



Red River Ramblings

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 3

MARCH 2008

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

A Month of Sundays

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March 2

Rev. Jennifer Innis

“The Choice for a Bright Future”

Taking the path to growth and welcoming the things we want in our lives is not always as easy as it sounds. Come join us as we consider those choices and the future of a liberal religious voice in Texoma.

Lunch will be served in the Fellowship Hall after the service.



March 9

Dr. Peter Schulze & Dr. John Ockels

“Evolution Sunday”

Churches across the country are endeavoring to demonstrate that religion and science can be compatible and to elevate the quality of the debate of this issue. Dr. Peter Schulze, Austin College Professor of Biology and Environmental Science and member of our congregation, will discuss the fundamentals of natural selection, the process that results in evolution of species and the origin of new species, and attempt to answer your questions.

Please send Dr. Schulze (pschulze@austincollege.edu) any questions that you would like him to try to answer and any topics that you hope he will cover.

March 16

Dr. Kathleen Campbell

“Telling Our Story”

We all have stories—stories that we tell about ourselves, about our families, about our communities. Stories are powerful tools for defining who we are and for thinking about who we can be. In this service, we will look at the story of Red River Unitarian Universalist Church. What does this story tell us about our church community? What kind of story do we want to be able to tell in the future?

March 23

Ms. Scottie McIntyre Johnson

“Spring Has Now Unwrapped the Flowers”

An Easter and Ostara Service with Flower Communion

Everyone is invited to bring a single cut flower, one for each member of your family - from your garden, from the roadside or from the super market! We will put them all into a common vase to make one lovely, single bouquet. The Earth Spirit Chalice Circle will provide an Ostara egg hunt for the children after the worship service, so children are invited to bring their Easter baskets to church in which to collect eggs.

March 30

RRUU Worship Team & Stewardship Committee

“Happy Birthday to Us!”

On March 27, 1997, 12 adults and a few children, calling themselves “Red River Unitarian Universalists”, held a worship service in the Small Chapel on the Austin College Campus. That group never stopped meeting and grew into Red River UU Church. Eight of the original 12 adults are still RRUU members. This Sunday we will celebrate our birthday, as well as mark the end of our 2008-09 Stewardship Campaign.



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

March 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					

Daylight Savings Time

The time has come around again to “spring forward”. March 9th, daylight saving time will be observed, so don’t be late to church! In addition to changing our clocks, fire safety officials continue to encourage using the annual clock change as a reminder to check the batteries in our smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Similar semiannual tasks some people do on the weekend of the clock change include inspecting their vehicle lights, updating their family disaster plans, checking storage areas for hazardous materials and reprogramming thermostats.

Coffee and Conversation

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

Hospitality will be handled by these people in March:

- March 2 & 30 Stewardship Committee March 9 Peter and Helen Schulze
- March 16 David and Cylvia Lawrence March 23 Rachel VanCitters

Schedule of Events

Monday Evenings 6:30-7:15

Being Peace Meditation Circle

Thursday Afternoons 12:15-1:00

Being Peace Meditation Circle

March 2 – * Stewardship Campaign Kickoff Lunch after church *****

March 4 – Texans Vote

March 6 – Board Meeting 7:30pm

March 7 – UUJam!! 7pm

March 9 – Daylight Savings

March 9 – Green Team Meeting 6pm

March 9 – It Takes a Village 2pm

March 20 – April Newsletter Deadline

March 21 – Red River Earth Spirit 7:30pm

March 23 – Flower Communion

March 23 – Ostara Egg Hunt after church

March 25 – Evensong 7:30pm

March 28 – The Reel Deal 7:20pm

March 29 – A Moveable Feast 6pm

April 6 – New to UU Class

April 25-27 – SWUUD Spring Conference

March Birthdays!

