

# Red River Ramblings

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 7

AUGUST 2008

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

## Thinking about the Knoxville Church Shooting?

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Last Sunday, a man walked into a Unitarian Universalist Church in Knoxville, Tennessee and began shooting a 12-gauge shotgun. As I write this, two adults have died of their wounds and several more are still in the hospital.

Others, including quite a few children who were present when he started shooting, will be carrying emotional scars for the rest of their lives.

Senseless mass murders like this happen every so often nowadays. They always bother me. This one bothers me a lot more, though, because I knew some people at that service. I know where they're coming from religiously, and the kind of anger they sometimes get subjected to. (It's been that way for Unitarians and Universalists for hundreds of years.)

Anger--that was the gunman's specialty. He fit the profile for such killers, almost perfectly. A loner, unable to hold a job. A nice guy, neighbors said, when he wasn't being angry at the world and with himself besides. Unfortunately, such anger took up a lot of his time.

He left a note which told how he hated liberals in general and Unitarian Universalists in particular. He traveled to the Knoxville Unitarian Universalist Church to kill as many liberals as possible until, he assumed, the police would solve all his problems by killing him.

Funny thing is, there were probably conservatives in that church, too. Unitarian Universalists disagree with one another about practically everything, politics right along with everything else. We do agree that we need to find ways to get along with each other. Too bad for everyone this guy couldn't see the sense in that.

It could have been even worse. After only three shots, members of that church ruined the gunman's plans by jumping on him, wrestling the shotgun away, and pinning him to the floor.

Well, that's one thing about Unitarian Universalists. People make fun of us--sometimes we even make fun of ourselves--as starry-eyed, impractical idealists. But it's a bum stereotype. You have to be tough to be idealistic in this world. Because idealism--crusading for equal rights for unpopular people, among other things--gets people stirred up. You have to be able to deal with the resulting anger.

This church isn't easy. Some people join because they want to help make the world a better place. We don't ask God to do for us, work that God gave us to do in the first place. Like really trying to bring peace to earth. And the kind of equal rights and justice that the prophets Micah and Amos talked about.

Others join because they want to make up their own minds on religion. They want stimulation and inspiration, but they don't want some church or minister telling them what to think.

That sort of attitude won't always make you friends. . .

Some people tell our members that we're "not a real church at all." That hurts. And it's not true. Our faith and devotion look different from other churches, but I'll put them up against anybody's. . .

And yes, we often stand up for gay rights and women's rights and racial equality and other ideals that aren't popular. That won't stop just because of one nutcase in Tennessee.

Besides, this fellow expressed hatred for traditional Christians as well, and a lot of other people. Hateful people do hateful, awful things. You don't end such anger by backing down on your beliefs. If we ever do give up our right of conscience in this country, there won't be any other rights worth having.

- Reverend Dennis McCarty



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

# August 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 Freethinkers 12:30 @ church	4	5	6	7 Being Peace 11am @ Nell Evans'	8 Red River Earth Spirit 7pm @ church	9
10	11	12	13	14 Being Peace 11am @ Nell Evans'	15	16
17	18	19 The Green Team 7:30pm @ Amy Hoffman-	20	21 Being Peace 11am @ Nell Evans'	22	23
24	25	26	27 Agape UU Christians 7pm @ church	28 Being Peace 11am @ Nell Evans'	29 The Reel Deal 7:20 @ Linda Woytasczyk's	30 A Moveable Feast 7pm @ Drew Wade's
31 It Takes A Village 12:30 @ church						

## Month of Sundays

### August 1 Ms. Megan Dalby-Jones "Speaking of Faith"

In today's America, religion and faith seem most often to polarize and divide people. Using National Public Radio host Krista Tippett's book as a text, we will explore how we might speak about faith in another way - a way that is profoundly inclusive rather than exclusive.

