

# Red River Ramblings

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 12

DECEMBER 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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December 7

RRUU Worship Arts Team

"Celebrations of Light"

Lessons from Diwali, Hanukkah, Yule, Christmas, Kwanzaa, and our own Unitarian Universalist heritage will all be a part of this multi-generational holiday service, which has become an annual December tradition at RRUU.

December 14

Rev. Jennifer Innis

"Unplugging the Bodhi Tree"

In Buddhism, the Buddha attained Enlightenment while sitting under the Bodhi Tree. Cuttings from this tree are cultivated around the world. If, as the Buddha says, we are to release our attachments, what are we still doing with this tree?

December 21

Scottie McIntyre Johnson

"Who Came Up with Christmas Anyway?"

Just because something, especially something as emotionally laden as a special holiday, has been a certain way during our lifetimes, we tend to think that's the way it's always been. Not so for our ways of celebrating Christmas in this country. This service will look at how some of our Christmas traditions came to be, with a special emphasis on the contributions of our Unitarian and Universalist ancestors. Our music-making Chalice Circle, UUJaml, will provide special music for the service.

December 28

RRUU Members and Friends

"For Auld Lang Syne"

In his retelling of fairy stories in the Scots language, Matthew Fitt uses the phrase, "In the days of auld lang syne", as the equivalent of "Once upon a time". Another RRUU tradition for the Sunday between Christmas and New Year's is to have a "Members' Sharing" service at which anyone who wishes may read a poem or short prose selection or sing a song for the group. Those who prefer just to come and listen are also most welcome. Following this service "It Takes a Village" Chalice Circle will serve a light meal and birthday cake in the Fellowship Hall in honor of Jesus' birthday. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



December 24 (5:00 P.M.) "Lessons and Carols of Christmas"

A Unitarian Universalist Candlelight Service

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

Adult Religious Education 10:00am Worship & Children's RE 11:15am Page 2 Red River Ramblings

## December 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 11:00am Being Peace	4	5 7:20pm The Reel Deal	6
7 2:30-5:30pm All Church Christmas Party	8	9 7:30pm The Green Team	10 11:00am Being Peace	11	12	13 10:00am Outdoors Circle
14 12:30pm Free- thinkers	15	16	17 11:00am Being Peace 7:00pm Agape	18	19 ?Red River Earth Spirit?	20
21	22	23	5:00pm Lessons and Carols	25	26	27
28 12:30pm It Takes A Village	29	30	31			



### UU'S RAMBLING IN THE COMMUNITY

A number of our members are involved in various events in the community during this holiday season. You are encouraged to attend to support them and to have a good time! If we have failed to list something, it is because we did not know about it. Please send notices of your "ramblings in the community" to the newsletter editor, Lisa Cates, and we will happily list your activity. Thank you!

Dec. 4 at 7:00 p.m. **Hilary Gregory-Allen** will sing with the Austin College Choir for a **Service of Lessons and Carols** at Wynne Chapel. The service is open to all without charge.

Dec. 4 at 4:00 & 8:00 p.m. **Scottie McIntyre Johnson** will sing with the Perkins School of Theology Seminary Singers for a **Service of Lessons and Carols** at Perkins Chapel, Southern Methodist University (Dallas). The services are open to all without charge.

Dec. 5, 6, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19 & 20 at 8 p.m. & Dec. 7, 14 & 21 at 2 p.m. **Tom Rawson** will perform as a member of the cast of Sherman Community Players' production of *The Walton's Homecoming* at the Finley Playhouse in Sherman. **Cynthia Evetts** worked on set construction. Ticket prices are \$5 for all seats at the Dec. 4th Preview; \$7 for all seats on Thursday nights; and \$14 for adults & \$7 for students at all other performances. Call 903-892-8881 for reservations.

Dec. 7 and Dec. 21 at 6:30 p.m. **Darrah Dunn** will sing a Christmas concert with **The Villagers Chorale** at Bells United Methodist Church. (Dec. 7) and at Grace United Methodist Church (Dec. 21). These concerts are free and open to the public.

Dec. 11 at 7:00 p.m. **Carolyn West** will perform in the Sherman High School Band Concert at the Sherman High School Auditorium. The concert is free and open to the public.

Dec. 14 at 3:00 p.m. Roger Gregory-Allen, Carla Murphy, and Kris Riek will sing with the North Texas Concert Chorale in a Christmas concert with brass and organ accompaniment at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Sherman. The concert is free and open to the public.

