

# Red River Ramblings



December,  
2014  
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Issue 6

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## Morning Meditation - Sundays 9-9:50 a.m.

Those who enjoy beginning their day quietly, pensively and thoughtfully are invited to join the morning meditation. New this month. Details on Page 4.

## The Adult Forum - Sundays 10-11 a.m.

Currently the Forum is studying the confusion over Confucius which is part of the Great Courses video course which covers the various religions on the Axial Age. The Axial Age or Axial Period is a term coined by German philosopher Karl Jaspers to describe the period from 800 to 200 BC, during which, according to Jaspers, similar revolutionary thinking appeared in Persia, India, China and the Occident. Come and be enlightened. <http://www.localendar.com/public/rruucalendar?style=D2>

**Sunday, December 7, 2014**  
11:15 a.m.

**Elections, Politicians & Lawyers, Oh My!**  
The Rev. Doug Strong, *preaching*

It has been a month since the mid-term elections with significant changes in all levels of government – local, state and national. Some see turmoil, some see order. Some are relieved and feel the republic is on the right path, others have vastly different perspectives. Toss in Ferguson, 2 grand jury decisions, 2 law suits, Officers Wilson and Pantaleo into the mix and emotions are raw. A sermon *not* about politics, but religion.

Refreshments: A-G

**Sunday, December 14, 2014**  
11:15 a.m.

**Introducing the Theology of Lloyd Geering**  
The Rev. Dr. Don Fielding, *speaking*

Dr. Fielding returns, refreshed and relaxed, from spending most of November south of the equator. This morning he brings a reflection about theology, which is a slice of philosophy, in general and the theology of one individual who has much to tell us.

Refreshments: Out To Lunch Sunday  
At *Southern Grill & Kitchen* (See page 5)

**Sunday, December 22, 2014**  
11:15 a.m.

**Solstice Sunrise**

The Rev. Marlin Lavanhar, *preaching (video)*

Humankind has paused to ponder the seasons in many ways. On this, the shortest day of the year, we will watch a sermon delivered by the senior minister at All Souls, Tulsa and learn about the history and meaning of the winter solstice.

Refreshments: H

**Sunday, December 28, 2014**  
11:15 a.m.

**On the Threshold**

The Annual Sharing Service

The ancient Roman god Janus lends his name to our month of January. Traditionally depicted with one face looking forward and another looking backward, Janus presided over beginnings and transitions, and therefore passages and doorways. Join us this Sunday as we stand on the threshold between the end of one year and the beginning of another. We will reflect on, celebrate, and let go of the past year as we look forward to the beginning of another.

This is our annual sharing service – bring a reading, poem, song, dance or anything that you feel fits into the theme of looking forward / looking backward.

Refreshments: I-Z

**Red River Unitarian Universalist Church ♦ Denison, TX**

*We are a sanctuary for religious liberals celebrating compassion, diversity and spiritual growth.*



## Dan's Dispatch

The winter solstice this month reminds us that it's literally the darkest time of the year in our hemisphere, and there's also a lot of metaphorical darkness out there: the media would

not have it any other way, since bad news has always sold far better than good news. And there's such a menu to choose from! There's the always reliable Middle East to provide something shocking and frightening; there's a deeply polarized political scene here at home that has led us into near paralysis; we have seen how the perceptions and reality of justice vary according to our race; there is the greatest inequality in income among us in the USA since the 1920s; drug lords spread shocking violence in Mexico with the collusion of elected officials and police... And I could go on – and I'm sure you could, too.

Nevertheless, rejoice, for there are also glad tidings! To spite the darkness of the year and the darkness of the soul, we deck our halls; we brighten the outside darkness by stringing our houses with lights. Inside our homes, we trim our trees with glittering baubles. We light our hearths and candles. We gather in our circles of families and friends to comfort and cheer and encourage and love one another. We are worldly wise enough to know that the wolf is always at the door, but divinely foolish enough to mock and belittle him by celebrating the abundant good there still is in the world and in us.