- Tom Rawson 3/4
- Jan Fletcher 3/12
- Diane Watrous 3/14
- Mary Larkin-Baker 3/17
- William Lloyd Fridley 3/21
- Elbert Hill 3/22



“Shine a Light into the World” The 2008 Stewardship Campaign

By the time you read this, we'll be kicking off our 2008 Stewardship campaign. You may even have received your pledge packet in the mail. This year, we are working to *Shine a Light into the World*. The board has laid out some ambitious goals, including to:

Religious Education:

- Raise the DRE salary
- Encourage and fund teachers to attend RE training
- Train some members to deliver the Our Whole Lives curriculum
- Implement the Safe Congregation Policy

Public Presence and Outreach

- Continue and extend the work of the Green Team
- Continue the Awakening the Dreamer seminars
- Make our worship and meeting spaces more appealing and better reflect our congregation

Building the Future

- Expand our membership program to better nurture visitors and provide a clear path to membership
- Continue working toward a new home
- Provide funds to help support members attending leadership training and General Assembly

We will introduce the campaign at a light lunch after church on March 2nd. We will wrap up the Stewardship Campaign on March 30th at our 11th birthday!

Soon, you should be getting called inviting you to a cottage meeting to discuss the future of our congregation. These meetings will be small and casual lasting no longer than 90 minutes. At each meeting there will be light refreshments and a discussion led by a member of the church board. You are encouraged to have in mind at least one question, comment, or suggestion regarding RRUUC.

We look forward to working with all of you for our 2008 Stewardship Campaign!

The 2008 Stewardship Committee

Roger Gregory-Allen, Chair

David Lawrence, Dan Althoff, Kathleen Campbell

Rev. Jennifer Innis, Advisor

Our Unitarian Universalist Heritage...

When you think of the Reverend Joseph Priestley what comes to mind? Facts like these...

- ❖ that he began the first Unitarian Church in North America?
- ❖ that his Presbyterian congregations in England felt him far too liberal?
- ❖ that his theological ideas inspired Thomas Jefferson who say Priestley as "one of the few lives precious to mankind."?
- ❖ or maybe you recall the Methodists in Leeds who penned a hymn asking God to...
 - *The Unitarian fiend expel*
 - *And chase his doctrine back to Hell*
- ❖ that the Reverend Priestley's philosophical writings shocked and appalled many readers, primarily because they challenged basic Christian orthodoxies, such as the miracle of the Virgin Birth and the doctrine of the Trinity?

Most people remember the Reverend Joseph Priestley for other, less "priestly" contributions he made to humankind. We remember that while he never took any Science classes in school he made remarkable academic discoveries which for many overshadowed his theological gifts. From his laboratory, first in Birmingham and than later in Northumberland, PA he

- ❖ discovered that India gum could be used to *rub out* lead pencil marks. (Yes, he had invented the eraser and gave the material its common name – *rubber*)
- ❖ invented carbonated water
- ❖ isolated and described the properties of ammonia, nitrous oxide, sulphur dioxide, hydrogen sulphide, and carbon monoxide for the first time
- ❖ first observed photosynthesis
- ❖ and discovered oxygen

Priestley was born in Leeds, England on March 13, 1733 He was raised in a strict Calvinist family. While studying to become a minister, he found that his strong liberal beliefs conflicted with his church's teachings. In 1767, Priestley became the minister in a small dissenting church in Birmingham. The congregation's pastor had a propensity for giving provocative titles to his writings.

His book Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever was an attempt to defend natural religion against skepticism. In The History of Corruptions of Christianity (1782) he set out to prove that the doctrine of the Trinity was not according to Scripture. It was officially burned in 1785.

Two other books followed. History of the Early Opinions Concerning Jesus Christ and A History of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ, compiled from Original Writers, proving that the Christian Church was at first Unitarian.

The Reverend Priestley addressed issues ranging from the divinity of Christ to the proper form for the Lord's Supper.

Thomas Jefferson would later write of the profound effect that these books had on him: "I have read his *Corruptions of Christianity*, and *Early Opinions of Jesus*, over and over again; and I rest on them ... as the basis of my own faith. These writings have never been answered."