### August 10 Dr. John Ockels "The Wonder of Being Human"

From our earliest days, we were awe-struck by the world around us and by ourselves, and we built dreaming responses to these miracles. Yet as we aged we often forgot our childhood dreams. How can we yet again be instructed by the miraculous, and how can we open ourselves again to its experience?

### August 17 Ms. Lora Brandis "Pray without Ceasing"

Emerson preached that, "It is not only when we audibly and in form, address our petitions to the Deity, that we pray. We pray without ceasing. Every secret wish is a prayer. Every house is a church, the corner of every street is a closet of devotion." What does prayer look like when we do not address petitions to a Deity but live as if we are praying without ceasing?

### August 24 Ms. Scottie McIntyre Johnson "Joy Like a Fountain. Peace Like a River"

#### IN-GATHERING AND WATER COMMUNION SERVICE

As is our tradition in this congregation, we will celebrate the beginning of a new church year with an In-Gathering Service. An important element of this tradition is Water Communion.

### August 31 FIFTH SUNDAY FORUM Ms. Marla Loturco "The RRUU Laughter Club"

Hugh Prather said, "Laughter can be chosen by anyone at anytime. It is truly a 'gift of the spirit.' Come join us for the first meeting of the RRUU Laughter Club. Laughter Club programs as developed by the World Laughter Tour and led by a Certified Laughter Leader provide light-to-moderate exercise for mental and physical flexibility, mood regulation, stress reduction and an attitude boost. No jokes are used - only the joy of laughing. "Think Globally, Laugh Locally." This service is for adults and children of all ages!

## Minister's Letter

### *On the Journey*

As of the printing of this newsletter, the details of the deadly shooting at Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church on July 27 are still unfolding.

Members, friends, and leaders of Red River UU are working to respond to the range of sorrows and concerns each of us has, including those of our children. Our leaders are preparing programs for adults and children to allow time for conversation and tools for facing whatever level of trauma remains with us from such a tragedy. A voluntary collection is being received for funds to assist Tennessee Valley UU Church and

Westside Unitarian Universalist Fellowship in the care of their members and friends directly affected by the shooting.

I offer a resource from the Rev. Dennis McCarty of Columbus, Indiana. He has an excellent column about his thoughts on the shooting. I believe his words are worth sharing among us in these first days.

During the coming weeks, we will learn more about the accused gunman, about his life, about his reasons for what he is understood to have done. We will learn more about how Unitarian Universalists are and are not understood in the world. We will learn how we respond to some-

thing that could happen anywhere and how that knowledge will leave its mark on us for the future. Let us take the time we need for reflection and action and support the leaders of this congregation as they find a way to help all of us take care of one another. May we remember that most important truth – we are not alone. We choose to be together. And together “our vision widens and our strength is renewed.”

Namaste,

Jennifer

## Where in the UU World is Rev Jennifer?

As of August 1, the Rev. Jennifer Innis is on family leave until October 1 to enjoy the birth of her son with the Rev. Patrick Price. In case of emergency, please contact a member of the Red River Board.

Bowing to the Light within,

Jennifer



### ANNOUNCING THE FIRST MEETING OF “AGAPE”

#### AN RRUU CHRISTIAN CHALICE CIRCLE WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 27, AT 7:00 P.M. AT THE CHURCH

We will kick-off this new Chalice Circle for UU Christians, other liberal Christians, and anyone who wants to participate in worship with a Christian focus and/or learn more about Christianity and the Bible with a special Worship Service, which will include sharing in the Lord's Supper. All are invited! Come with your ideas of what you would like this group to do during the coming year.

