

Red River Ramblings



May 2015
Volume 12
Issue 11

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The Spring Congregational Meeting
May 17th

Set Up Day for the Church Yard Sale is Friday, May 15

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Church calendar for the next 30 days:



Sunday mornings in May: to mind your spirit & spirit your mind

Sunday, May 3, 2015

Riffs on the Fifth Principle

Anita Mills, *speaking*

Democracy depends upon us to express our opinions – whether it is at the ballot box, by petition or protest rally. Social action starts with conscience and interfaces with our participation in the democratic process. We'll "riff" on the intertwining of conscience and democracy.

Refreshments: A-G

Sunday, May 10, 2015

The Hardest Sermon Ever to Write

The Rev. Doug Strong, *preaching*

Ask ten UU clergy persons what is the most difficult sermon to write and probably all ten will without hesitating reply, "Mother's Day." Along with May Day flowers comes the quietly growing angst for those UU ministers scheduled to speak on the second Sunday of May. In my case, I volunteered! I'll be interested in hearing what I have to say. Join me.

Refreshments: H

Sunday, May 17, 2015

Why Tear Up Candy Land? And Other Philosophical Questions

Dr. William Fridley, *speaking*

Views on the afterlife may provide—for some—comfort and hope. To pose questions about these views, admittedly, might be cause for discomfort. And, to some, such questions may seem analogous to tearing up Candy Land (the popular board game for children). Why would you want to do that?

These questions will be:

- *What is a soul or spirit? (A metaphysical question)*

- *Why do people believe in souls and spirits? (An epistemological question)*
- *What happens after we die? Resurrection and the intermediate state (An empirical question in principle, but in practice? Christian theology and philosophy)*
- *What is heaven like? (The logical, ethical, and aesthetic dimensions of this question)*

The answers are up to you.

Finger Food Potluck: *Everyone*

Sunday, May 24, 2015

What Happened to Decoration Day

The Rev. David Pyle, *preaching*

Memorial Day triggers emotions, grief, and even anger as personal attitudes about war may clash with a day to honor and remember those in military service, those who have served and those who died. On Sunday we will hear a sermon written in 2010 by the Rev. David Pyle who asked, "What happened to decoration day."

Refreshments: I-R

Sunday, May 31, 2015

Motherly Love and Christian Community

Dr. Meg Cotter-Lynch, *speaking*

The stories of the saints from the first 1500 years of the Christian era provide us examples of mothers who exemplify Christian love—often by leaving their children behind. While in some ways clearly at odds with what most of us think of as "motherly love," these stories about women who abandon their children help us to think about what it means to be a mother, and what it means to love. How might these uncommon examples of motherly love illuminate the possibilities for love within a Christian—or any—community?

Refreshments: S-Z

Morning Meditation: 9

Adult Forum: 10

Worship: 11:15

Fellowship Gathering: 12:15

Red River Unitarian Universalist Church ♦ Denison, TX

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

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Dan's Dispatch



The late cultural anthropologist, Margaret Mead, is credited for a well-known saying that has even found a place among the readings in our gray hymnal: "Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

That saying kept echoing in my head as I attended and did some volunteer work at the Texoma Earth Day on April 25. It's somewhat embarrassing to admit that I was a complete "newbie" there, but as a newbie, I also had a set of fresh eyes and absolutely no ideas of what to expect.

When I arrived at the Sherman Municipal Grounds around 6:30 that morning to assist in setting up, I was first surprised by the scope of the project and the amount of ground it would cover. Tiny orange flags planted in the ground indicated the locations of vendors who would soon come to set up shop.

And set up, they did! According to the Texoma Earth Day website, there were 59 confirmed vendors and participants – and that's without counting the entertainers and speakers. (Did I say there were belly dancers? Well, there were belly dancers!) The mayor of Sherman, Texas, Carolyn S. Wacker, issued a proclamation declaring April 25 to be "Texoma Earth Day Festival" Day. The Texoma Earth Day Festival has been an annual event since 2009.

And who puts together this magical show of entertainment, education, recycling, and fun? Oh, a just a *small group of committed people* known as the Green Team at Red River Unitarian Universalist Church!

Chaired by Amy Hoffman-Shehan, and assisted by many among us in the congregation, the Green Team plans months in advance for this one day a year when values and actions meet entertainment and light-heartedness. Saving the planet is such serious business that entertainment and art and singing (and belly dancers!) are absolutely essential. This Small-But-Mighty group even won the Interfaith Power and Light Cool Congregations "Community Inspiration" Award last year. It is truly amazing what a *small group of committed people* can do. We can help change the world. And as Margaret Mead told us, "Never doubt."