Not surprising, his works catalyzed storms of controversy. Priestley was attacked in pamphlets and periodicals, denounced in pulpits and in the House of Commons, and considered as an agent of the Devil because of his unorthodox views. He was declared a Dissenter. Under the Test and Corporation Acts in England, the Dissenter was deprived of the rights of citizenship, and, by law, the Unitarian was not even tolerated.

His Birmingham home and church were burned to the ground by an angry mob in 1791. He moved to London, but the persecution continued. In 1794 Priestley and his wife moved to Northumberland, Pennsylvania where he constructed his new home and laboratory. Although he never became a citizen and did not involve himself in the political affairs of the nation, he founded the first Unitarian church in America in Philadelphia. His sermons were attended by then Vice President John Adams and other luminaries, including Thomas Jefferson who greatly admired Priestley and even consulted him for advice on the curriculum for the University of Virginia

Priestley died in Northumberland on February 6, 1804, and was buried there in a Quaker burial ground. Kindly and soft-spoken, methodical and industrious, the Reverend Joseph Priestley was convinced that the application of science could bring material progress to mankind. He also provided a sound theological perspective for religious tolerance that Unitarian Universalist have continued to embrace.

He was one of the 18th century's most outstanding experimental scientists and theologians. Although he supported civil and religious liberty he was never a leader in the English radical movement for parliamentary reform, yet he was perhaps the most prominent victim of the intolerance manifested by the supporters of the established order in the 1790s.

Priestley Unitarian Chapel, Northumberland, PA



Social Action—"One More Step!"

We've received approval from the City of Sherman to conduct our annual clean up at Baker Park on April 6, 2008 at 1:30 p.m. Last year we had great weather and a great turnout. This is a great project for all age groups. Please feel free to drop by for a few minutes or for the whole afternoon.

We'd like to extend an invitation to other civic groups in the area. If anyone has contacts, please drop a line to David Lawrence, our Social Action Coordinator at dnlawrence@aol.com. If you'd like to hand deliver or post a notice on a bulletin board at work, feel free to take one of the extra notices located on the SA bulletin board

For our Texas members - Don't Forget – Get Out And Vote on March 4

Informative, impartial information may be found at the League of Women Voters site. It also provides links to county information.

<http://www.lwvtexas.org/localleaguevoters.htm>

For those of you not registered, it's too late for the primaries, but not too late for the fall elections. You can register at you local courthouse or on line at the following web addresses.

Texas: <http://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/voter/reqvr.shtml>

Oklahoma: <http://www.ok.gov/~elections/voterreg.html>

Upcoming Events:

Habitat for Humanity has recently completed a home at 218 E. Hull in Denison. Because of the timing, we were not able to participate in the landscaping; however, we will actively pursue their next project.

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

Draft Covenant

"LOVE IS THE SPIRIT OF THIS CHURCH" - A COVENANT OF OUR OWN

Unitarian Universalism is both a congregational and a covenantal religion. This means that each local congregation is in charge of its own affairs, and that we are bound together not by laws but by promises, which we make to each other freely.

A Task Force, consisting of Elbert Hill, Scottie McIntyre Johnson, Mary Larkin-Baker and the Rev. Jennifer Innis, has been working to draft a covenant, which will make clear how we will promise to act in our dealing with each other and with the world. To be useful, such a covenant should be as comprehensive as possible, while still being succinct and poetic! This is not easy to do, of course, but the Task Force has come up with a proposed draft of a covenant. The draft has been derived from member responses at the January workshop.

Now, you are invited to consider the proposed covenant and make your suggestions. The congregation will vote on the final proposal at the May Annual Congregational Meeting. Please send your comments to scottieone@cableone.net, mail them to Scottie McIntyre Johnson, 1001 N. Cleveland Ave., Sherman, TX 75090 or hand something in writing to one of the Task Force members at church. THANK YOU!

DRAFT RRUU COVENANT

Love is the spirit of this church, and service is our call.

