January 20

Rev. Rob Moore

#### “Come Be My Light”

As we enter into this winter season of darkness, many of us need to bring light and love into our lives more intentionally than other times of the year. We will look at the life and ministry of Mother Teresa to see how she brought that light and love to the poorest of the poor even in the midst of her own terrible “dark night of the soul.” Along the way, maybe we can find some wisdom and more light and love for our own lives.

### January 27

Red River Players

#### ”Spoon River Anthology”

In 1915, American poet, Edgar Lee Masters, published Spoon River Anthology, a book of poems in which each free-form poem is spoken by a dead person who had lived in the fictional town of Spoon River. In 1963, it was made into a stage play, complete with music. Our service on January 27 will be a staged reading of portions of this play.



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

# January 2008

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

Monday Evenings 6:30-7:15  
Being Peace Meditation Circle

**Jan 5** ATD Symposium @ AC 9a-4p

**Jan 6** UUJam!! 12:45

**Jan 8** The Green Team, 7:30

**Jan 10** RRUU Board Meeting, 7:30

**Jan 15** Evensong, 7:30

**Jan 17** February RRUU Newsletter Deadline

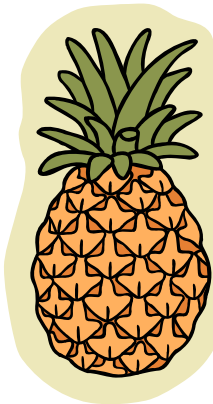
**Jan 19** A Moveable Feast

**Jan 20** It Takes A Village, 3:00

**Jan 25** Reel Deal, 7:20

**Jan 27** Chili Lunch & Workshop after Church

## Hospitality Hosts Needed!



Elbert & Marion Hill coordinate the Hospitality Team at RRUU. They have provided a sign-up sheet in the foyer of the church for the months of January 2008-June 2008. That is 26 opportunities for you to volunteer for this important service to the church and to our guests. Don't be nervous about volunteering, there are some printed guidelines to give volunteers and Elbert & Marion are usually available to help. The church does provide coffee and

juice, so volunteers need only bring refreshments. Thanks goes out to all who have already brought goodies and encouragement to join in to those that have not. Suggestions from the Hospitality Team include bringing cookies, donuts, coffee cake or fruit.

## January Birthdays!

Linda Woytaszyk 1/4

Cynthia Evetts 1/7

Jeannine Hatt 1/23

Mitchell Reid 1/23

Matthew Rawson 1/26

Drew Wade 1/31



## This Month's Worship Leaders

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**The Rev. Robert Moore** graduated from Meadville/Lombard Theological School in 2001. He has served as Interim Minister at congregations in Grand Junction, CO and Port Townsend, WA. He came to Texas in 2004 to be part of the initial staff at Pathways Church as the Associate Pastor of Family Life Ministries. He and his family, partner Jaime and two sons, Alex and Zach, are currently members of Pathways where Rob leads the Equipping Ministry Team and occasionally preaches and teaches Adult R.E.

**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.

**Dr. Kathleen Campbell** is the current president of our congregation, a member of the RRUU Worship Arts Team and a frequent and popular speaker in our pulpit. She holds BS and MA degrees in Theatre from Northwestern University and Trinity University, respectively, and an MA and PhD in Literature from the University of Dallas. Kathleen has worked as a director, designer, producer, actor, and voice coach for a variety of theatres and educational institutions.

## Green Team Tips from November

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12/02/07      **Take Shorter Showers**

Showers account for 2/3 of all water heating costs. Save 350 lbs. of carbon dioxide and \$99 per year.

12/09/07      **Install a Low-Flow Showerhead**

Using less water in the shower means less energy to heat the water. Save 350 lbs. of carbon dioxide and \$150.

12/16/07      **Buy Products Locally**

Buy locally and reduce the amount of energy required to drive your products to your store.

12/23/07      **Buy Minimally Packaged Goods**

Less packaging could reduce your garbage by about 10%. Save 1,200 pounds of carbon dioxide and \$1,000 per year.

12/30/07      **Reduce Garbage**

Buy products with less packaging and recycle paper, plastic and glass. Save 1,000 lbs. of carbon dioxide 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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There have been five Presidents of the United States who were Unitarians. January 8th is the birth date of one of them. He was born in a log cabin in upstate New York and had a maple sugar trough as a crib. As a youth he was apprenticed to a wool carder. He desperately wanted an education, so he bought a cheap dictionary. In his words, "While attending the carding machines, I used to place the dictionary on the desk – by which I passed every two minutes in feeding the machines and removing the rolls – and in this way I could have a moment to look at a word ..."