Johnny Bertrand 8/2

Tim Tracz 8/4

Caellan House 8/9

Helen Schulze 8/9

Lisa Cates 8/10

Jack Blue 8/14

Jean Roelke 8/16

### August Birthdays!

Kathleen Campbell 8/17

Penny Armstrong 8/18

Alana Butler 8/20

Dianna Butler 8/20

Jim Murphy 8/23

John Rawson 8/26

Nell Evans 8/26

Carolyn Buttner 8/29

Doug Strong 8/31



## Letter from the RRUU Board President

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As I write this, the Unitarian Universalist communities of America (and, I assume, of the wider world) are in a state of shock as the result of the tragic shooting that occurred this past Sunday at the UU church in Knoxville, Tennessee. Details are still coming in about the event, so we have to wait and withhold our judgments until the facts of the case can somehow be put into an order that is comprehensible. From what we know, however, we can be proud of the courage and self-sacrifice shown by our fellow Unitarian Universalists who met the challenge posed by the gunman and restrained him before he could do further harm.

On a much lighter note I can report that my wife, Scottie, and I recently returned home from a delightful week spent at the Southwestern Unitarian Universalist Summer Institute with Chris, Diana, Caleb and Alana Butler, Linn and Tristan Cates, and over 250 other Unitarian Universalists from Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Tennessee, and Mexico. For me personally, the highlights were the theme speakers (Michael Dowd and Connie Barlow), who eloquently evangelized us with words, music and images supporting their theme of "Thank God for Evolution," and the artists in residence (musicians Mary Reynolds and Louise Goldberg), who performed and inspired great music all week long. I also enjoyed and benefited from the two workshops I attended daily: "Myths to Live By" and "Non-violent Communication." Of course, there were also the pleasures of summer camp: time to relax and the challenges of putt-putt golf! All in all, it was a fine experience and one that I would recommend to others when it comes around again in a year's time.

A special treat at this year's SWUUSI was the appearance of the Rev. Aaron White, a young man who went to Austin College, found Unitarian Universalism at RRUU and, while here, got the call to become a UU minister. He has now graduated from Harvard Divinity School and last spring was ordained by Live Oak UU Church in Austin. This coming year, he will serve as part-time minister for the San Marcos UU Fellowship and as the Coordinator of Young Adult Ministries for the Southwest UU District. Aaron led one of the evening worship services at SWUUSI and did a wonderful job. It was a pleasure to see "one of our own" now entering the profession and doing very well.

## RRUU Board Meeting Highlights—July 9, 2008

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Mary Larkin-Baker was elected Secretary of the Board.

Jim Johnson gave the end-of-year Treasurer's Report (details are given elsewhere in this issue); also Dianna Butler gave her first report as the new Treasurer; in order to have better internal controls on our church finances, the bank accounts will be monitored electronically by the Immediate Past President on a regular basis.

This fall, we will introduce "Conversation with the Board," an opportunity for members and friends to meet with church leaders to discuss issues of interest to the congregation and the church. This will occur once in the fall, at a specific Adult RE session to be announced. We hope to continue it in the spring as well.

Work has been started on a new Church Directory. Jim Murphy is heading up the project.

Kathleen reported that church attendance over the 2007 year had averaged 50 and that the first six months of 2008 had an average of 55. This is an impressive attendance record for our church.

## Treasurer's Report for 2007-2008

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This is my final Treasurer's report, since Dianna Butler has assumed the responsibilities of the office as of July 1, 2008. This is an annual report over the entire fiscal year of 2007-8. In general, it's been a very good year. We completed our first year of paying for a quarter-time minister (with help from a NTAUUS grant that funded a third of her salary) as well as a director of education and a newsletter editor. We spent over \$3000 on social action projects and over \$400 on environmental action projects. We paid all our bills; paid our full share of dues to the UUA, SWUUC and NTAUUS. We provided childcare for Sunday morning RE and Worship; we had the church cleaned weekly by professional cleaners. We hired SWUUC and UUA consultants and brought ministers to our pulpit from the Metroplex and elsewhere. All in all, we expended almost \$56,000 last year (actually \$55,949.97.) This is considerably more than we have ever spent in a year before, but we had the income to support these worthy expenditures and the good work represented by them. Our total income for the year was \$57,674.18. This gave us a net inflow (positive balance) of \$1724.21. Your pledge payments constituted the lion's share of our income (\$48,564.50), but we also had generous offerings in the plate by members, friends, and visitors who did not complete a pledge form. Regarding pledges, almost everyone paid their pledge in full; for the few that did not, others contributed beyond their pledge to make up the difference. Our net worth (the amount remaining in bank accounts, CD's etc) at the end of the year (on June 30, 2008) was \$53,506.88. As retiring treasurer, I want to thank all of you who contributed time and money for your generosity, which has allowed our church to both pay its bills and offer a wealth of good services to both our church community and to the larger community around us. I know that our current economic situation has created a hardship for many of us; I trust, however, that together we can weather this storm and continue to grow.