In my own divine foolishness, I believe that underneath the relentless commerce of the holiday season there still resides a still living spark of giving, good will, cheerfulness, and caring—although it's sometimes hard to find smoldering underneath all the cardboard and plastic. We at Red River strive to be giving, cheerful, and of good will throughout the year, but I admit I enjoy seeing our aspirations strung with lights and shiny ornaments at this time of year. And that wolf? He's not far, for sure, but for right now at least, we have the upper hand.

## Join UUs to lobby Texas Legislators ~ Jan 20

Van loads of UUs from around Texas will travel to Austin for the **Texas UU Justice Ministry** Legislative Action Day Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2015 to promote UU values with legislators as they kick off the 2015 Session, and it's time to get organized.

Gil Alexander and Doug Strong, our local representatives to TX UU Justice Ministry, would like to hear from anyone interested in participating. Here's the details of the day:

We'll start our day at the Capitol in room E2.026 at 8:30 a.m. hearing Rev. Carlton Smith, a member of the UUA Southern Region Life Staff, talk about how our Texas issues connect to the larger UUA picture and Representative Donna Howard, a fellow UU, share an overview of what to expect from the legislature and how we can best advocate our values.

We'll learn how to conduct advocacy meetings with our legislators by role-playing with Austin UU Karen Neeley, who's worked as a lobbyist for community banks for 25 years, and we'll receive one-page, informative flyers to leave with legislators, which tell about both Unitarian Universalism and our main issues: women's reproductive justice, Medicaid expansion and

economic justice. From 11 a.m. - 3 pm, we'll visit legislators from our districts, and from 3:30-4:30 pm we'll reconvene as a big group to debrief our day before heading home.

Those planning to arrive Monday, Jan. 19, will have the option of a special 7 p.m. tour of the Capitol, by Karen Neeley, who will show us the shortcuts, back stairways and other secret spaces most people never discover, along with sharing a few juicy stories.

If you want to sign up, click on this link:

<http://tinyurl.com/lhp7xwk> which is an on-line E-vite. Just add your name to the list of those who are going.





Dear RRUU'ers,

One of the things I like to do in the services I lead, is to play around with the liturgy. Liturgy means, literally, "work the people," but practically it is a traditional or prescribed rite of worship – the way we do things. Unitarian Universalism, for the most part, follows the old standard Christian hymn – sandwich (a hymn at the beginning, the meat or sermon in the middle, and another hymn at the end) that was a typical liturgy in those churches out of which we grew, and which we still practice. I would say that generally speaking most UU church services resemble the Methodist church down the street, but there is no necessary requirement for us to do so.

Somehow that has always bothered me. It seems to me as though we have an opportunity to practice the freedom we claim we cherish but you would never know what from attending one of our services. If you will recall some of the services I have led in this church I have often tried to experiment with the liturgy: once we replaced hymns with reading poetry, another time we had chamber music via videos and often I scrambled the various elements of liturgy looking for something that feels comfortable and meaningful. That's what I mean when I say I like to play around with liturgy. Worship, after all, means that which we hold up that is of worth – that which we value. Yes, sometimes we value conformity, but not all the time; sometimes we value creativity and spontaneity, too. Coming to church should be exciting: an adventure: what's it going to be like today?

For the four talks I will be bringing to RRUU (Jan 11, Feb 8, Mar 8, Apr 12) which were originally my Sunset Talks at SWUUSI in the year 2000, I hope to add yet another new piece of liturgy – an intermission. The reason I think an intermission would be of value is because the talks I gave as Sunset Talks are longer than a normal "reflection," and I think you would appreciate hearing the whole talk – not just some of it. An intermission we give you the opportunity to stretch your legs, to refill your coffee, or go to the bathroom and return to your seat ready for the remainder of the talk more alert and awake.

The talks themselves are about the thinking and writings of Chet Raymo. Raymo, raised a Roman Catholic, is often asked why he isn't a Unitarian Universalist. He earned his PhD in physics from the University of Notre Dame, and taught at Stone Hill College in Massachusetts until his retirement. He has written several books on the interface between science and religion. Chet Raymo definitely has something to say to Unitarian Universalist. Come and see if an intermission works in our church and learn more about Raymo and the way he sees the world.