In his rise from a log cabin to wealth and the White House, Millard Fillmore demonstrated that through methodical industry and some competence an uninspiring man could make the American dream come true.

He first attended school at the age of 18, fell in love with his school mistress, Abigail, and married her seven years later. He was always sensitive about his limited education. After he left the White House, he was offered an honorary degree from Oxford, which was written in Latin. He turned it down on the grounds that "no man should accept...a degree he cannot read."

He was given a job as clerk by a local lawyer and was admitted to the bar at the age of 23. In 1828 he was elected first to the state legislature. He went on to serve three terms in the House of Representatives and then was elected Vice President under Zachary Taylor.

On July 9, 1850, President Taylor died from an acute attack of gastroenteritis and Millard Fillmore became the 13th President of the United States. Thirty years earlier, the Fillmore's joined the First Unitarian Society in Buffalo, NY and during his presidency he attended All Souls Unitarian Church in Washington. Abraham Lincoln attended the Unitarian Church in Buffalo with Millard Fillmore on Lincoln's way to Fillmore's inauguration.

At some other time he might have made an excellent and well-remembered President. But he stepped into an impossible situation. As Vice President he had presided over six months of Senate debate led by Calhoun, Daniel Webster and Henry Clay over the issue of extending slavery into new territories. Fillmore had reached the conclusion that compromise was best for the country, and as President he immediately backed that position.

Five compromise bills passed and were signed into law during his first eleven weeks of office. The Great Compromise of 1850 ruined his Presidency. Neither side was satisfied, and he became everyone's scapegoat. He was forced to send federal troops to Charleston, SC to prevent insurrection and had to threaten to use military force in the North to enforce the fugitive slave law. He had lost his effectiveness.

In 1852 he could not even win the nomination of his own party and so he left the Presidency after less than one full term to become one of the least known of our American Presidents. In 1938 a stamp was issued as a way to help folks remember him. However, his wife is remembered for having installed the first bathtub in the White House.



## Social Action—"One More Step!"

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The end of the year is always a time for reflection and for looking forward. December has been a great month for giving at RRUU. Elbert and Marion will be delivering our donations of food to Loaves and Fishes in Durant in time to start the New Year.

If you missed out on the Alternative Holiday Gift Program, donations can still be made at [www.altfits.org](http://www.altfits.org) or by calling (800) 842-2243.

Our special collection on Dec. 16th raised money for children at the North Texas Youth Connection in Sherman. This collection will provide gift cards for the purchase of basic clothing and toiletries for youth that do not currently have a supporting homelife. These are children for whom a gift of socks, shirts, and healthcare products are Christmas.



Following one of our established traditions, we were able to provide gifts for eighteen Day Care clients including one new last minute addition. Thanks to everyone for taking the time to select, purchase, and wrap gifts. We presented the gifts on Wednesday, the 19th and allowed the excitement to build until the following day when they were opened at their party. The tree looked much better surrounded by our gifts.

Please mark your calendar for the Souper Bowl of Caring that will be held Feb. 3, 2008. This is the Sunday when we join with thousands of churches across the nation in taking up a special collection to benefit hungry people in our own communities. A lunch of soup, bread and dessert will be provided in the Fellowship Hall after the service.

We will also be trying to provide landscaping for Habitat for Humanity homes that are being completed in 2008. Further information will be available for the next newsletter.

### Upcoming Events:

The cleanup scheduled for March 30 at Herman Baker Park in Sherman has been rescheduled for April 6 to avoid a conflict with the church birthday party.

Aid for the Bryan County Youth Center - April of 2008.

## Claudia Pinson Anderson (July 1, 1947-December 6, 2007)

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RRUU member, Claudia Anderson, passed away Thursday, December 6, 2007 at Texoma Medical Center. At the time of her death, she was a resident of Texoma Specialty Care Center in Denison.

Claudia was born July 1, 1947, in Lenoir, North Carolina, the daughter of James C. and Ruby (McCrary) Pinson. She completed her nursing training at Eastfield College and worked as an LVN for home health agencies, nursing homes and hospitals in the Dallas area for a number of years before her retirement.

Claudia was a faithful member of Red River Unitarian Universalist Church and continued serving on its Caring Committee even after she was unable to come to church, by faithfully sending birthday and get well cards to church members and friends. She loved music and singing, especially gospel songs and folk music, and played the autoharp.