My sincere admiration and thanks to Amy and all those who volunteered at this year's Texoma Earth Day Festival. The work you lead us in is truly impressive.

And who puts together this magical show of entertainment, education, recycling, and fun? Oh, a just a small group of committed people known as the Green Team at Red River Unitarian Universalist Church!

Meet our May speakers

Anita Mills is a lifelong Unitarian and is a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Oak Cliff (Dallas), where she served for 2 years as President. Currently she is serving as President of the North Texas Unitarian Universalist Congregational cluster. Anita describes herself as a gardener, activist, weaver, mentor, and singer. She is a co-founder of the Common Ground Street Choir, which fields members to sing at protests and rallies. Although her bachelors was in Criminal Justice Research from the University of California at Davis, she worked for over 25 years in the investment banking and financial industry.

Anita is now in semi-retirement and, through her own company Anita's Arbor, installs vegetable gardens for clients as well as mentoring community and school gardens, particularly those located in food deserts.

Meg Cotter-Lynch is Associate Professor of English at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. Her research focuses on female saints in the Middle Ages. Her book, *The Transformations of St. Perpetua: Mother, Gladiator, Saint* will be released in 2016. She lives in McKinney, TX, with her husband Sean and daughters Mabel (age 8) and Ruby (age 5).

I, **David Pyle**, am a Unitarian Universalist Minister and a U.S. Army Reserve Chaplain. I have served UU congregations in Illinois, Michigan, and California... and have served as a Hospital and Hospice Chaplain in Illinois. I have served U.S. Army Reserve units in Michigan and California as both a Battalion Chaplain and a Combat Support Hospital Chaplain. I currently serve the 71 UU Congregations of Northern Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Central and Eastern Pennsylvania, Southern New Jersey, and Washington DC as the District Executive of the Joseph Priestley District of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations.

William Lloyd Fridley, a longtime friend of the congregation. Fridley is an Associate Professor of Education and has been at Southeastern Oklahoma State University since 1999. He teaches Foundations of Education and his areas of expertise are philosophy of education, professional ethics and ethical theory, and multicultural education. William is also an artist and song writer and collaborates with his wife Carolyn in musical recording, performing and other creative projects.

Doug Strong, also a lifelong UU, who co-founded RRUU while serving Community UU Church in Plano, now 18 years ago. After retiring in 2003 he settled in Sherman and is an active lay member here. He helps out in various ways, including serving as board secretary.

The spring annual meeting is May 17th



The Universalist theologian, Conrad Wright, writes of congregational polity, *"It is a fact of no small consequence that Unitarian Universalists stand in a tradition of congregational polity that is almost four centuries old; that they are much more conservative with respect to the practice of that polity than they are with respect to doctrine; that they have been Congregationalist in polity much longer than they have been liberal in theology; that, indeed, their congregationalism has proved to be more durable and adaptable to changing times than any of the doctrinal formulations - whether of God, or human nature, or human destiny - that dominate accounts of the history of liberal religion."*

We are about to practice that 400 year-old tradition this month, on the 17th. The Spring Congregational Meeting will be called to order at 12:35 pm in the Chapel.

There are several important items on the agenda for the upcoming meeting, including appreciating those leaders who are completing their terms of office and electing several new church leaders. We will discuss revising some church documents and listen to a summary of reports from the Board of Trustees, President and Membership Team.

Booker for lunch ~ May 14th



Booked for Lunch meets at 1 pm on May 14 in the Barton Parlor. This is the last meeting before the group takes their annual summer break. Come get suggestions on what to read over the summer. Snacks are provided. Don't miss out on the fun!

Those among us who are legal members of the congregation will cast their votes for the candidates all of whom have agreed to serve, if elected.

The nominating committee has submitted the following slate for nominees:

Nominations for the Board of Trustees

Vice President - 2 year term ending 2017: Gil Alexander

Secretary - 2 year term ending 2017: Doug Strong

Trustee at Large - 2 year term ending 2017: Helen Schulze

Nominations for the Nominating Committee

Lanan Shelton - 3 years ending 2018

Kat Walston - 2 years ending 2017

Amy Hoffman-Shehan - 1 year ending 2016

Nominations for the Committee on Ministry

Carole Harner - 3 years ending 2018

L.D. Clark - 1 year ending 2016

Time will be given for a town-hall style conversation about hopes and fears, dreams and disappointments that anyone can mention. And, as is our custom, before the meeting we will have a finger food (so there won't be a lot of dishes to wash) pot luck lunch.

