



Red River Ramblings



December 2015
Volume 13
Issue 6

Grow Your Soul & Serve the World

In this issue:

Houston:
We Are In
Trouble!

*An open letter
from the Worship
Team*



The President of
the congregation
has a request
for us all.



Thanksgiving
Dinner
food drive
a huge success.



The Third Floor
Gets a Needed
Facelift

[Church calendar
for the next
30 days:](#)

Sunday, December 6, 2015

A Very UU Christmas

The Worship Team

Back in the days when Unitarians identified as liberal Christians, we made our own very distinctive contributions to this widely loved holiday. Join the Worship Team as we celebrate in word and music how Unitarian Universalist influenced has shaped Christmas.

Refreshments: A-G

Sunday, December 13, 2015

All Our Thoughts and Prayers"

the Rev. Dr. Christine Tata

What do we mean when we say "all our thoughts and prayers"? It's a trite phrase we use all the time, when we don't know what else to say, but is it more than that? Aren't "our thoughts and prayers" also the most central and ephemeral manifestations of our faith? When do our thoughts *become* our prayers? And what role does prayer play in the life of a questioning seeker? Come, "let us reason together" – in the space where reason gives way to hope.

Refreshments: H

Morning Meditation – 9
Adult Forum – 10
Worship – 11:15
Conversations & Calories – 12:15

Sunday, December 20, 2015

Attitude of Gratitude- Mindful Living

Sarma Gunturi

This is about simple ways that we all can develop to show our gratitude to the life around us and receive the happiness we all looking for. This can impact how we look at our life and have a mindful living filled with His Love.

Mr Gunturi lives in Plano and retired from Texas Instruments after 26 years as an engineering executive. He has served as the president of Sri Sathya Sai organization in Plano for the last five years. Sathya Sai organization is involved in providing a venue for self-transformation and a meeting place for spiritually inclined people from all the religions based on the fundamental Human values of "Truth" "Righteousness" "Peace" "Love" and "Non Violence"

Refreshments: I-R

Sunday, December 27, 2015

A Time to Share

The Entire Congregation!

On this last Sunday of 2015, we will again celebrate our Annual Sharing Service. We started 2015 with a service "On Gratitude" and learned that an attitude of gratitude can improve your well-being. How did you do? What were your moments of gratitude? Something you did, saw, gave or learned? Was your world touched by acts of gratitude? Think of the ways you experienced gratitude over the last 2 months and bring a poem, a story, a song, a memory to share.

Refreshments: S-Z

Red River Unitarian Universalist Church ♦ Denison, TX

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





"With a fairly small membership, we know that running a congregation is actually a pretty big undertaking, so it's hard for me to ask more of a group that already does so much. But all the same, ask I shall."



Dan's Dispatch

As many of us celebrate a holiday season, some of us may find it difficult to respond to the prompts all around us to be "merry," as if that were something people can become on cue.

After all, we can still see all the old curses of humanity are still among us, and some of them in particular seem to be especially thriving. The list is long and depressingly familiar; there's no need to enumerate them as a litany of evil. I don't find it surprising at all if some of us feel somewhat less than jolly at this time of year, whether it's due to the weather, a general discouragement at the human condition, or personal challenges and difficulties.

As a lay-led congregation, we depend only upon ourselves as members to carry out the traditional and usual functions of a church. We are so fortunate to have so many talented and dedicated volunteers among us who make Red River UU Church a real option for those in far north Texas and southern Oklahoma who seek a spiritual and intellectual fellowship with other kindred liberal spirits. I am so grateful for everyone who participates and invests their time and energy and hearts in this special sanctuary. With a fairly small membership, we know that running a congregation is actually a pretty big undertaking, so it's hard for me to ask more of a group that already does so much. But all the same, ask I shall!

At one point in our shared history, there was a group of volunteers who called themselves the Caring Team.

They were those gentle souls who always had their eyes and ears open to the difficulties that other members were experiencing and who would act in some way to try to ease a member's burden-- or simply share (as appropriate) that information with others. Currently, though, we have no "official" Caring Team; you'll see on our website that the contact person's name for that group is empty. Since we affirm at every Sunday service to help one another, I would like to put out a formal and official call in this season of giving and sharing to anyone who would like to help out on the Caring Team. Caring for one another is an absolutely essential part of congregational life. All you need to do is let me know of your interest, and we'll start from there. . And as our Jewish friends might say, it would be a wonderful *mitzvah* (good deed)!