*Rev. Don Fielding,*

## *A Special Invitation*

Elbert and Marion Hill invite all members and friends of Red River Unitarian Universalist Church to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary with them at a come-and-go party on December 20, 2-5 p.m., at the church (515 N. Burnett Ave. in Denison). Drinks and substantial hors d'oeuvres will be served. The attire is smart casual (something between a tuxedo and a thong and flip-flops). Please join us if you can! RSVP to [mhill@communicom.com](mailto:mhill@communicom.com) or 580-924-7715

## *Booked for Lunch*

Will be back in January! Happy Reading!

## *The Green Team*

Green Team will meet Thursday, December 11 at 7:00 at Amy Hoffman-Shehan's house. We will update on progress in planning the 2015 Earth Day Festival.

## *The Garages ~ are now locked!*

The key hangs up in the basement. Look for it on a long wood stick shaped like a key!

## Treasurer's Report – for November 2014

In the month of November, we had income of \$2,145 from general operations. After operations expense of \$1,373 for the month, we had a net income from operations of \$772.

In November we had a fund raiser for the endowment fund which came to \$340.

For the year to date period of November 2014, we had net income of \$16,493 from operations. The total change in cash for the year to date period was a decrease of \$4,687.

As of the end of November 2014, we had cash of \$48,373 and debt of \$33,326. The cash amount includes \$3,592 reserved for grants. In November we donated \$89 from the Share the Plate program to the Grayson County Shelter.

Robert Shelton,  
Treasurer



## Meditation anyone?

Meditation Class is in session once more! Join our newest member, me, Peter Nichols at 9:00 - 9:50 am Sundays for meditations that will include free form stretching, chi kung meditation, walking meditation, guided meditation, and sitting meditation. I look forward to working with you all! We'll meet in the Chapel and stop in time for those who want to attend the Adult Forum.

## Dining for Dollars

Raised \$340.00 for the RRUU Endowment! Thanks everyone for your generosity.

## Share Your Thoughts ~ with the UUA

As Unitarian Universalists, we hope to move our world "toward more love, justice, and peace." We cast a broad vision – yet ground it in effective action.

And since 2010, the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) Board of Trustees has been engaged in efforts to ensure governance of our Association is more effective, democratic, and inclusive. We've made progress, yet the Board has identified three long-standing challenges that remain:

- Our annual General Assembly is not, in practice, very democratic and inclusive.
- General Assembly is not especially participatory and does not promote shared learning.
- There is sometimes poor alignment among leadership roles of the UUA.

The UUA Board and I invite you to explore possibilities for re-imagining governance – from small-scale fixes to broad changes – and comment on them. These are possibilities, not proposals. [Please complete the online survey, "Re-Imagining UUA Governance."](#) It will take 15-20 minutes and will be available through December 20, 2014.

Jim Key,  
UUA Moderator

## Welcome Peter!

Peter Nichols became our newest Member on Nov. 23<sup>rd</sup> during the Morning service. By way of an introduction, Peter writes, "I was raised in the UU church but it didn't stick until I joined LRY [Liberal Religious Youth] at 14. Here I began to feel my spirituality and many of my rough edges got polished. Next I joined a wiccan coven and got polished even more while learning energy healing work. Next I took a Buddhist name and learned to meditate and how our perception is the world. Finally I am quite happy in the mystical understanding of Carl Jung and in the UU church again. I do not know if this is the end, but I am certain it is a good beginning."

## Board Bits ~ from the November Board of Trustees meeting

The agenda was a fairly short one, and because of some other commitments among the Board members that day, the meeting was scheduled for one hour rather than the usual two. We decided that rather than calling on all church committees to submit a monthly report, we would make a request to one or two committees to update the Board on their activities and replace the monthly reports with quarterly reports.

The Board noted that the Habitat for Humanity house being constructed in our neighborhood was nearly complete, and expressed a desire to contribute. Dan will contact Grayson Habitat to see how RRUU can best help their work—not necessarily at the neighborhood house, but at a future house (or houses).

The Board has submitted 3 grants to NTUUC. We are requesting support for purchasing three cordless microphones; support for installing Wi-Fi at the church

building for community use; and support for a local billboard to make our presence, and UUism's presence, more visible to the general public.

