

Red River Ramblings

VOLUME 6, ISSUE 3

MARCH 2009

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 1

Dr. John Ockels

"On Hope"

March 8

Rev. Jennifer Innis

"Live the Promise of the River"

This congregation lives and breathes and is part of our daily existence because it is we who make it possible. What are the promises we make to renew this treasured place, this light in our lives? This sermon is part three of the theology of Unitarian Universalism and is the start of the annual stewardship drive.

A spaghetti lunch will be served in the Fellowship Hall following the service.

March 15

Ms. Megan Dalby-Jones

"Looking at Lent through Deep Time Eyes"

March 22

Dr. Elbert Hill

"A Road Less Traveled"

Why do UUs have so many problems with the "elevator speech", explaining Unitarian Universalism in a nutshell? Maybe it's because we are truly misfits in the religious community. Let's consider some suggestions about what sets us apart.

March 29

Rev. Dr. Xolani Kacela

"When Dreams Are Broken"

How do we build resilience into our lives when our plans don't turn out the way we planned or hoped for?

Originally an ordained United Methodist minister, Rev. Dr. Xolani Kacela was received into fellowship by the Unitarian Universalist Association in 2008. He has been in the ministry for over twelve years. Xolani holds a PhD in Pastoral Theology and Pastoral Counseling from Brite Divinity School at TCU. He serves as a chaplain at the 136th Air-lift Wing in Ft. Worth and as the Minister of Pastoral Care at the First Unitarian Church in Dallas.

NOTE: Because this was the only Sunday Rev. Kacela was available, our usual Fifth Sunday Forum service will be held on the fourth Sunday in April instead of on March 29.



Adult Religious Education 10:00am
Worship & Children's RE 11:15am

RRUU March 2009

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 10:00 am Adult RE 11:15 am Worship: John Ockels 12:45 pm Freethinkers 12:45 pm It Takes a Village	2	3 7:30 pm Green Team	4 11:00 am Being Peace 7:15 pm RRUU Board	5	6 7:00 pm UUJam!	7 9:00 am Outdoor Circle
8 10:00 am Adult RE 11:15 am Worship: Rev. Jennifer Innis 12:45 pm Stewardship Dinner	9	10 7:30 pm Green Team	11 11:00 am Being Peace	12	13	14 2:00 pm It Takes a Village
15 10:00 am Adult RE 11:15 am Worship: Megan Dalby-Jones "Share the Plate" Collection for Women's Crisis Center 12:45 pm Agape	16	17 7:30 pm Green Team	18	19	20 7:30 pm Earth Spirit	21 6:00 pm Moveable Feast
22 10:00 am Adult RE 11:15 am Worship: Elbert Hill	23	24 7:30 pm Green Team	25 11:00 am Being Peace	26	27	28 9:00 am Habitat for Humanity Project
29 10:00 am Adult RE 11:15 am Worship: Rev. Xolani Kacela 2:00 pm Baker Park Clean-up	30	31 7:30 pm Green Team	April 1 11:00 am Being Peace			

The new RRUU Caring Committee is ready to go to work addressing concerns for our church family. Please contact Cylvia Lawrence at cylvialaw@aol.com or 903-482-5121.

Social Action—"One More Step!"

Our Share the Plate donation for February raised \$154.00 for the UUA Service Committee. The UUA Service Committee is charged with working to advance human rights and social justice in the United States and around the world.

As part of our international program, we have made a 10 year commitment to supporting a child under the Bonny Shah Sponsorship Programme. This program provides food, shelter, and education to orphaned and homeless children in India. We recently received pictures and a brief letter detailing a field trip taken by the 8th & 9th grade to the Ajanta Caves built in the 7th century by Buddhist monks. In addition to educational supplies, each of the students received a night shirt of their own. Please view the pictures and letter on our board.

Collections from our food drive were split between Bryan and Grayson County.

We recently received and completed a survey for NTAUUS designed to detail services that they could provide to assist in furthering social justice activities among UU organizations in North Texas. While RRUU tends to address social issues more than legal and legislative concerns, providing grass roots training sessions for methods, contacts, and resources would be a great help. A copy of the completed questionnaire is posted on the bulletin board.