This we promise to one another and to the world:

To treat each other and the earth gently;

To be slow to judge and quick to forgive;

To be kind in disagreement and caring at all times;

To celebrate our differences and cherish what we share;

And by working together for justice and the common good,

To grow toward harmony with the mystery of life.

Religious Education News

Religious Education Classes for adults and for students from 7th through 12th grades are held each Sunday beginning at 10:00 a.m.. Nursery care for babies, toddlers and younger children is provided during this hour.

Here is the schedule of topics that will be covered in the Adult Education Class for the month of March:

March 2nd - Building Your Own Theology: Part 1- Dr. Elbert Hill will conclude the first part of BYOT. The second part in this series will begin mid-April.

March 9th - "When the Gods Absconded in the West" - Dr. John Ockels will present an overture to the subject of the "disenchantment" of the Western world.

March 16th - Evolutionary Sunday feedback session with Dr. Peter Schulze.

March 23rd - "Really Olde Tyme Religion - Part 1" - Dr. John Ockels will begin a four week discussion of nature religions, one of our great source religions in the UU movement and one that holds the promise of "re-enchantment" in our lives.

March 30th - "Really Olde Tyme Religion - Part 2" - Continuation.

Religious Education Classes for children in grades K though 6 is held during the 11:15 a.m. worship service. Nursery care is provided for babies and toddlers.

The RRUU Caring Committee wants to know about your joys, sorrows, concerns and needs.

Please contact the Caring Committee Coordinator, Viv Weeks:

vvnweeks@yahoo.com or 903-564-3838



Special News from the Green Team

The Green Team, our church's Environmental Action Chalice Circle, is working hard to help organize the Texoma Area Interfaith Environmental Alliance, a group that will provide a focus for local congregations of all religions to work together to promote good stewardship of the earth. An organizational meeting and potluck dinner will be held on Sunday, March 9 at Grand Avenue Presbyterian Church in Sherman at 6pm. The speaker will be Gary Stuard, director of the statewide Interfaith Environmental Alliance. Please call Amy Hoffman-Shehan (903-892-4198 or 903-821-8198) for details and to confirm attendance

New to UU Class — Coming Soon (Save the Date!!)

A "New to UU" class will be offered April 6 after the service. Visitors, new members, and those considering membership are invited to meet with Rev. Jennifer Innis and Board President Kathleen Campbell to learn more about Red River Unitarian Universalist church and our faith. Watch for details of time and place.

February's Green Tips

02/03/08 Switch to a Tankless Water Heater

Your water will be heated as you use it rather than keeping a tank of hot water. Save 300 lbs. of carbon dioxide and \$390 per year.

02/10/08 Switch to Double Pane Windows

Double pane windows keep more heat inside your home so you use less energy. Save 10,000 lbs. of carbon dioxide and \$436 per year.

02/17/08 Turn off Your Computer

Shut off your computer when not in use, and save 200 lbs of CO₂. Conserve energy by using your computer's "sleep mode" instead of a screensaver.

02/24/08 Use a Push Mower

Use your muscles instead of fossil fuels and get some exercise. Save 80 lbs of carbon dioxide per year

Southwestern UU District Spring Conference—April 25-27

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.

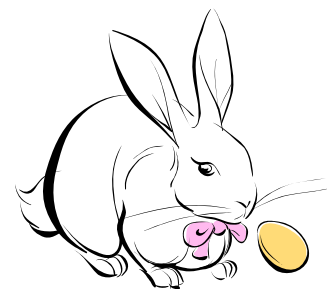
And if you've wondered why we say "Keep Austin Weird," now's your chance to find out. Please plan to join us for a memorable occasion. More details to come.