She is survived by her loving family; one daughter, Amy Elizabeth Myatt of Garland, Texas; three sons, Robert Dwight Anderson III of Garland, Texas; James Gregory Anderson of Sherman, Texas and Ferris A. Anderson of Austin, Texas; four grandchildren, Jordan Green and Chelsea Myatt both of Garland, Texas and David Palmer and Melanie Anderson both of Sherman, Texas. Also surviving are her mother, brother, James Pinson, sisters, Jackie and Jane Knotts and other family and friends. She was preceded in death by her father.

Everyone who knew Claudia appreciated her quick wit, keen intelligence, and love of life. She will be missed by many people. A memorial service for Claudia was held Saturday, December 15, 2007. Her family wishes to thank everyone who contributed toward the beautiful service. They also want to express how grateful they are to everyone who cared about and for Claudia during her time as a member of RRUU. An additional service in Claudia's memory will be held in the spring during which some of her ashes will be sprinkled in our church's Memorial Garden near the children's play area.

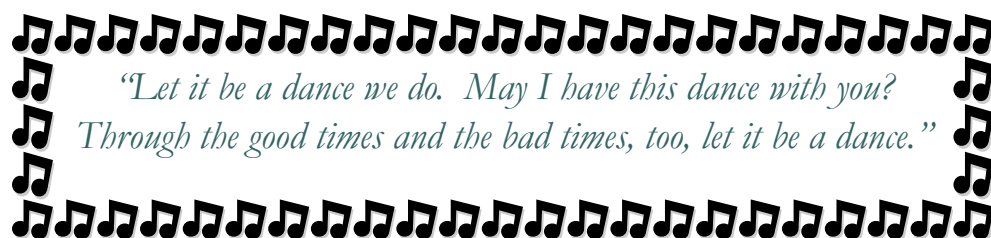
If you would like to make a donation to the church in memory of Claudia, those funds will go toward the cost of new hymnals. Since Claudia loved music and, in fact, loved our UU hymnal, *Singing the Living Tradition*, this seems an especially appropriate use of funds that might be donated in her name. A special bookplate designating a hymnal as having been given in memory of Claudia will be placed in the front of a book, with your name as the donor. If you wish your gift to remain anonymous, however, you may certainly indicate that on your check or in a note attached. Just for your information, each hymnal costs \$28 and shipping from the UUA Bookstore, but, of course, any amount you choose to give would be much appreciated.

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Our condolences go to our member, Doug Strong, whose brother, Dr. Frank Edward Strong, passed away on December 10, 2007. Dr. Strong was a resident of Quadra Island, British Columbia.

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Our condolences also go to our member, Kathy Whisman, whose mother, Lillian Furr, passed away on December 10, 2007. A memorial service at Dannel Funeral Home was held on December 18 with Scottie McIntyre Johnson officiating.





## Awakening the Dreamer—Symposium

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**Saturday, January 5, 2008**

**9 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

**Austin College**

You are cordially invited to attend the first Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream Symposium to be held in the historic Red River Valley. We'll be meeting in the Arena Theatre, located on the lower level at Ida Green Communication Center on the Austin College Campus. The fee for this event is \$20, and prior registration is required. The purpose of the Symposium is to bring forth an environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling, socially just human presence on this planet as the guiding principle of our time. If this purpose resonates with you, then this is an event you'll not want to miss!

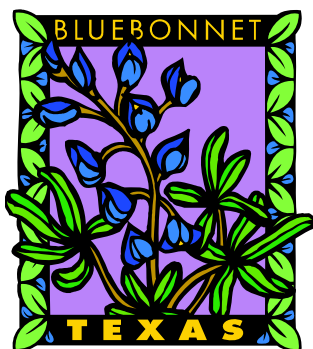
The primary presenters will be Charlie Behrens and John Ockels, with audio/visual support from Cathy Ingham and Ramesh Mahale. The videos alone are worth your attending, and include insights from inspiring philosophers, scientists and community leaders such as Brian Swimme, Matthew Fox, Thomas Berry, Lynn Twist, Paul Hawken and Van Jones. Participation in this event is limited to thirty persons, so please register early to assure your seat. If you have friends and colleagues that you think might benefit from this event, please forward this notice to them. The first invitations to the general public will be made on Thursday.