Our spring Habitat for Humanity project will be held on Saturday morning, March 28 (weather permitting). The house was completed in Denison in time for the owners to spend Christmas in their new home; however, the yard is still in need of some finishing touches. Late March is a great time to plant and a great opportunity for our youth to volunteer. The home is located at 803 N. 8th in Denison. We hope to work with the Grayson County Master Gardeners on this project. Please mark your calendars.

Sunday afternoon, March 29, will be our annual "Baker Lake Cleanup". This gives everyone a chance to help beautify a small part of Texomaland and enjoy one of our local hidden treasures.

The March "Share the Plate" will be contributed to the local Women's Shelter (Mar)

Upcoming Events

March 28 – Habitat Landscaping Project

March 29 – Baker Lake Cleanup

One of the main points that became apparent through the recent NTAUUS questionnaire is the need for training and area workshops. In response to this, NTAUUS has agreed to fund a one day session entitled UUA Social Justice Empowerment. The program will be presented by Susan Leslie.

The date for this workshop will be April 11; time and place will be determined and announced later.

At the 2008 Unitarian Universalist General Assembly in Ft. Lauderdale, delegates selected "Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice" as a Congregational Study/Action Issue 2008-2012. Over the next few years, we hope to discuss and explore what we eat, where it comes from, and how the process affects the world. For more information on this topic visit <http://www.uua.org/socialjustice/issuesprocess/currentissues/ethicaleating/index.shtml>

Where in the UU World is Rev. Jennifer?

I expect to be in Sherman/Denison to attend the Board meeting on March 4, to lead the worship and help start the annual Stewardship Campaign on March 8. The best ways to contact me are by 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, of course, I will respond as soon as possible.

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 March 13-17 and 25-29. When I am in Midland, I ask that you let me know if a matter needs my immediate attention. 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

Notes from the President

Two important processes will take place at Red River Unitarian Universalist Church this month: our Annual Stewardship Campaign and a Congregational Check-In.

The Stewardship Campaign is an opportunity for participants in the church community to show their dedication to RRUU and the mission and programs of the church by pledging their financial support for the coming year. Roger Gregory-Allen and his capable Stewardship Committee will guide the campaign to its conclusion near the end of March.

The second process, which I will discuss in more detail here, is our Congregational Check-In. We haven't done one of these in a couple of years, but given the current recession in our country, it seems to be a good time to take the congregation's pulse and to learn how our church ministry might operate better and more efficiently to meet the needs and goals of our membership. To that end, members of RRUU will be asked to respond to an online survey that asks, "How are we doing?" regarding the church's ministry as broadly interpreted. We will be asking about church personnel and Sunday services, but also about our church's other programs and involvements and about its operation as a community. (See Rev. Innis' letter in this issue for a summary of developments at RRUU during her two years of ministry with us.)

At the beginning of the survey members will be required to identify themselves, but only the Committee on Ministry, which consists of Linda Woytaszyk, Chair; Elbert Hill, and Darrah Dunn, will access the individual survey responses. The Committee on Ministry will compile the survey results into a reportable form that shows the trends of the data collected and will send this report to the Board of Trustees in time for its April meeting. No individual respondent will be identified in the report sent to the Board. The Board will use the results to plan improvements and refinements of the church's operations. I hope that each and every member of RRUU will take a few minutes to complete the survey so that our church can reach its highest potential and make an even greater contribution to the lives of our members and the welfare of our community.

- Jim Johnson, President

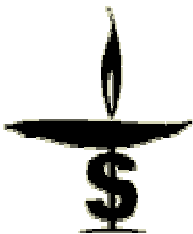
February 2009 Treasurer's Report

For February, we had total revenues of \$4,074.08 and our expenses were \$4,518.65, resulting in a net loss of \$444.57 for the month. However, fiscal year-to-date, RRUU is financially holding steady with a net gain of \$600.65. As of February 28, 2009, RRUU has a total of \$53,227.79 in the bank in checking accounts, savings accounts, and CD's.

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, or if you need a statement of donations for IRS purposes, 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

The Red River Unitarian Universalist 2009-2010 Stewardship Campaign



Share in our Future...

Invest in our Vision!

Now, more than ever,

Put your money where it *REALLY* matters!

The 2009-2010 stewardship campaign will be from March 8th through April 5th. We will kick off the campaign with an Italian dinner served after church on March 8th and will conclude with the Church birthday bash on April 5th.