History of Ostara (and an invitation from Red River Earth Spirit)

The word Ostara is just one of the names applied to the celebration of the spring equinox on March 21. The origin of the word is actually from Eostre, a Germanic goddess of spring. Of course, it's also the same time as the Christian Easter celebration, and in the Jewish faith, Passover takes place as well. For early Pagans in the Germanic countries, this was a time to celebrate planting and the new crop season. Typically, the Celtic peoples did not celebrate Ostara as a holiday, although they were in tune with the changing of the seasons.

The Red River Earth Spirit chalice group invites children to stay after the worship service on March 23rd for an Ostara Egg Hunt!



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).



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 ARE ALWAYS WELCOME AT EITHER CIRCLE! JUST SHOW UP.



EVENSONG, A Circle for Sharing Our Stories. Facilitator: Scottie McIntyre Johnson. **IN MARCH & APRIL, WE WILL MEET ON THE FOURTH TUESDAY OF THE MONTH.** Next meeting: March 25 @ 7:30 p.m. @ the home of Scottie McIntyre Johnson in Sherman. **NEW MEMBERS & GUESTS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!**



THE GREEN TEAM, An Environmental Action Circle. Facilitator: Amy Hoffman-Shehan. Next meeting: Tuesday, March 4 at 7:30 pm at the home of Amy Hoffman-Shehan. We will report in on invitations for the Interfaith Environmental Alliance meeting, conduct training for house meeting facilitators, and finalize the agenda for the IEA meeting. **ANYONE WHO LOVES OUR PLANET IS WELCOME!**



IT TAKES A VILLAGE, A Circle of Parents Supporting Parents. Facilitator: Dianna Butler. Next meeting: Sunday, March 9, 2:00 p.m. We will attend the Theatricks' production of *Anne of Green Gables* together. Contact Dianna Butler for details.

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: Saturday, March 29, 6:00 p.m. @ the home of David & Cylvia Lawrence. Contact Marion or Elbert to RSVP.



RED RIVER EARTH SPIRIT, A Nature-Based Spirituality Circle. Facilitator: Penny Armstrong & Kris Riek. Meets at various places on various dates. Next meeting: Friday, March 21 @ 7:30 p.m. @ the church to prepare for Ostara Egg hunt.

NEW MEMBERS AND GUESTS ARE ALWAYS 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, March 28. We will watch the George Clooney film, *Michael Clayton*.

NEW MEMBERS & GUESTS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!



UUJAM!! A Music-Making Circle. Facilitator: Jan Fletcher. Meets the first Friday of the month @ 7:00 p.m. @ the home of Jan Fletcher. Next meeting: March 7. Bring your beverage of choice, your musical instruments and songs to sing. Our musical theme this month is Irish songs and Beatles' tunes.

MUSICIANS AND LISTENERS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!

RRUU Board Meeting Highlights--February 8, 2008

The Safe Congregation Policy (approved on January 27) calls for the appointment of a Safe Congregation Panel consisting of the minister, the church president, the Director of Religious Education, and two members appointed from the congregation. John Ockels and Tingey Trace have agreed to serve. The group will meet soon to begin planning the implementation of the policy.

The congregation was certified in January with 64 members. Our average weekly attendance is 50 and we have 41 pledging units. At the same time, the congregation's vote in favor of consideration of both study action issues was registered.

The board approved the extension of Rev. Jennifer Innis's contract with a 3.5 cost of living increase. Following the recommendation of the Committee on Ministry, the contract will be for 16 months; this extension allows for any future contracts to run concurrently with our fiscal year. The total salary for the 16-month contract will be \$20,700. Jennifer's duties will remain as specified in her previous contract:

Provide consultation to the Board and the congregation on development and growth. Meet and coordinate with officers of the congregation or with various committees as requested by the Board regarding planning, programs and opportunities.

Have primary responsibility for one Sunday service per month, including sermon research and writing, preparation of service materials, in cooperation with the Music and Worship Teams. Involve lay members in worship services as the Minister sees appropriate. Provide copy for the printed Orders of Worship to the appropriate person in a timely manner.