May we all share the warmth of community especially at this time of the year!

**A
SPECIAL
INVITATION
from
Dan Althoff**

**Open House
Friday, Dec 11th
3:00 pm**

**Under the banner of
A Sparkling Season
Dan Althoff and his
dad invite everyone
to their new home
at
5118 Valley View Dr
Durant.**

**Dan will provide
sparkling beverages
(wines, seltzers, so-
das, juices) as well as
both hot and cold
hor d-oeuvres.
Since it could be
chilly, some hot bev-
erages will also be
on hand. You are
invited to bring a
finger food or
sweets to share.**

house: 580.745.4116
cell: 580.920.3592.

Houston: We have a problem!

Last year three studies hit the religious media outlets which has set the Worship Team in a funk. The studies explored how willing church goers are to watch a sermon on video rather than a live-and-in-person clergy type. No major surprises – most folks want the flesh and blood rather than a hi-def sermon. Let's face it, no one gets up on Sunday and says, "Boy, I sure would like to watch a sermon on video today!"

The studies found that almost half of those who don't go to church (47 percent) say it doesn't matter if the sermon is live or delivered by video and church goers under 30 (37%) generally agreed it didn't make a difference. Three in 10 claim videos won't keep them from coming. The same number say live or video sermons are fine. That information could be helpful as we look at ways to grow.

The funk came from learning that ...

- smaller churches have a bias against video
- those with a college degree are more likely to want an in-person sermon
- Older people who regularly attend church are the least favorable toward video sermons

We're small, degreed and older. We are in trouble!

This is important for Red River because we make use of video sermons. The good parts of video sermons ...

- we get to hear a variety of UU clergy, each with his/her own style
- we come to know newer, younger ministers who will be the future face of our faith
- we can count on quality content since ministers scrub their cruddy videos
- we are able to keep within the budget

The bad parts of video sermons ...

- people opt out and stay home

Unitarian Universalists have, since time forgotten, valued the sermon above all else – even coffee! It is the sermon that brings us to the chapel week after week. When using a video sermon the worship team crafts a full service to enhance and deepen the experience, including a worship associate and live music on those Sundays. The aim is to assure the worship experience has value and meaning even when the speaker is on video.

Living in a rural area, it is a struggle to find speakers, harder to get ministers who are generally working Sunday mornings. Video sermons make the work of the worship team less grueling yet people are staying home.

Change is difficult and made more challenging when people assume they won't like a video sermon before experiencing services using one. Some argue that you go and visit a friend in the hospital, you don't send an Instagram image of yourself. Some ask how a minister would feel to have 30 cell phones propped up on chairs with people watching an in-person preacher from their homes.

The worship team feels that Hi-Def sermons are good theology and good business for Red River. Yet people are still opting out and staying home.

Change takes planning. Before launching their new product Sears asked focus group participants if they would buy a remotely operated garage door opener. The response was overwhelmingly negative. Henry Ford famously said if you asked the people what they wanted they would have requested a faster horse.

Please give video sermons a fair shot. Please remember that Hi-Def sermons are good theology and good business for Red River - for all the reasons listed above. The worship team hopes that you will come to church anyway because good things happen here: friendships, spiritual growth, community and great coffee.



"Please give video sermons a fair shot and remember that Hi-Def sermons are good theology & good business for Red River.

Come to church anyway because good things happen when we're all together."





The North Texas UU Congregations is an umbrella organization to which Red River UU belongs. We are one of thirteen congregations that make up NTUUC.

NTUUC, through their endowment, has given our Fellowship grants for multiple years. Marla Loturco of Red River UU is on the board of NTUUC as the secretary. This organization is a vital support to our Fellowship and it is essential for us to be involved. We receive education, training, and funding from this organization. It also connects us with the twelve other congregations in North Texas.