Does your money support your values? Please look into your heart and your pocketbook and ask yourself that question. If you have been reluctant to commit to a pledge in the past, please remember that regular donations add up to a pledge of support for the church and its work.

Please join us on March 8th for food, fellowship, and commitment!

-Your Stewardship Committee

Minister's Letter

On the Journey...

Happy Anniversary! This March is the two year anniversary of my service as your consulting minister. I feel very fortunate for the chance to serve such a growing and healthy congregation. Via last year's budget, this church voted to continue the presence of professional ministry for 2008-2009. In planning for next year, the Board and I want to get more feedback from the congregation on the direction of the church and its ministries. See Jim Johnson's column for notes about the congregational check-in. How did we get to this anniversary? What have we accomplished?

This religious community's leaders hoped to meet the goals set in spring 2006, including adding professional ministry. In the summer of 2006, the Board and I started a conversation on a quarter-time consulting ministry at RRUU. I felt fortunate to find a strong and vibrant church close to my new home in Plano.

Prior to my current agreement, the Stewardship Committee and I organized the first official annual fund drive in the church's history. One goal of that campaign was to raise sufficient funds for half the cost of professional ministry combined with a grant from NTAUUS for the other half. Through the hard work of many volunteers, the campaign resulted in a 30% increase in pledges and met the goal of receiving completed pledge forms from 85% of membership.

Since March 2007, my primary responsibilities consist of preaching and leading worship once a month and consulting on the growth and development of the congregation. Other responsibilities are being present but not in the pulpit on a second Sunday each month, writing material for the newsletter, assisting in pastoral crises, and availability by phone and email for support and/or counsel. I average 40-45 hours per month in service to the congregation. This total includes half the time I need to travel between Denison and my home in Plano. In fulfilling our agreement, I led worship regularly and I arranged for a guest minister during my maternity leave in August and September 2008. Serving as your consulting minister also benefits the congregation in ways that are frequently not as visible to the congregation. I represent the congregation in the course of my travels in the district and nationally. By the end of the month, I will have participated in or attended two installations and two ordinations and one building dedication in the last two years. I have met with members on the path for Unitarian Universalist ministry as they navigate their transition between lay members and emerging ministers. I participate in meetings of the Dallas-Fort Worth area cluster of Unitarian Universalist ministers.

Congregational development over the last two years includes:

Numerical congregational growth from 61 members in 2007 to 70 members reported to the Unitarian Universalist Association in January 2009.

In 2008, increased average attendance from 50 to 57.5 people. This increase places the congregation in the early stages of a pastoral-sized church and is evidence that RRUU is evolving from a large family to a more intentional community.

Formation of the first Committee on Ministry. The purpose of this committee is to look at the larger picture of the congregation, including the Board, the professional ministry, staff, and members and friends. The committee also makes recommendations for contract renewal and compensation. Currently, I work with the Committee on Ministry to compose a description of the committee's responsibilities and member rotation.

Establishment and initial use of the Safe Congregation Policy. To assist the Safe Congregation Panel, I sought advice from a coach with experience in congregations using similar policies.

Consultation visit from the UUA on the readiness of the congregation to start a capital campaign for a new church home.

Renewal and extension of the consulting minister contract and sufficient pledges to cover the entire cost of the consulting minister compensation for March 2008-June 2009.

Consultation with the Religious Education Committee on the state of the program and plans to search for a new Director of Religious Education.

Renewed efforts to provide a Caring Committee for the general well-being and crises in the congregation.

Whenever possible I spend a second Sunday of each month with the congregation. It is hoped this second Sunday gives more visibility to the professional ministry and is a chance for me to participate in the life of the congregation. In addition to meetings, I also attended the It Takes a Village and Agape Chalice Circles, enjoyed numerous congregational meals, and shared the leadership of newcomer classes. As of 2008-2009, I offer the prayer when appropriate during the worship, including the Sunday after the deadly shootings at the Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church in Knoxville, TN.

Given the consulting nature of my responsibilities outside of Sunday worship, most of my work has been with the Board, the Committee on Ministry, the Stewardship Committee, and the Safe Congregation Panel. I feel privileged to be as available as I can to members' and friends' personal concerns given the limited scope of the position. As the congregation grows, I hope we can expand on the pastoral role. I enjoy the chance to know such an excellent community in Texoma. If there is a way I can be of service, please let me know.

Namaste, Jennifer

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).