The volunteers from Austin College's annual *Great Days of Service* project were absolutely terrific young women and men! They helped organize our seating in the building and move the venerable old "red chairs" into storage. They also helped straighten the lower "basement" level rooms, as well as sort and organize the bicycles that L.D. Clark has gathered to restore and distribute to neighborhood "bikeless" kids. It was a lovely day in more than one way.

NTUUC also has an open call for nominations for the Marty Robinson Award for Volunteers. Nominations are open for any individual to nominate any other individual. The deadline for submission is December 8. Visit the NTUUC website at <http://ntuuc.org/awards.shtml> for details.

The Board meets next on Thursday, Dec. 11 at 2:30 p.m.

## December Moveable Feast ~ Dec. 18<sup>th</sup>

Moveable Feast at Gil and Marilyn Alexander's on Thursday, December 18 at 6:00 pm. Marilyn and Carolyn are cooking, Bruce is bringing the wine to go with a curried chicken in an herbed wine sauce served over rice with homemade bread, broccoli spears with cheese sauce, spiced pears on a lettuce leaf and pies for dessert. Come celebrate the season!

RSVP to Marilyn at [galex@cherokeecomm.com](mailto:galex@cherokeecomm.com) by Dec. 15<sup>th</sup>.



### Kevin's Back ~

Kevin Bartell, the carpenter who spent hours working at church, has returned to Texoma. He helped transformed the Chapel and found a supply of surplus low-e windows that were too large to fit in our building. He cleverly devised a way to embed the extra glass in the wall (by removing the window trim, inserting each window and then replacing the trim). He also repaired the sliding doors in the Barton Parlor along with doing several other tasks. Kevin is a fine craftsman. If you need or know someone who could use his skill, give him a call. His cell is 612-562-9573.

## Out To Lunch ~ Sunday, December 14<sup>th</sup>

The December **Out To Lunch** will be on Sunday, Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>, at the restaurant we've been to before (maybe it was a Sport's Bar?) – The building is at 2700 S. Eisenhower Parkway in Denison, and is now the Southern Grill & Kitchen. Those who have tried the place report their Sunday Buffet is wonderful (you can also order from the menu). Prices are reasonable.

Everyone is invited to join in the fun – we each pay our own fare and we'll gather at 12:45 p.m.



## Highlighting our support for the Grayson County Shelter



The Shelter Crew (a group of a dozen or so congregants) from RRUU prepares and serves a meal about once every four months to the residents of Grayson County

Shelter, which is the only homeless shelter in the county and a lifeline for individuals and families going through a difficult time financially.

Because the shelter is located practically on RRUU's doorstep, less than a block south of the church, the congregation has "adopted" it as a community project. The shelter's board of directors holds its monthly meetings at the church, and RRUU donates "Share-the-Plate" offerings to the shelter six times a year. (Once a month, all undesignated cash in RRUU's Sunday collection goes to either the shelter or to help fund Earth Day Texoma, the community-wide, family-friendly environmental awareness festival held in April each year in Sherman. RRUU's Green Team Chalice Circle organizes EDT, and the one-day event is largely staffed by volunteers from the church. The shelter and EDT receive "Share-the-Plate" money in alternating months.) The congregation also has an ongoing drive for personal-care products (shampoo, deodorant, etc.), collecting these for shelter residents in a basket in the church foyer. In past years, congregants have taken toys to the shelter for the children who will be in residence over the holidays, using "want lists" with suggestions for gift items provided by the shelter.

Annette Limoges is the acting Executive Director of the shelter, replacing Ashley Earls, who took another job. Michele Holcomb is Director of Volunteers and coordinates meals. Shelter residents are responsible for cooking and kitchen cleanup as a general rule, and they always express great gratitude when RRUU brings over a meal that they don't have to prepare. Usually a few of the Shelter Crew eat and chat with the residents, and most residents seem to appreciate that someone takes an interest in them personally.

Membership of the Shelter Crew is voluntary. Anyone wishing to participate should get in touch with Marion Hill ([mhill@communicomm.com](mailto:mhill@communicomm.com) or 580-924-7715).

About once a quarter, she sends an email to crew members suggesting possible dates for doing a meal, then calls Michele to schedule the date the group has chosen on the shelter's calendar. Individual crew members volunteer to prepare specific foods for the meal, then cook and deliver these to the shelter. The menus tend to be basic, dishes familiar to most residents and balanced between meats, veggies, and starches, with a low-sugar dessert (since usually at least one shelter resident is diabetic).