The last board meeting for NTUUC was held on November 7, 2015 at Horizon UU Church. Highlights from the meeting include:

- ✓ Rebecca Marmaduke from Oak Cliff Social Justice was a visitor attending the meeting to talk to us about gun control and a group called Moms Demand Action to End Gun Violence. This is a national organization with a local Dallas chapter. Rebecca asks that local churches allow the group to hold their quarterly meeting at various UU churches in the metroplex area without charge. She will also be the liaison if any NTUUC churches would like to ask the Mom's group to speak at their social justice meetings or Sunday services.
- ✓ An new video on NTUUC is almost ready for release. It was previewed at the meeting and is having some final adjustments made before release.
- ✓ NTUUC has created a brochure that includes one page on each of the 13 member congregations. This will be available soon as well. A copy has been given to the Red River UU board in case they want to make any changes to their page.
- ✓ If you would like to attend any NTUUC events, region events, or even GA and could use some financial assistance, the NTUUC committee you can apply to is now called Registration Assistance. Marion Hill from Red River UU serves on that committee.
- ✓ The NTUUC Awards deadline is December 10, 2015. Individuals and congregations may submit suggestions for Ministers, Staff, and Volunteers from their congregation for the awards at <http://www.ntuuc.org/events/recognition-awards>. Red River UU has been lucky to have a Marty Robinson Award for Volunteers winner every year since the beginning of the awards: Amy Hoffman-Shehan (2010), Marla Loturco (2011), Bruce Cameron (2012), Carolyn Cameron (2013), Marion Hill (2014), and Elbert Hill (2015).

- ✓ A Social Action Workshop is being planned for March 5, 2016. It will be held in Fair Park and will talk about Environmental Justice as it intersects with Social Justice, Racial Justice and Economic Justice. It will be an interfaith event. Aly Tharp is one of the organizers with the NTUUC Education Committee and NTUUC Social Justice Committee both involved as well.

- ✓ The grant request deadline is November 30, 2015 with the grants awarded on January 23, 2016 at the Awards Banquet held at Oak Cliff UU. Everyone from Red River UU is invited to attend. Tickets will be available in January from Marla Loturco or on-line at www.ntuuc.org/.

Some happenings around the NTUUC cluster:

Arlington UU Church - Hosting a COG (Covenant of the Goddess) all-day event that includes a Diversity, Racism, and Privilege Walk; taking the first small steps toward the big project of repairing/reconditioning their aging building.

Community UU Church - Adult RE program is vibrant with Fall courses offered every night of the week; the congregation voted to pass a resolution of support for the Black Lives Matter movement.

Denton UU Fellowship - 2016 Stewardship Campaign goal is \$180,000 of which there are pledges totaling \$141,000 (78% of goal) as of November 1, 2015. For 2015 there were 112 pledge units and to date, 64 so DUUF is hoping to hear from about 40 to 50 more.

First UU Church of Dallas - First Sunday in November had a Planned Parenthood speaker through Rev. Daniel Kanter's connections. Share the plate collection for Planned Parenthood was over \$20,000.

Horizon UU Church - Search committee has a new brochure and had a good workshop on this. Information could be available to other churches in search. Hosting Great Decisions discussions and Dec 2: Crisis in Syria.

Pathways Church - Have been keeping our kids busy. We are about halfway through with the OWL program for our 8-10 year olds, they also recently harvested from our two box gardens and fed the congregation a salad luncheon after the service. On another Sunday they teamed up with our Humanist covenant group to hear a presentation from a local beekeeper.

Sacred Journey Fellowship - Young adult meetings on Sunday evening - starting to run out of room. Averaging 25-30 people 18-30 years old.

Westside UU Church - Westside just held our Biennial Progressive Dinner and Auction called BUUTs and Bling at the Stampede Room of the Fort Worth Stockyards. It was very well attended and we are hoping to come close to the \$34,000.00 we raised in 2013! Our MSC committee is hard at work putting the finishing touches on our search packet for the prospective candidates looking for a full time church.

Want to expand your UU experience? How about getting involved with an NTUUC committee. Marla can give you more information.

Treasurer's Report

In the month of October, we had income of \$3,156 from general operations. After operations expense of \$2,195 for the month, we had a net income from operations of \$920.

In October we received a donation of \$15 for the Wi-Fi fund. We spent \$127 for Wi-Fi services. We also spent \$335 for paint for renovation of the upstairs rooms.