Dec. 16 at 7:00 p.m. **Caleb Butler** and **Davis Gregory-Allen** will perform in the Dillingham Middle School Band Concert at the Sherman High School Auditorium. The concert is free and open to the public.

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### **RRUU Green Tip of the Month**



Do a home draft audit. Hold a candle next to your door and window frames to see if there may be a gap that should be plugged.

### Social Action—"One More Step!"

One of the major concerns in an overpopulated word is the basic necessity of feeding a constantly growing population. The complexity of this issue is even greater for UU's and others that recognize the need to maintain respect for all life forms. The resource guide for the 2008-2012 Congregational Study/Action Issues is now available on line. I would urge each of you to view the electronic booklet to determine if there is interest in pursuing this as a study course.

http://www.uua.org/documents/washingtonoffice/ethicaleating/studvguide.pdf

We recently renewed our membership for the Grayson County Chapter of the NAACP.

In October we contributed gift bags to the Grayson County Foster and Adoptive Parent's Association's Fall Festival. You may use the following link to see smiling faces. <a href="http://www.gcfapa.org/photogallery.html">http://www.gcfapa.org/photogallery.html</a>

In recognition of World AIDS Day, December 1st, our November "Share the Plate" collection of \$181.45 was donated to Callie's Clinic in Sherman. This was formerly known as ARCOT. Our December collection will be donated to the North Texas Youth.

The items for the Thanksgiving food drive will be delivered this week to a local charity. We will begin a Christmas food drive that will be delivered before Christmas.

It has become a tradition at RRUU to provide Christmas gifts for the clients at Day Star. During the first week of December, we will post names along with a simple gift that they desire. Please bring the wrapped gift no later than Sunday, December 21. We will deliver them to the young at heart at Day Star on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Future Share the Plate donations are scheduled is as follows: Grayson County Shelter -Denison (Jan), UUA Service Committee (Feb), Women's Shelter (Mar)

#### **Upcoming Event**

December 13 – A Peacemaking Workshop will be held from 2:00-4:00 at Pathway UU Church. Pathway is located at 524 S. Nolen Drive, Suite 300, Southlake, TX 76092 (Please see SA bulletin board for more information.)

December 21 Gifts for clients at Day Star

### RRUU Photo Directory

A new photo-directory of RRUU members and friends is being prepared! After our Sunday services, starting on December 7 and for as many Sundays as it takes, the Directory Team will take individual and family pictures. You may, of course, choose not to have your information and/or photo included in the directory, but all members and friends of RRUU are encouraged to verify their contact information. Thank you!

Your Directory Team: Marla Loturco, Kris Riek, Carolyn Cameron, and Jim Murphy

### Safe Congregation Panel Report

The congregation of RRUU passed the Safe Congregation Policy unanimously in January 2008. Since then the Safe Congregation Panel, established by the Policy, has been working to establish procedures for implementing the policy. At this time, the Panel would like to share with the congregation the procedures it has established for dealing with cases involving a member of the congregation that may come before it. The Panel believes these procedures support its dual responsibilities of protecting the congregation and treating all individuals with respect.

Your Safe Congregation Panel is composed of the President of the Board, the Minister, the Director of Religious Education, and two members appointed by the President. Since its formation, SC Panel members have been Kathleen Campbell, Rev. Jennifer Innis, Linda Woytasczyk, Tingey Tracz and John Ockels. At the request of Jim Johnson, Kathleen and Linda have remained on the Panel after leaving the positions of President and DRE because of their familiarity with the Policy as it was developed. Jim and Viki Reeder will take their places on the Panel as it moves into the next phase of its work.

First, the Panel views its charge to maintain confidentiality when investigating the conduct of members as absolute. Members of the Panel will not share any details of an investigation, or even if an investigation is taking place, with other members of the congregation. The Panel hopes that this confidentiality will be maintained by any individuals coming before it since it would be extremely damaging to the congregation and the individual for such matters to become the basis of public debate. We believe strongly that this confidentiality is essential for both the integrity of the process and the protection of the individual and will maintain it regardless of any breach by members under review.

Upon a report of possible misconduct or a self-identification of a member of the congregation as a sex offender, the Panel will ask the individual concerned to limit his/her participation in congregational activities to attendance at worship, coffee hour, and congregational meetings until the case can be considered. We believe this a sensible precaution that both protects the congregation and protects the individual from possible future misunderstanding.