A number of people have expressed an interest in forming a new Chalice Circle around the topic of “Voluntary Simplicity” or “Sustainable Living”. If you are interested in being a part of such a group, especially if you would be willing to facilitate it, please contact Scottie McIntyre Johnson, Chalice Circle Coordinator (scottieone@cableone.net).



AGAPE, A UU Christian Circle. Facilitator: Drew Wade. Meets after the regular worship service on the third Sunday of each month. Next meeting: A Worship Service with Communion on Sunday, March 15 @ 12:45 p.m. @ the church. The worship service will be preceded by a light meal.

ALL LIBERAL CHRISTIANS AND UUs WHO WANT WORSHIP WITH A CHRISTIAN FOCUS ARE WELCOME!



BEING PEACE, A Mindfulness Meditation Circle. Facilitator: Nell Evans. Meets every WEDNESDAY from 11:00 A.M. to noon. @ the home of Nell Evans in Sherman, but we will NOT meet on March 18 because of Spring Break.

NEW AND EXPERIENCED MEDITATORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!



FREETHINKERS, A Humanist Chalice Circle. Facilitator: L.D. Clark. Meets on the second Sunday of each month @ the church after church at about 12:45 p.m. BUT due to a scheduling conflict with the kickoff of the new Pledge Drive, the Freethinkers Chalice Circle will meet on the FIRST Sunday of March, We will be watching and discussing the Geert Wilders film "Fitna" and also some commentary on the film. . Bring a brown bag lunch.

ALL FREETHINKERS ARE WELCOME!



THE GREEN TEAM, An Environmental Action Circle. Facilitator: Amy Hoffman-Shehan. We will meet every Tuesday during the month of February to get ready for the 2009 Earth Day Festival. The meetings are at 7:30 at the home of Amy Hoffman-Shehan. We will need additional volunteers on April 18, the day of the festival. Please contact one of the Green Team members if you can donate some time to the event.



IT TAKES A VILLAGE, A Circle of Parents Supporting Parents. Facilitator: Dianna Butler. Meet on various dates, depending on the activity. Next 2 meetings: March 1 @ the church after church. Topic: "The RRUU Safe Congregation Policy." A light meal will be served, and childcare will be provided. Also, on Sat. March 14 @ 2:00 p.m. we will go to the Theatricks production of the musical, Honk! Please let Dianna know by March 4 if you would like to attend.

ALL FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN ARE WELCOME AT "VILLAGE" ACTIVITIES



A MOVEABLE FEAST, A Cooking and Eating Circle. Facilitators: Elbert & Marion Hill. Meets at moveable times and moveable places! Next Meeting: Saturday, March 21 @ 6:00 @ the home of David & Cylvia Lawrence in Van Alstyne. Those who plan to attend should let RSVP to dnlawrence@aol.com.

ANYONE WHO LOVES COOKING AND/OR EATING IS WELCOME!



Outdoor Activities Circle, Facilitators: Suzanne Durland & Kathleen Campbell. Meets monthly, usually on a Saturday, for a hike or other outdoor activity. Next Meeting: March 7 trip to the Trinity River Audubon Center in Dallas. Contact Kathleen for details: kcampbell@austincollege.edu or 903-892-0576.

ALL ARE WELCOME!



RED RIVER EARTH SPIRIT, A Nature-Based Spirituality Circle. Facilitators: Penny Bertrand & Kris Reik. Meets at various places on various dates. Next meeting: Friday, March 20, 7:30 p.m. @ the church to celebrate OSTARA .

NEW MEMBERS AND GUESTS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!



THE REEL DEAL, A Movie Watching Circle. Facilitator: Linda Woytaszyk. Usually meets the last Friday of each month BUT we will not meet in March.

ALL MOVIE LOVERS WILL BE WELCOME AT THE APRIL MEETING!



UUJAM!! A Music-Making Circle. Facilitator: Jan Fletcher. Meets the first Friday of each month @ 7:00 p.m. @ the home of Jan Fletcher. Next Meeting: Friday, March 6. Call or email Jan with your rsvp. (jans_melodies@msn.com; (903) 892-8396)

ALL MUSIC MAKERS AND LISTENERS ARE WELCOME!

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A home for religious liberals in
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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

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Church Leadership

Minister

Reverend Jennifer Innis

Board of Trustees

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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

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