Be present but not in the pulpit one additional Sunday per month unless a different schedule is chosen by mutual agreement. This additional time is directed toward growth or providing general presence. Possible responsibilities on these Sundays include conducting a newcomer's class or other special religious education program or making pastoral care visits as requested by the Caring Committee.

Provide newsletter copy for Sunday services, a minister's column and special notices.

Be available by telephone and e-mail at reasonable hours for consultation on congregational business or with members seeking support or counsel.

The board appointed a nominating committee for this year: Dam Althoff, Nell Evans, Lisa Cates, Darrah Dunn, and Scottie McIntyre-Johnson

The board decided to hold a board retreat on March 8 to discuss the results of the Percept studies and the assessment report.



The next board meeting will be Thursday, March 6 at 7:30 PM at the home of Dianna Butler:
1002 N. Cleveland Ave.
(Sherman)

RRUU BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Kathleen Campbell, President

Tom Rawson, Vice-president

Jim Johnson, Treasurer

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

UU Jam!!

WOW!!!!!! What a great February session! Thank you so much for making UUJAM a success! We had 12 brave souls who traveled through the "wilds" of Hazelwood country in the dark to locate our prairie home and share their love of music. Thanks to Marla, Scottie & Jim for providing sheets to share. And thank you to our listening audience who complete the fun.

Our program March 7 will be a combined theme for our sing alongs...some Irish goodies to put us in the mood for St. Patrick's Day as well as some requested Beatles sing alongs. And, of course we will continue the spontaneity of whatever springs to mind. We will open promptly at 7 (now that many know their way) to include our covenant opening, so come a little early if need be to get set up (Bennie Holcomb says he may bring his "jazz set up" so we can include drums in our percussion).

Bring your instruments and beverage of choice. Members are alternating providing snacks so let me know if you plan to bring food to share. Future sessions might highlight old 50s & 60s folk music, Broadway hits, early rock and roll, singer/songwriter hits, pop composers from all decades, silly songs, rhythm & blues, and anything else we can think of. To quote an old disco hit..."I'm So Excited"!!!!!! If you haven't made it to a UUJAM Session, come on over on Friday, March 7 from 7 pm till whenever! If you need directions or have any questions, just give me a call at 903-892-8396. See you the 7th... Jan Fletcher (chalice circle facilitator)

Letter from the RRUU Board President

Rather than write an extended letter this month, and I want to direct your attention to some important articles that I hope you will read and consider carefully.

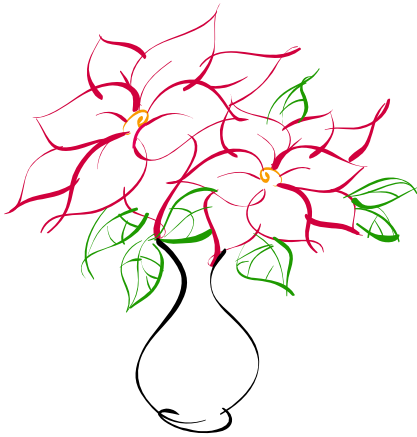
First, I encourage you to read the information about this year's stewardship campaign. I hope you will be at church for the kick-off of the campaign on March 2 and for our closing celebration on March 30, and that you will participate in one of the cottage meetings. One of our strengths is our financial stability, and we need to maintain that as well as provide funding for new initiatives with a successful pledge drive.

Second, read the report of the covenant task force and the draft covenant they have created from the work done in our workshop in January. Your comments on the covenant will help the task force finalize the language for presentation to the congregation at the annual congregational meeting in May. This covenant should express the thoughts of the congregation, so wide participation in its development is important.

Finally, the full report of Carole Czujko, our consultant from the UUA, is included in a separate attachment sent along with this newsletter. This is a long and detailed report, outlining our strengths and areas in which we need to improve, and it will be an important guide as we continue to build this congregation. Please read it carefully and save it for future reference. If you have comments on it, please direct them to the minister or any member of the Board of Trustees.