To facilitate communication, the individual will be given the opportunity to select one or two members of the Panel to be his/her prime contacts during the process.

The individual will be asked to give permission for the Panel to do a criminal background check. The Panel has made arrangements with a service recommended by our insurance company to do such checks. They involve only a search of available databases, such as court records and sex offender registries. (The Panel expects to request all congregational members working with children to give permission for the same search of criminal records.)

The Panel will request from the individual a statement about the circumstances that have led to the Panel's investigation. The individual may also request that statements from professionals who may be familiar with his/her circumstances be submitted to the Panel.

The Panel may also gather information from other sources on relevant factors that might have bearing on the circumstances and the Panel's recommendations, and may discuss elements of the case with appropriate professionals.

After assembling all information, the Panel will write a summary of the events and information it has assembled during its investigation. The Panel will then meet with the individual to discuss its findings. The individual will have the opportunity to correct errors of fact and present any further statement he/she wishes.

The Panel will then carefully consider all factors and submit its recommendation to the Board of Trustees. That recommendation may include limitations on a member's participation in congregational activities. Although the Policy mandates a report only if the Panel has recommendations for limitations on participation, the Panel believes it is important to inform the Board of all cases, including those in which an individual is completely cleared of any accusations. The Board of Trustees is required to maintain the same level of confidentiality as the Safe Congregation Panel.

According to the Safe Congregation Policy, the Board of Trustees makes the final decision on all cases that come before the Safe Congregation Panel. The Board of Trustees may accept the Panel's recommendation, request additional information or reconsideration from the Panel, deny the recommendation, or substitute its own proposal. All decisions made under the Safe Congregation Policy will be reviewed annually.

The Board of Trustees will inform the individual of its decision. It may also inform only those other members of the congregation necessary for implementation of any limitations included in the decision. Members with whom the decision is necessarily shared are expected to maintain the same level of confidentiality as the Safe Congregation Panel and the Board of Trustees.

The next task of the Panel will be to develop the educational and preventative programs mandated by the Safe Congregation Policy. The Panel will be creating programming to inform the congregation about the Safe Congregation Policy and preventive measures all members of the congregation should be aware of. The Panel will also be creating a process for performing background checks on all members of the congregation working with children, as mandated by the Safe Congregation Policy.

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### Minister's Letter

### On the Journey...

 $\dots$  Remembering the stable where for once in our lives Everything became a You and nothing was an It. - W.H. Auden

I wonder where you are in the story. - Spirit Play

Some of you know I am in a program to be certified to train volunteers and staff in the curriculum called Spirit Play. To describe Spirit Play in one sentence, it is the Unitarian Universalist adaptation of a popular Montessori-based Episcopalian curriculum called Godly Play. By nurturing a strong community of children in an open, interesting environment for learning, the goal of Spirit Play is to help children pursue their own existential questions: Where did we come from? What are we doing here? How do we choose to live our lives? Where do we go when we die? There is attention to many details, including asking whether one is ready to enter the room and be part of the community. Ideally, everything in a given room is able to be reached and handled by the children, such as story materials as well as tools for cleaning up after sharing food or painting. Every child is encouraged to work with art or story materials at their own pace once she or he has heard a particular story. The stories in Spirit Play draw from Unitarian Universalism, other religions, classic and contemporary stories, and tales created for a particular church. When the adults work with the children they offer inquiries crafted to encourage thoughtful responses and avoid a simple "yes" or "no" or a "right" answer. These are "wondering" statements, as in "I wonder where you are in the story." The responses are not meant to be simple or static from one telling of the story to another.

Taking the time to "wonder" can be our response to a story of the season: how in an ordinary place, nothing special or fancy, someone waits. The story most often told includes a stable, parents-to-be, a few wise men and shepherds, various farm animals, some innkeepers, a dread king, a host of angels, and a star. Upon reflection, I realize each year I wonder where I am in the story. Am I a shepherd, inspired and afraid of this miracle to which I am drawn? Am I Joseph, wishing he and his little family did not have to endure this journey, wanting nothing more than to protect his wife and the child she bears, one that is not really his? Am I the manger, the vessel available to hold the new life in his first moments? Or am I another part of the story altogether, one that is not usually offered as a character – the presence of hope, or the everlasting wait? I believe every year, when the stories are told yet again, we have a chance to find that place. Whether consciously or unconsciously, we wonder where we are in the story so we can await this mysterious renewal of life that comes before us again and again. We find a place from which we bear one part of that hope it brings, a promise needed by our neighbors as well as us.