-Jim Johnson (Retiring Treasurer)

## Worship Leaders

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**Ms. Megan Dalby-Jones**, a frequent and popular speaker at RRUU, is a Ministerial Candidate, as recognized by the Ministerial Fellowship Committee of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Megan served as the Ministerial Intern at First Unitarian Church of Dallas in 2006-07 and is currently filling the pulpit of a number of churches in the North Texas area as a UU “circuit rider”. She and her partner, Kristi, are the parents of a brand-new baby boy named Parker.

**Dr. John Ockels** is a member of RRUU and currently works as the Director of the Texas Illegal Dumping Resource Center. He provides criminal environmental law enforcement training to peace officers throughout Texas. Mr. Ockels holds degrees in several subjects, including a master’s degree in theological studies from Perkins School of Theology, SMU. John is a frequent and popular speaker in our pulpit, is RRUU’s Director of Adult Religious Education and is a member of the RRUU Board of Trustees.

**Lora Anne Brandis** is pursuing a Master of Divinity degree at SMU’s Perkins School of Theology. She received an award for the best student sermon of 2007-2008 and is currently serving as a student chaplain at Parkland Hospital in Dallas. Lora has been a member of the First Unitarian Church of Dallas since 1999 where she has served as a worship assistant, led deepening groups and taught religious education classes. She is married to Frank Peña, and they have four daughters ranging in age from 16 to 25.

**Scottie McIntyre Johnson** is a founding member of RRUU, a past president of the congregation and current coordinator of the RRUU Worship Arts Team. Having retired from a long career in Montessori education, in the fall, Scottie will begin her third year as a student at Perkins School of Theology (SMU), in preparation for the ordained UU ministry. Scottie has been a member of the Southwestern Unitarian Universalist Conference Board of Trustees and has served as the Dean of our District’s adult leadership school, the Dwight Brown Leadership Experience, for seven years. In 2004 she was awarded the Alfred von Stille Award for outstanding contributions by a lay leader toward promoting the growth of Unitarian Universalism in the Southwestern UU Conference. Last month, she led a workshop on “Praying in Color” at SWUUSI, the Southwestern Unitarian Universalist Summer Institute, and she will be presenting the same workshop for First Unitarian Church of Dallas this month.

**Marla Loturco**, an active member of RRUU who serves as our Historian and as co-chair of the Hospitality Committee, is a Certified Laughter Leader for the World Laughter Tour. She currently works for Loturco Enterprises, Inc. doing application and database support. Working alone in a technological arena, Marla came to realize how little laughter there was in her daily life. After hearing a radio show in 2001 about laughter clubs, she immediately signed up for a class and coincidentally a life change. Her degree is a B.S. in Education from Central Michigan University.

### BEING PEACE MORNING MINDFULNESS MEDITATION CIRCLE



will meet every Thursday in August from 11:00 a.m. to 11:50 a.m. at the home of Nell Evans,

315 W. McGee in Sherman.

Experienced and novice meditators are welcome!

## “One More Step”—Social Action News

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July's Second Sunday collection was used to purchase 15 electric fans that were donated to the Texoma Council of Governments 211 program. The fans will be distributed to those in need of basic cooling help during the long Texoma summers.

The 211 program provides individual assistance and also serves as an information and referral source for area programs. It is also a great resource for finding charitable organizations to meet any volunteer's interest. A list of services and programs will be posted on our Social Action bulletin board.