Kathleen Campbell

The Flower Communion Service—March 23rd



The flower communion service was created by Dr. Norbert Capek, founder of the Unitarian Church in Czechoslovakia. As he ministered to his congregation, Dr. Capek felt the need for a symbolic ritual that would bind his parishioners more closely together. The traditional Christian communion service of bread and wine was unacceptable to the members of his congregation, so he turned to the native beauty of their countryside for elements of a communion which would be genuine to them. He created the flower communion service, first held at his church on June 4, 1923.

The flower communion was introduced to the United States in 1940 at our Cambridge, Massachusetts church by Dr. Capek's wife. The ritual gradually spread from congregation to congregation and is now an important springtime event in most North American UU churches.

People are asked to bring a single flower of their choice to church. Each person places his or her own flower in a large container, signifying that it is by our own free will that we join with others. As people leave the church after the service, each takes home a flower other than the one that he or she brought.

By combining our flowers in a common vessel, we show our willingness to join together in our search for truth, disregarding all that might divide us. By taking home a flower brought by someone else, we show our willingness to accept what others have to offer. This communion of sharing is symbolic of a free people of a free religion.

Minister's Letter

On the Journey

I have a special place in my heart for the churches without steeples. For all the beautiful traditional edifices that dot the land there are some without much to recommend them, even in New England. The one where I grew up was built of brick and cinder block in the 1950's. It more resembles a modern school than a religious home. Beyond a cascade of religious symbols facing the main road, it does not look like a church – on the outside. But inside – that is something special. The heart and the spiritual challenge found there is what brings my family back to that church year after year. But that congregation does not rest in the successes of a good program and a caring community. How they bring what is inside to the larger world makes all the difference in whether they are seen beyond the small circle of those who know them well.

There is a special place in the world for the people who must make their own light and not rely on a building or a steeple. In the canvass brochure, I talk about how well this congregation shows up in the world

without the benefit of a steeple, a fabulous building, or even a place that is easy to find. The good work of the Red River Unitarian Universalist Church is all around us because we make the choice to appear. We welcome the visitors who come through the door. We work in the community with groups such as Habitat for Humanity or join with others to make a stand against new polluting coal plants. We participate in the larger Unitarian Universalist world when we encourage leadership development in North Texas and Texoma and when we vote to bring issues such as nuclear disarmament and ending world hunger to the national discussion of liberal religion.

This ability to see the world and the desire to meet its needs doesn't come from a mere wish to be busy and to fix what needs fixing. If visibility were measured by what we fixed, that would be all we did. The desire to show up and the ability to stand out in the moment of the task come from a light that is already there. It comes from a light within. That is how the good people of this church shine. That light led to the covenant workshop in January and the language of the draft covenant

found in this newsletter. That light leads to volunteers for leading adult programs and making great music. That light leads to people becoming members and feeling like this is a home, a place of safety and comfort, and a place of intellectual and spiritual growth. How we want to bring this light into the future is for us to decide with the annual stewardship campaign.

The choice this time is to recommit to the momentum created in the last few years in quality worship, growing programs for all ages, and expanding the ways we serve and witness in the larger community. Every one of us will need to find a level of financial commitment that will let us show up in the world and keep offering a message of hope to all who need it. And we all need that hope. Learn all you can about the annual fundraising campaign, about the vision this church has for the coming years, and make an informed choice about what this congregation means in all our lives.

Namaste,
Jennifer

Where in the UU World is Rev Jennifer?

I will be with Red River to lead service on March 2 and to attend service and join in the celebration of the church's birthday on March 30. Other known events and meetings include the Board meeting on March 6, the Board retreat on March 8, ongoing support of the stewardship campaign, and the to-be-scheduled meeting of the Committee on Ministry.

In addition to my usual time working in Midland, Patrick and I will be part of the installation of the Rev. Bret Lortie at the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Antonio on March 9. 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.

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 March 14-23. 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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Church Leadership

Minister

Reverend Jennifer Innis

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Tom Rawson, Vice-president (2008)

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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:

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