For additional information and online registration, please go to <http://029d256.netsolhost.com/schedule/sherman.html>. This Symposium is a community outreach program of the the Red River Unitarian Universalist Church, Denison, Texas. [www.ruuu.org](http://www.ruuu.org)

If you have questions, please contact John Ockels [ockels@mac.com](mailto:ockels@mac.com)

## Southwestern UU District Spring Conference—April 25-27

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YOU are invited to Austin, Texas, to the District Spring Conference, hosted by First UU Church of Austin. It's a "don't miss" UU event.

Our theme is "What the World Needs from Religious Liberals" with two keynote speakers -- David Bumbaugh and Natalie Fenimore -- and worship services with the hosting minister, Dr. Davidson Loehr. David is Professor of Ministry, Meadville-Lombard Theological School in Chicago. Natalie is a Master Credentialed Director of Religious Education, Fairfax, Virginia. Davidson has been minister at First UU of Austin for more than 6 years, has gained a deserved reputation as a scholarly and thought-provoking preacher.

Our workshops will include subjects on: Sustainable Architecture, Talk-backs with the Keynoters, UU History, Update from U-Bar-U, Greening your Grounds,

Jesus Seminar, Winning Religious Education Grants, and more. Saturday early morning extras: Yoga or Walking tour of Lady Bird Lake.

Austin is the Live Music Capital of the World, so we are scheduling some of our best local talent for worship services and evening entertainment. For a quieter and more spiritual mood, we'll offer a video presentation of work by world-acclaimed artist, Andy Goldsworthy, featured on the cover of UU World, Summer 2006.

And if you've wondered why we say "Keep Austin Weird," now's your chance to find out. Please plan to join us for a memorable occasion. More details to come.

## 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.

**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. **NEW MEDITATORS WELCOME AT EITHER CIRCLE! JUST SHOW UP.**



**EVENSONG, A Circle for Sharing Our Stories.** Facilitator: Scottie McIntyre Johnson. Meets the third Tuesday of the month @ 7:30 p.m. Next meeting: January 15 @ the home of Scottie McIntyre Johnson in Sherman. **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. Jan. 8. **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. **BUT** this month, the meeting will be a Tea Party for Children and their Grown-ups on Sunday, Jan. 20 @ the home of Dianna Butler @ 3:00. **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: Jan. 19. Time & place TBA. **NEW MEMBERS AND GUESTS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME, BUT OFTEN WE NEED TO KNOW IN ADVANCE HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL BE EATING, SO PLEASE LET THE FACILITATORS KNOW IF YOU WISH TO ATTEND.**



**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: TBA. **NEW MEMBERS AND GUESTS WELCOME!**



**THE REEL DEAL, A Movie Watching Circle.** Facilitator: Linda Woytasczyk. Meets the last Friday of the month from 7:20 to 10:00 @ the home of Linda Woytasczyk in Sherman. Next meeting: Friday, January 25. **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: Jan. 6. Bring your own brown bag lunch, your musical instruments and a song to sing! **MUSICIANS AND LISTENERS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!**



## RRUU Board Meeting Highlights--December 2 & 13, 2007

### December 2

The Board met briefly on Dec. 2 to approve the adoption of the Unitarian Universalist Minister's Association's guidelines for ministerial behavior as RRUU church policy. These guidelines recommend appropriate conduct for UUA ministers in relationship to their congregations, their colleagues, and the community. Our relationship with Jennifer is governed by this document, so the board wished to incorporate it into our church policy. The guidelines can be found on-line at [www.uuma.org/Documents/guidelines.html](http://www.uuma.org/Documents/guidelines.html)

#### RRUU BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Kathleen Campbell, President

Tom Rawson, Vice-president

Jim Johnson, Treasurer

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

### December 13

During November and December the congregation had an opportunity to review the draft of the Safe Congregation policy posted on-line at the RRUU web site. Three meetings were held to give members an opportunity to discuss the policy with members of the task force and the board. One suggestion was made for a small change in the policy, which the board has referred to the task force. Some people had concerns about the difficulty of implementing the policy. The board will give clear guidance to the Safe Congregation Panel about a timeline for implementation. After final editing and checking, we hope to present the policy to the congregation for approval at a congregational meeting on January 27. At that time, we will ask that the congregation approve the policy without further amendments.

The board discussed the possibility of applying for a NTAUUS grant to help support a campus ministry project. Kathleen had worked with a member of the Denton church on a joint project, but the Denton board voted against the proposal. The board felt that this was not the right time for RRUUC to pursue the project alone and agreed to look at it again in the future.