A few days before the crew delivers the meal, Marion calls Michele to get a count of shelter residents, plus any needed information about special diets, whether children are there, etc. This month, the Shelter Crew is serving a meal at the shelter on December 3. About 20 residents are there now, including four children. Various RRUU congregants have spoken with shelter staff people about how best to assist the shelter at this time of year (beyond delivering the meal) and have gotten varying responses. We do know that several other churches and individuals donate at this time and that the shelter has a sizeable storage room filled with donated items for distribution to residents at Christmas or other times. Several of us on the Shelter Crew have talked about the situation and had the idea that RRUU might focus this year on collecting cleaning products and other basic items needed for day-to-day running of the facility.

If you agree with this approach, please bring dishwashing or laundry soap, cleanser, paper towels, toilet paper, or other maintenance essentials to the collection point in the church foyer during December. If you prefer to give toys, games, clothing, special foods, or other "fun stuff," I'm sure the shelter wouldn't turn those down. They seem happy with whatever we bring them. But it seems a nice idea to show the shelter folks that we're aware they have year-round basic needs, however unglamorous and mundane those are.

Some of RRUU's own congregants have spent time in homeless shelters, so we know their residents aren't just a bunch of ne'er-do-wells. A shelter resident can literally be anyone who's had a run of bad luck. Anyone.

## Leadership

### Board of Trustees

Dan Althoff, *president*  
 Gil Alexander, *vice president*  
 Robert Shelton, *Treasurer*  
 Doug Strong, *Secretary*  
 Paula Blackshear, *Trustee*  
 Elbert Hill, *Past President*

### Committee on Ministry:

Carole Harner, Gerry Shehan,  
 Peter Schulze

### Team Leaders/Members:

Adult Forum: Gil  
 Aesthetics Team:  
 Bruce, Joyce, Maura, Paula  
 Building & Grounds: Marilyn  
 Communications: Doug  
 Chalice coordinator: Open  
 DRE: Open  
 Finance: Open  
 Good Times:  
 Carole, Marilyn & Marion  
 Long Range Planning:  
 Amy, Gil, Marilyn  
 Membership: Marion  
 Nominations: Helen, L.D., Marla  
 NTUUC Rep: Marla  
 Safe Congregation Panel: Dan  
 Social Action: Gil  
 Ways & Means: Open  
 Worship:  
 Dan, Doug, Faye, Marla

## Contact Us

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*How to reach us:*

Email: **info**[+ suffix]\*  
 Phone: 903.231.3232  
 Web: [www.rruu.org](http://www.rruu.org)  
 E-News: **announce**[+suffix]\*  
 Facebook:  
 RedRiverUnitarianUniversalistChurch

## A nice thank you note



Dear Friends,

"y'all" are champions! Thank you so much for your on-going Share-the-Plate donations to the Shelter. Without help from our church friends, we would be unable to continue assisting our residents, much less keep the shelter operating. A simple "thank you" for what you have done for us, both now and in the past, seems so small, but I hope it conveys at least a portion of our appreciation.

My best to everyone at RRUU.

Annette Linoques,

## Chalice Circles / Interest Groups

**GREEN TEAM**, an Environmental Action Circle usually meets on Thursday evenings @ 7:00 PM. Next meeting Dec.11 at Amy Hoffman-Shehan's house. Facilitator: Amy Hoffman-Shehan.

**MOVEABLE FEAST**, a Cooking and/or Eating Circle will be meeting on December 18<sup>th</sup> at Marilyn & Gil Alexander's home in Colbert.

**BOOKED FOR LUNCH**, is an informal book discussion group which usually meets the second Thursday of the month at 1 p.m. in the Barton Parlor. The group is not meeting in December. Facilitator Carole Harner.

**OUT TO LUNCH**, One Sunday a month after things we go out for a Dutch-treat lunch. There is no agenda, no reports, no minutes - just everyone heading out and breaking bread together. This month Out to Lunch heads to Southern Grill & Kitchen (see page 5). Email **announce** [+suffix]\* if you have a restaurant suggestion.