The Warrant for the meeting will be sent to members in accordance to our bylaws. Everyone is encouraged to partake and witness this cherished tradition of the free church. And in case it sound dreary, it is not; nor, does the meeting last very long.

Yard Sale Set up: Fri. May 15th

The treasures sure are growing! Bring more! It promises to be an impressive assortment of stuff people will come and buy.

We have two truckloads of furniture (thanks to Carole, Kerry, Marla, Dan, Marilyn, Danny, Gil, Lorraine, and Doug who hauled it all), plus two loads of items donated from a friend of church in Plano.

The set up is Friday, May 15. WE NEED YOU! Starting at 9:30 AM, rain or shine. We need to set up and price the items not already labeled. We need to clean up and polish the donated furniture.

Keep bringing things. The more we have, the more we can sell.

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Board Bits

During the April 9th Board meeting, the Board:

- Our need to revised the Safe Congregation Policy because we are not in compliance and agreed to suggest a revised policy at the Spring meeting
- Agreed to find a place at church to put up and “official” bulletin board so all can see important notices
- Agreed that we do not need a policy regarding the Wi-Fi system since it is password protected
- Accepted a donation of 14 comfortable chairs for use in the Barton Parlor
- Suggested an article in the newsletter about the importance of congregational policy and agreed not to permit voting by email as a way to nudging people to attend the meeting
- Settled plans for the board retreat to be held on April 16th
- Voted to remove 7 people from membership who have not been active for over two years. Each was sent a letter in January asking for an update on their desires regarding membership. None replied.

Treasurer's Report

In the month of March, we had income of \$2,699 from general operations. After operations expense of \$2651 for the month, we had a net income from operations of \$18.

In March, we spent \$40 of our Wi Fi fund for a router. We are now up and going!

For the year to date period of July 2014 through March 2015, we had net income of \$5,802 from operations and principal payments of \$4,115. The total change in cash for the year to date period was a decrease of \$5'131.

As of the end of March 2015, we had cash of \$5,131. We had \$5,103 reserved for grants. Our unrestricted cash totals \$48,993 and our debt totals \$32,288.

In March, we donated \$66 from the Share the Plate program to the Grayson County Shelter.

Robert Shelton, Treasurer

The Sneller Window



This is the story of a stained glass window which was created in memory of my great, great grandmother Rosina Barbara Sneller. The window was commissioned by her family and placed in the Universalist Church, Cicero, NY. I know the church was constructed in 1832 for the Baptist who sold it to the Universalists in 1852. From photographs I found in a book on the history of Cicero; between the 1880's and 1905, the building was modified. The entire structure was raised, a basement created and “a large semicircular window was installed over the front doors.” I'm unsure when the gift happened but given that Mrs. Sneller died in 1889, husband Jacob Sneller died in 1902 and son Jacob, Jr in 1923 it seems probable that the window was completed during the installation of the semicircular window.

I know that the church was sold and demolished to make room for the Post Office in 1960. I know that the Sneller window was then returned to my grandparents who stored it inside the unused chicken coop. When my grandparents relocated to Madison, WI in 1974 the window moved from the chicken coop to my mother's garage.

One Christmas dinner my family jokingly appointed me Trustee of the Sneller Window (given my close relationship with 'all things religious' you understand). Privately, I was thrilled but having no place to hang the window, it languished in mom's garage. The years became decades. I worried about it getting damaged. I wondered what to do with the window. It needed a home. It needed a ten foot ceiling in order to be upright.

Then in 1991 my sister measured her ceiling and hinted the window would look nice in her home. I gave a sigh of relief and we moved the window. It graced her home until her death in 2012. It was time for the window to move, again! Deep in my heart, I wanted the window to be in a church - a UU church. My brother-in-law asked, “Why not move it to Texas?” It was my eureka moment.

I had the window crated and moved to her garage where it remained until February when I had it shipped to Denison and put it, yet again, into a garage. Last week Tracy Homuth and I navigated it into the chapel. So it is - that after 55 years in its own diaspora - the Sneller Window again graces a (Unitarian) Universalist church. I couldn't be more proud.

However, in the Free Church tradition, one dude cannot impose on

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Red River UU Church Endowment Fund

Dear Newsletter Editor,

I'd like to know something about the endowment fund, specifically, how much money is in it? What is the purpose of the money (How and when it is used and why) and who decides? Who are the members of the committee? Are they looking for other members? What are the duties of the committee? If someone were to feel like making a contribution, to whom would they give the check?