The board approved a recommendation from the Committee on Ministry for a process to create a covenant for the congregational. The idea of a covenant and the proposed process are discussed in more detail in the Committee on Ministry's article and in Jennifer and Kathleen's letters elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Stewardship Committee has recommended that the annual stewardship drive be held again in March. It will kick off with a special event March 2 and end with a church birthday party March 30.

The spring meetings for the RRUU Board of Trustees are scheduled for January 10, February 7, March 6, April 3, May 1, and June 5. Meetings will begin at 7:30PM at the church. Meetings are open and anyone may attend. To place an item on the agenda, contact Kathleen Campbell, at 903-892-0576 or [kcampbell@austincollege.edu](mailto:kcampbell@austincollege.edu)

## Right Relations Covenant

In an effort to express our commitment to respect others and to build on a foundation of open communication, the Committee of Ministry has suggested a process to create a Right Relations Covenant for Red River UU. We are truly a congregation that communicates openly and honestly, and with a healthy respect for the opinions and diversity of others. A three member task force will be named by the board to oversee the process. On January 27th after church services we will have a chili lunch, and then meet in small groups to address questions posed by the task force. Questions like "what is important to you in belonging to a community?" and "how do you want to be treated in a church community?" will be presented for discussion. Results from the small groups will then be presented to all those attending for clarification and structure. A draft will be constructed by the task force and presented in February to the board for response and suggestions. In the March and April newsletters the Right Relations Covenant will be published for the congregation to view. It will then be voted on in May at the Congregational Meeting. The approved covenant will be the June newsletter.

We hope you will be a part of this process. It will be so important to hear from all members so that this covenant is accurate and meaningful. So mark January 27th on your calendars and plan to attend.

-Linda Woytaszyk, chair of the Committee on Ministry

## Letter from the RRUU Board President

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As I write this, a few days before Christmas, holiday celebrations are going on around me. I still have shopping to do (I am always a last minute shopper) and haven't yet joined my daughter and her family in Dallas for our annual cookie baking session. I have good memories of Christmas parties, especially of the open house hosted by Roger Gregory Allen, Viki Reeder, Hilary and Davis for our RRUU family. I look back with joy at our annual Festivals of Light service, one of my favorite services of the year. Thank you, Scottie, for creating this beautiful experience for our church. And I am looking forward with eager anticipation to our final services- Jennifer preaching next week and our annual "sharing" service on the 30th. But most of all I am looking forward to the Lessons and Carols service on Christmas Eve, another of my favorite traditions at RRUU. I'm sure December has been a busy month for all of us, but one with little business to take care of at RRUUC, except to enjoy the Christmas season together. In January, however, we will get back to business with several important activities coming up.

During late November and December, RRUUC members had an opportunity to review the draft of the Safe Congregation Policy. At several meetings and by email and in face-to-face conversations members of the board and the task force have listened to your concerns. After a final review, the policy will be ready to bring before the congregation for approval. We hope to do this by the end of January, but at this time the date of the congregational meeting has not been finalized. This is a complicated document and important legal and financial repercussions have been considered in drafting the policy. Because of this, the Board will ask the congregation to approve the policy as written, without further editing or amendment. Thus I urge you, if you have any concerns about the policy or comments that you want to make, please do so now, so that they can be considered before the policy is brought before the congregation. You can communicate your concerns to me (kcampbell@austincollege.edu), task force chair John Ockels (ockels@mac.com), or our minister Jennifer Innis (revjinnis@earthlink.net).

Also in January we will begin our work on the creation of a congregational covenant. You will find more details about covenants and about the process we will use in Jennifer's letter and in the report of the Committee on Ministry. I believe that creating this covenant is one of the most important things that we can do for the future of RRUUC. During the next months and years we will be facing many important and difficult decisions. As individuals, we will have differing views about the best courses of action to take as we face significant issues; as a church, we must live with those differences without allowing them to create division. A covenant can help us work through these potentially difficult moments and retain our identity as a close knit and loving community. I encourage everyone to participate in the process as fully as possible; the more the covenant derives from the feelings and concerns of the congregation, the stronger it will be.

Before you know it, it will be March and time for our annual stewardship campaign. The stewardship committee (David Lawrence, Dan Althoff, Kathleen Campbell, chaired by Roger Gregory-Allen, and guided again by our minister) is planning the campaign now. It will begin with a kick-off event on the first Sunday in March and end on March 30 with a birthday party for RRUUC (we'll be eleven years old this year). I hope you will all participate in the campaign and think carefully about what this church means to you as you determine your pledge for the next fiscal year.