I wonder where I am in the story. I wonder where you are. I wonder how the story will be told, with all its characters connected, because we are willing to take a place. And wait for the new life to come.

Namaste,

Jennifer

### Where in the UU World is Rev. Jennifer?

I expect to be in Sherman/Denison to attend the Board meeting on December 2, to lead the worship on December 14, and to participate in the Christmas Eve service on December 24. The best ways to contact me are by cell phone (972-639-7900) and by email (revinnis@earthlink.net). My day off is Monday. I will return general calls or email after my day off is over. In case of emergency, of course, I will respond as soon as possible. Also, Patrick and Nate and I will be with my family in Massachusetts for the New Year. I am available for emergencies only for December 26-January 3.

In addition to serving Red River Church, I am the Minister (1/2 time) for the Unitarian Universalist Church of Midland. For this month I will be in Midland during December 5-9 and 17-21. When I am in Midland I may take a little longer to return calls and email due to my responsibilities with that congregation. I ask that you let me know if a matter needs my immediate attention. If you do not reach me directly, please let me know how to get in touch with you. More than a full-time minister, I rely on you to let me know how I can support you and how we can nurture this congregation.

Bowing to the light within,

Jennifer

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### Save The Dates!!

The Southwest Unitarian Universalist Conference is excited to announce that we will be presenting two Young Adult Ministry Leadership Intensives in March of 2009. These weekend-long events are designed to help your congregation effectively minister to and with young adults (ages 18-35). Here at SWUUC, we are committed to developing vibrant, multi-generational communities of faith, and engaging the young adult community is critical in working toward this goal.

Please save these dates:

#### March 6-8 2009 at All Souls Unitarian Church in Tulsa, OK.

March 20-22 2009 at Emerson Unitarian Universalist Church in Houston, TX.

Does your congregation want to develop more in the following areas?

- Campus Ministry
- Young Adult Lay and Professional Church Leadership
- Maintaining Effective Outreach through Technology
  - Young Adult Small Group Ministry
    - Vibrant, Challenging Worship
- Providing a Congregational Environment that Welcomes and Integrates People of All Ages

If so, these leadership intensives are for you! We will have speakers and workshop presenters who have had great success in young adult ministry and want to share their experience with you. We will also experience a variety of worship styles and leaders throughout the weekend. These events are designed for congregational leaders of all levels. We are asking young adults, ministers, religious educators, church program staff, and lay leaders of all types to join us for these weekends of education, worship, and congregational development.

We invite you to attend these events, and please pass this information along to your congregation's leaders. More information on registration to follow.

If you have any questions about these leadership trainings or suggestions about what resources your congregation could use in this area, please contact the Rev. Aaron White, at aaronscottwhite@gmail.com or 972-333-6707 (Cell). Aaron is the Young Adult Minister for our district, and he is happy to answer any questions you have about these weekends or young adult ministry in general.

### Treasurer's Report

The RRUU Finance Committee has requested that I submit monthly rather than quarterly financial reports to be published in the newsletter. Due to the newsletter submission deadline, the reports may run a few months late, but as always, if you would like more current information, please feel free to contact me anytime.

For October, we had total revenues of \$4,807.13 and our expenses were \$4,137.63, resulting in a net gain of \$669.50. Year-to-date, RRUU has a net gain of \$30.76. As of October 31, 2008, RRUU has a total of \$58,740.37 in the bank in checking accounts, savings accounts, and CD's. Those funds are dedicated as follows:

6-Month Emergency Reserve	30,392.50
Grants Fund - Restricted Assets	484.60
New Home Fund - Restricted Assets	5,695.00
DBLE Scholarships - Restricted Assets	1,000.00
Other Committed Funds	435.26
Endowment Fund	4807.68
Uncommitted Funds	15,925.33

I have configured my accounting software to track pledges, and I update those pledges on a weekly basis. If you would like a balance or need a history of your donation transactions, please send me an e-mail anytime (dianna820@hotmail.com) or call (903) 744-0570, and I will do my best to get back to you as soon as possible. Respectfully submitted by Dianna Butler, RRUU Treasurer

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### 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. Because of Christmas, Agape will meet on the THIRD Wednesday in December. Next meeting: A Worship Service with Communion on Wednesday, December 17 @ 7:00 p.m. @ the church.