As part of our ongoing commitment to servicing all of the Texoma area, we are earmarking our August collection for Bryan County's "Families Feeding Families" program. Families Feeding Families is a local organization that provides food and assistance to families in need. Since Bryan County will be starting back to school in mid-August, our donations will be used to help provide basic school supplies for a number of children.

We will also sponsor a return-to-school drive for the Sherman/Denison area. Children's backpacks and basic school supplies will be collected on August 31 and September 7 for distribution to local schools.

We are still developing this year's monthly contribution schedule. Please forward ideas to me at the e-mail listed below.

### Upcoming Events

The NAACP Freedom Fund Banquet is scheduled at 7:00 p.m. on August 15. It will be held at the Wright Center, Mabee Hall at Austin College. Red River UU has purchased a table and still has two tickets remaining. Tickets are \$30. The proceeds are used to supply scholarships for members of the NAACP youth group.

The 2008 Alan Ross Texas Freedom Parade will be held Sunday, September 21. This will be the 25th Anniversary Parade. The theme will be "Remembering Our Past – Celebrating Our Future". The Parade begins at 2:00 pm at the corner of Cedar Springs Road and Douglas Avenue and proceeds down Cedar Springs Road to the Festival at Lee Park. The Festival at Lee Park provides a number of interesting informational booths and exhibits. Last year a large contingent from the North Texas UU churches marched together. A streaming video may be seen at [www.oaklawn.tv](http://www.oaklawn.tv). In light of the recent tragedy in Tennessee, we must constantly strive to overcome the barriers of hate and prejudice.

For tickets to the NAACP Freedom Fund Banquet or if you have ideas for projects or future Second Sunday contributions please contact David Lawrence at 903-814-1410 or [dnlawrence@aol.com](mailto:dnlawrence@aol.com)

## Our Principles

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There are seven principles which Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

**RED RIVER EARTH SPIRIT INVITES YOU TO A CELEBRATION OF LAMMAS, THE FIRST HARVEST FESTIVAL OF THE PAGAN YEAR.**

**FRIDAY, AUGUST 7, AT 7:00 PM AT THE CHURCH**

Bring something to share for a Pot Luck Supper.



### **RRUU FREETHINKERS**

**WILL MEET**

**SUN. AUG. 3**

**12:30 PM AT THE CHURCH**

We will view and discuss a DVD by Richard Dawkins, entitled "The Virus of Faith". Richard Dawkins is a prominent evolutionary biologist and atheist who is the the author of the 2006 best-selling book, The God Delusion. Bring a brown bag lunch.

## 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! You do not have to be a member of RRUU or even attend Sunday services in order to participate in a Chalice Circle. If you are interested in attending a particular circle, contact Circle Coordinator, Scottie McIntyre Johnson (903-892-4751; scottieone@cableone.net).



**AGAPE**, A UU Christian Circle. Facilitator: Drew Wade. Meets on the fourth Wednesday of every month. First meeting: Wednesday, Aug. 27, @ 7:00 p.m. @ the church. We will kick-off this new Chalice Circle with a Worship Service of Word and Table.

ALL LIBERAL CHRISTIANS AND UUs WHO WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT CHRISTIANITY AND THE BIBLE ARE WELCOME!



**BEING PEACE**, A Mindfulness Meditation Circle (Morning Session) Facilitator: Nell Evans. Meets every Thursday morning from 11:00 to noon @ Nell's home in Sherman.

**BEING PEACE II**, A Mindfulness Meditation Circle. (Evening Session) Facilitator: Scottie McIntyre Johnson. WE WILL NOT MEET IN AUGUST but will resume meeting every Monday evening @ 6:30 p.m. @ Scottie's home in Sherman on Sept. 8.

**NEW MEDITATORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME**



**EVENSONG**, A Circle for Sharing Our Stories. Facilitator: Scottie McIntyre Johnson. WE WILL NOT MEET IN AUGUST but will resume meeting on the third WEDNESDAY of each month @ 7:30 p.m. @ Scottie's home in Sherman on Sept. 17.