Finally, in early May, we will hold our annual congregational meeting, at which we will vote on new officers and board members, approve our 2008-09 budget, and take care of other important business of the church.

As you can see, it will be a busy spring, but I hope our work together will bring us further along the way toward fulfilling our vision of what we can be, for ourselves and for the larger community of which we are a part.

Kathleen Campbell

## Minister's Letter

### *On the Journey*

When I speak of how we are part of the "Free Church tradition" before the weekly offering, I am referring to the way in which we govern ourselves and establish how we will treat one another. The basic unit of energy in each church comes from our relationships rather than an external institution. Each of us freely chooses to listen to one another and stick together when times are hard. One of the tools to help us be consistent in our behavior and remind us of our intentions is called a covenant. Beginning this month, the Board, and Committee on Ministry and I ask the congregation to start a process to create a covenant, one that may be voted on at the congregational meeting in May.

Since defining a term that describes a relationship is not easy, I offer a few samples of what a covenant is – and what it isn't.

First, what it isn't. A covenant is not a creed. A creed is a statement of belief, such as the Apostle's Creed, which begins "I believe in God the Father and in Jesus Christ, His only Son. . ." Or from the Islamic tradition, there is the Shahadah from 600 CE: "There is no God but God and Mohammed is His prophet." Like a covenant, a creed is a way of being clear about one's values and priorities. However, a creed does not necessarily describe how people will live out that belief.

Also, a covenant is not a mission statement. This difference can be a little more difficult to explain. A mission statement describes what the group is trying to accomplish. It answers the questions of "What we are doing" and "Why we are here", while the covenant addresses the "How". A mission statement working

with a covenant looks like this:

"The Unitarian Universalist Society of Geneva is a diverse, welcoming community which endeavors to make its Covenant a living reality. We provide religious education and opportunities for spiritual growth. We encourage individual and mutual responsibility as together we work to be a liberal religious voice in the community and a force for compassionate social justice."

— adopted by the congregation May 19, 1996

For an example of a covenant, I offer one from the Unitarian Universalist Society of Geneva, Illinois where I served as Interim Associate Minister for a year. Their founders wrote the covenant into the charter documents at their founding in 1842. The Covenant is recited as part of the worship every weekend.

### **Our Covenant**

"Being desirous of promoting practical goodness in the world, and of aiding each other in our moral and religious improvement, we have associated ourselves together — not as agreeing in opinion, not as having attained universal truth in belief or perfection in character, but as seekers after truth and goodness."

I can't tell you how many times I heard the phrases, "not as agreeing in opinion" and "promoting practical goodness" over the course of many changes in the space of one year. The words are there for good reason – those two points form the backbone of how people remember their rela-

tionship with one another. "Promoting practical goodness" is something of a mission, while "not as agreeing in opinion" recognizes who will be along for the ride, that there will be disagreement and offers the confidence to handle those differences. Given that this Covenant is 165 years old, and the church is going strong, I think they have something that will last.

Marion Thomson tells us, "A covenant is a written agreement within a self-selected group of people regarding their shared values and behavior toward each other." As members and friends of Red River Unitarian Universalist Church, we are building the foundations of something that can last, especially if we make the time to put into words the ways we will treat one another. In a small church, people learn how to create a relationship by watching others at events and by informal mentoring of members. The exact values of how care for one another and models of good communication are implicit at this church. As the congregation grows, what is desired and expected in the community needs to be made explicit. With more people, it is easier to misinterpret some of the congregation's values. A covenant that is thoughtfully prepared and easy to remember guides everyone – newcomers and long-term members alike.

The Board, the Committee on Ministry, and I hope you will join us for a time to create a covenant for Red River after service on January 27 or speak to one of us if you are unable to attend.

Namaste,

Jennifer

## Where in the UU World is Rev Jennifer?

The best ways to contact me are by my cell phone: 972-639-7900 and by email: 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. Also, Patrick and I will be away at the winter retreat for the Southwest Unitarian Universalist Minister's Association during January 28-31.

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 January 11-20. If you do not reach me directly, please let me know how to get in touch with you.

Bowing to the light within,

Jennifer

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Phone: 903-463-3399  
E-mail: [info@rruu.org](mailto:info@rruu.org)

A home for religious liberals in  
Southern Oklahoma and North  
Texas

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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