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



**BEING PEACE**, A Mindfulness Meditation Circle. Facilitator: Nell Evans. Meets every WEDNESDAY from 11:00 to 11:45 a.m. @ Nell's home in Sherman.

WE WILL NOT MEET ON CHRISTMAS EVE OR NEW YEAR'S EVE NEW MEDITATORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME



**EVENSONG**, A Circle for Sharing Our Stories. Facilitator: TBA. Evensong will not meet in December. We hope to resume again in January with a new facilitator.



**FREETHINKERS**, A Humanist Chalice Circle. Facilitator: L.D. Clark. Meets on the second Sunday of each month @ the church after church. Next meeting: December. 14. Topic: TBA. Bring a brown bag lunch.

ALL FREETHINKERS ARE WELCOME!



THE GREEN TEAM, An Environmental Action Circle. Facilitator: Amy Hoffman-Shehan. Next meeting: Tuesday, December 9 at 7:30 pm at the home of Amy Hoffman-Shehan. We will work on Earth Day 2009 and discuss the work done on the carbon footprint audit of the church and continue planning for the 2009 Earth Day Festival.

ANYONE WHO LOVES OUR PLANET IS WELCOME!



<u>IT TAKES A VILLAGE</u>, A Circle of Parents Supporting Parents. Facilitator: Dianna Butler. Next meeting: Sunday, December 28 after church @ the church for a birthday party for Jesus! We will serve chili, soup and birthday cake and sing carols.

#### THE ENTIRE CHURCH IS INVITED!



A MOVEABLE FEAST, A Cooking and Eating Circle. Facilitators: Elbert & Marion Hill. Meets at moveable times and moveable places! Next meeting: Saturday, Dec. 20, 6:30 p.m. @ Devolli's Italian Restaurant in Denison. Please RSVP to Elbert or Marion if you are coming. NEW MEMBERS AND GUESTS ARE CIRDIALLY INVITED!



**RED RIVER EARTH SPIRIT**, A Nature-Based Spirituality Circle. Facilitators: Penny Bertrand. Meets at various places on various dates. Next meeting: Plans are still being made for a Yule Celebration, probably on Dec. 19. Contact Penny Bertrand for more information.

#### NEW MEMBERS AND GUESTS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!



THE REEL DEAL, A Movie Watching Circle. Facilitator: Linda Woytasczyk. Usually meets the last Friday of each month @ 7:20 p.m. @ the home of Linda Woytasczyk in Sherman. BUT THE DECEMBER MEETING WILL BE ON DEC. 5 The movie will be *Miss Pettigrew Lives for a Day*.

### ALL MOVIE LOVERS ARE WELCOME! Popcorn is provided!



<u>UUJAM!!</u> A Music-Making Circle. Facilitator: Jan Fletcher. Meets the first Friday of each month @ 7:00 p.m. @ the home of Jan Fletcher, however, THERE WILL BE NO MEETING IN DECEMBER. Those participating in the Dec. 21 worship service will meet on Sat. Dec. 20 @ 2 PM @ the church for rehearsal. Next Open Meeting: Friday, January 2.

#### ALL MUSIC MAKERS AND LISTENERS ARE WELCOME!

#### ANNOUNCING THE FORMATION OF A NEW CHALICE CIRCLE!

This as-yet unnamed group will meet monthly, probably on a Saturday, for an **outdoor activity**. Facilitators: Suzanne Durland & Kathleen Campbell. Next meeting: Saturday, Dec 13, from 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM @ Hagerman National Wildlife Refuge Education Center. Rick Cantu will lead a program on the many ducks and geese at the Refuge this time of year. Learn key identification tips. Photo presentation will be followed by field trip.

Dress accordingly, and bring binoculars, cameras and field guides.

Contact Kathleen (903-892-0576; <a href="mailto:kcampbell@austincollege.edu">kcampbell@austincollege.edu</a>) or Suzanne (903-327-8896; ehman1@localnet.com) if you are interested in attending. ALL ARE WELCOME!

102 West Harrison Street PO Box 1806 Denison, Texas 75021

Phone: 903-463-3399 E-mail: info@rruu.org

A home for religious liberals in Southern Oklahoma and North Texas

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.RRUU.ORG

### **Church Leadership**

#### **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:

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Website:

Nell Evans