NEW MEMBERS & GUESTS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!



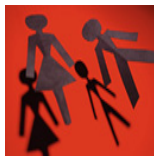
**FREETHINKERS**, A Humanist Chalice Circle. Facilitator: L.D. Clark. Meets on the first Sunday of each month @ the church after church. Next meeting: Aug. 3. We will watch and discuss a DVD by Richard Dawkins called "The Virus of Faith". Bring a brown bag lunch. HUMANISTS, AGNOSTICS, ATHEISTS, AND OTHER FREETHINKERS ARE WELCOME!





**THE GREEN TEAM**, An Environmental Action Circle. Facilitator: Amy Hoffman-Shehan. Next meeting: Tuesday, Aug. 19 at 7:30 pm at the home of Amy Hoffman-Shehan. We will complete our work on environmental policies for RRUU.

ANYONE WHO LOVES OUR PLANET IS WELCOME!



**IT TAKES A VILLAGE**, A Circle of Parents Supporting Parents. Facilitator: Dianna Butler. Next meeting: Sunday, Aug. 31 @ 12:30 p.m. @ the church. Scottie McIntyre Johnson will teach the children and adults how to “Pray in Color”.

FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!



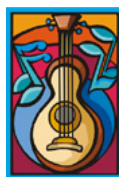
**A MOVEABLE FEAST**, A Cooking and Eating Circle. Facilitators: Elbert & Marion Hill. Meets at moveable times and moveable places! Next meeting: Saturday, Aug. 30 @ 7:00 p.m. @ the home of Drew Wade in Denison for a Pot Luck Picnic. Bring dishes featuring fresh summer fruits and vegetables. ALL ARE WELCOME, BUT YOU MUST RSVP IN ADVANCE TO MARION OR ELBERT HILL.



**RED RIVER EARTH SPIRIT**, A Nature-Based Spirituality Circle. Facilitators: Penny Armstrong & Kris Riek. Meets at various places on various dates. Next meeting: Friday, August 8 @ 7:00 @ the church to celebrate Lammas, the first harvest. Our celebration will include a Pot Luck Supper, so bring a dish to share. NEW MEMBERS AND GUESTS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!



**THE REEL DEAL**, A Movie Watching Circle. Facilitator: Linda Woytasczyk. Meets the last Friday of each month @ 7:20 p.m. @ the home of Linda Woytasczyk in Sherman. Next meeting: Friday, Aug. 30. We will watch the critically acclaimed crime drama, Gone Baby Gone, directed by Ben Affleck. Popcorn and other yummy snacks are provided! ALL MOVIE LOVERS ARE WELCOME!



**UUJAM!!** A Music-Making Circle. Facilitator: Jan Fletcher. Meets the first Friday of each month @ 7:00 p.m. @ the home of Jan Fletcher in Sherman. Next Meeting: Friday, Aug. 1, @ 7:00 p.m. We will begin to prepare for the worship service we will offer for the congregation in September with the theme “Community”. Bring instruments, sheet music, chords, etc. of songs you would like to perform on this theme. ALL MUSICIANS AND LISTENERS ARE WELCOME!

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

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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

Jim Johnson, President (2010)  
Jim Murphy, Vice-president (2010)  
Dianna Butler, Treasurer (2010)  
Mary Larkin-Baker, Trustee-at-Large (2009)  
John Ockels, Trustee-at-Large (2009)  
Elbert Hill, Trustee-at-Large (2010)  
Sylvia Mitchell, Trustee-at-Large (2010)

### 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:

Viki Reeder

Youth Advisor:

Roger Gregory-Allen

Social Action:

David Lawrence

Hospitality:

Marla Loturco &

Amy Hoffman-Shehan

Communications:

Kathleen Campbell

Historian:

Marla Loturco

Newsletter:

Lisa Cates

Caring:

Viv Weeks

Website:

Nell Evans