Your Newsletter Editor was overjoyed with the email: The first ever letter to the editor! So, kind reader, here are some highlights from the Red River Unitarian Universalist Church Endowment Fund Bylaws, which were approved by the Board of Trustees, April 21, 2004. The entire bylaws are posted on the bulletin board in the Soul Café (until we can get the 'official' bulletin board up). Marion Hill, Gil Alexander & Doug Strong are the current Trustees. The Fund stands today at \$1,030. Contributions, payable to RRUU Endowment Fund, go to the church treasurer.

Here are some highlights from the bylaws:

Purpose

- 1.1 The Red River Unitarian Universalist Endowment Funds (hereafter called the "Fund") shall be established for the following purposes and reasons:
 - a. To provide a vehicle to accept bequests and contributions that will constitute an endowment fund,
 - b. To provide a method for long term management of bequests and other funds contributed to, or earned by, the Endowment Fund.
 - c. To establish reserve funds and investments to ensure the perpetuity of Church and,
 - d. To provide a resource in the event of emergencies jeopardizing the continuity of Church.

Principal and Income

- 3.1 The principal and income of all property may be distributed for the benefit of Church in accordance with the provisions of Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code, except as limited by this and other provisions of the By-laws.
- 3.2 No distributions by the Fund shall be used for the annual operating budget of Church. Further, no distribution in any one year shall exceed the fund income from the prior year, except in an emergency requiring distribution of corpus of the Fund and approval by the membership of the Church shall be required.

- 3.3 Decisions on the distribution of income shall be the province and responsibility of the Trustees operating under majority rule.

Management

- 4.1 The Fund shall be managed by three (3) Trustees until such time as the Fund corpus reached \$100,000.00 at which time two additional trustees shall be elected at the next regularly scheduled of the Church election. Once the Fund reaches the amount to trigger the addition of the two additional Trustees, then elections shall be conducted by mail ballot.
- 4.2 Trustees will be elected by simple majority with at least 6% of the membership having voted. Initial terms of service for trustees shall be randomly assigned as 1, 2, or 3 years. At the end of each of the three terms above, subsequent trustees shall be elected for terms of three years.

Provisions

- 5.1 No distribution from the Endowment, for purposes other than the operation of the Fund, shall be made until the Fund reaches a value of \$50,000.00.
- 5.2 No distribution out of Principal shall be permitted except by the approval of 65% of the Church members voting on the issue. Such a question before the Membership will require a congregational meeting or a mail ballot with notice going to the entire Church membership at least two weeks prior to such a mail ballot or meeting.

Records and Reporting

- 6.1 Trustees shall continually maintain unambiguous financial records and prepare thorough reports for the Church semiannually.
- 6.2 The midyear report shall be to the Board of the Church and the yearend report shall be at the congregational spring meeting.
- 6.3 The Endowment Fund Trustees shall meet at least twice annually and keep accurate written minutes of all meetings.

Church Directory Updates

Calling all members and active friends! It has been a couple of months since y'all received your new church directory.

Were there any edits to your listing? Any corrections you've noticed?

If so, email directory + suffix [remember the suffix is @rruu.org]. Later in May an update sheet will be sent to everyone.

Many thanks.

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Our Earth Day Festival Booth

This year, for the first time, the church had a booth at the Earth Day Festival. A basket full of apples succeeded in enticing the venturesome to come in. Five bags of apples were given out and six people inquired about Unitarian Universalism.

One woman moved here from Alaska, another young woman said her parents used to go to the church. Several people took literature and one woman said she definitely plans on coming to our Yard Sale (she liked the sign).

Six people signed up to receive the e-news. More than one was surprised and pleased to learn that there is a UU church in Texoma.

All in all, it was a worth having the booth.



Meet the Dyers: David, Kelly and Ellie

During worship on April 19th Kelly, David and Ellie joined the congregation. The Dyers live in Colbert and first visited RRUU the Sunday before Thanksgiving last year. Here, they have found a refreshing and different religious community. Look for them the next time you're at church and be sure to introduce yourself (and wear your name tag) so they can come to know each of us as we get to know them.

Welcome Ellie, David and Kelly!

The Sneller Window *continued*

the whole a window - matter not its history. Therefore, I would ask that y'all sit with the window for the next three Sundays and at our congregational meeting on May 17th, let the body politic decide whether it stays or goes. If it stays, fine, if not, there are lots of garages in the world!

The Rev. Douglas Morgan Strong,
Trustee Pro Tem
The Sneller Window

P.S. Sometimes histories get confused through time. After all my research, calls, reading, hunting etc. just now (Tuesday, May 5 @ 2:30 PM) I wanted to verify one last thing about my great, great grandmother. Rather than typing Rose B. Sneller, I left off the "B" and found a new reference I had never seen before: *"The History of Cicero United Methodist Church. The church bell, cast by Meneeley of West Troy, NY, is also dated 1859. Other windows were in memory of Rose B. Sneller, Alice Kellogg, Mary L. Moore, ...*

There it was, reality trumped family history. I'm not discouraged by the change of fate. OK, maybe just a teeny bit. That window has been a Universalist most of my life. I will accommodate to reality! Turns out the Methodists built a new church in 1954 and windows from the previous church which were not incorporated into the new church building but returned to the family. This news does answer one lingering thought that I've had throughout all my research. As a little boy, I used to play in the chicken coop. I thought I remembered being warned not to break the window. I couldn't reconcile the dates. 1960 found me in high school and long since had I given up playing in the old hen house.

When my grandfather died his memorial service was held at that Methodist church. Their minister and grandpa were close friends. They went fishing often and argued about God, Hell and the state of souls. Grandpa was president of the Universalist congregation for many years and I can only imagine those conversations.

So the Sneller Window came out of the Methodist church. Go figure! A lifelong story kicked out in less than a second. Ayn Rand wrote that the truth isn't for everyone, only those who seek it. In the end I'm glad I know. After all these years, I'm not resigning from being Trustee of the Sneller Window. Blood is thicker than religious beliefs. I still love the window, now 100+ years old, and appreciate the twist of fate presented to me this afternoon compliments of Google! I'll smile about this for the rest of my life.

Leaders

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*
 Finance: *Open*
 Good Times:
Carole, Marilyn & Marion
 Long Range Planning:
Amy, Gil, Marilyn
 Membership: *Marion*
 Nominations: *Helen, L.D., Marla*
 NTUUC Rep: *Marla*
 RE Team: *Carolyn, Dan, Tommi*
 Safe Congregation Panel: *Dan*
 Social Action: *Gil*
 Ways & Means: *Open*
 Worship:
Dan, Doug, Faye, Marla

Contact Us

Red River UU Church
 515 North Burnett Ave
 Denison, TX 75020

mail to:

PO BOX 1806
 DENISON, TX 75021-1806

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How to reach us:

Email: [info\[+suffix\]*](mailto:info[+suffix]*)
 Phone: 903.231.3232
 Web: www.ruuu.org
 E-News: [announce\[+suffix\]*](mailto:announce[+suffix]*)
 Facebook:
 RedRiverUnitarianUniversalistChurch
***Church email suffix: @rruu.org**

Standing on the Side of Leadership June 13, 2015

8:30 am – 4:30 pm • First Unitarian Church, Dallas



Help Promote the Conference! The flyer for the conference can be downloaded here.

Standing on the Side of Leadership

"Breaking Down Walls; Building Bridges"

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."

- John Quincy Adams, 6th President of the United States and Unitarian forefather

With these words in mind, NTUUC's annual Standing on the Side of Leadership Conference will focus on developing new skills and opportunities for effective community engagement in a multi-cultural world. The morning sessions, led by Rev. Tamara Lebak, will concentrate on Cultural Competence, the ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures and socio-economic backgrounds, particularly in the context of organizations. Ginny Goldman, Texas' Executive Director of Texas Organizing Project will start the afternoon session which will continue with breakouts offering a variety of ways to apply knowledge gained in the morning into action in North Texas.

Whether you're an elected leader in your congregation or a member/friend who'd like to learn more about this important work and help your congregation open and grow, please join us for SotSoL 2015!

June 13th, 2015 8:30am to 4:30pm



Chalice Circles / Interest Groups

GREEN TEAM, an Environmental Action Team. In April the team meets on May 7th @ 7 pm at Amy's home. Amy Hoffman-Shehan's house. Facilitator: Amy Hoffman-Shehan.

MOVEABLE FEAST, a Cooking and/or Eating Circle has not been decided for May.

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 next meeting is May 14th. 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 we're staying in for a finger food potluck lunch before the congregational meeting on Sunday, May 17th. Email **announce** [+suffix]* if you have a restaurant suggestion.