For the year to date period, we had a net income of \$9,317 from operations. Those included restricted amounts of \$5,862. The total change in cash for this month was \$474.

As of the end of October 2015, we had total cash of \$61,031 and our debt totaled \$29,114.

In October, we donated \$103 from the Share the Plate program to the Earth Day Festival.

Robert Shelton, Treasurer

The Adult Forum



Each Sunday morning folks gather at 10 for the Adult Forum. The programs are varied, the ideas are always intriguing and thought provoking.

If you have an inkling to expand your horizons but don't want to spend the money for Lumosity, why not give the Forum a try. You won't be disappointed!

December's Birthdays

- 03 – Matt Schulze
- 04 – Donna Toerper
- 07 – David Lawrence
- 16 – Jason Harbour
- 17 – Amy Hoffman-Shehan
- 18 – Jennifer Schwichtenberg



UUJam ~ Friday, December 4th

Please mark your calendars & plan to attend our last FFMC-UUJam of the year on Friday, December 4.



We will officially start at 7 but if most prefer to begin earlier we can. We will need to discuss changing the time & day of the group for those members not wanting to drive in the dark.

Contact Jan at (972.897.5796) to confirm your place in the music circle...a listening audience is warmly welcomed as well.

Work Party ~ Saturday, Dec 4th



The Anthony Room, F. Church Library and the hallways on the third floor have been painted. On Saturday morning help is needed to restore the rooms and put all the books back!

It shouldn't take more than two hours. We'll work from 10 – noon. Please come help.

Booked for Lunch ~ Thursday, Dec 10th

Thinking of giving a book to someone this year? The booked for lunch group is a splendid place to learn what others from Red River have been reading, or plan to read.

The group is informal and rather than discussion a single book or article, folks talk about different books and why they enjoyed them – without any spoiler alerts – so you won't be disappointed to learn "the butler did it in the library with the candle stick". 1 PM, at church.

Leaders

Board of Trustees

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

Committee on Ministry:

LD Clark, Carole Harner, Gerry Shehan

Team Leaders/Members:

Adult Forum: *Gil*
 Building & Grounds: *Marilyn*
 Communications: *Doug*
 Finance:
 Good Times:
Carole, Marilyn & Marion
 Long Range Planning:
Amy, Gil, Marilyn
 Membership:
 Nominations: *Amy, Kat, Lanan*
 NTUUC Rep: *Marla*
 RE Team: *Dan, Tommi*
 Safe Congregation Panel: *Dan*
 Social Action: *Gil*
 Ways & Means:
 Worship:
Dan, Doug, Faye, Jan, Marla

Food for *In-Triumph*

WOW! Our tiny congregation contributed a total of 148 separate food items, along with sheets, pillows, towels and men's clothing to help the residents of In Triumph have a wonderful Thanksgiving.

The NAACP reported that Red River's bounty made a huge difference and was deeply appreciated by everyone.

Well done, everyone!

Chalice Circles / Interest Groups

BOOKED FOR LUNCH, an informal book discussion group which usually meets the second Thursday of the month at 12:30 p.m. in the Emerson Room, on December 10th. Facilitator Carole Harner.

GREEN TEAM, an Environmental Action Team. The Team will meet on Thursday, December 10th at 2 p.m. at Amy Hoffman-Shehan's home. Facilitator: Amy Hoffman-Shehan.

MOVEABLE FEAST, a Cooking and/or Eating Circle meets monthly. In December the Festers are joining the congregation at Dan Althoff's Holiday gathering in his new home. Fri. Dec 11th @ 3 pm.. Facilitators: Elbert & Marion Hill.

UU JAM, an acoustic music circle for musicians, singers & music loving listeners meets the Friday, Dec 4 at 7 PM at the home of Jan and Ken Fletcher. Bring your instrument, song books, beverage of choice & a snack to share. Please email your place in the circle: [uujam \[+ suffix\]*](mailto:uujam[+suffix]*). Facilitator: Jan Fletcher.

Contact Us

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

mail to:

PO BOX 1806
 DENISON, TX 75021-1806

◆ ◆ ◆

How to reach us:

Email: [info\[+ suffix\]*](mailto:info[+suffix]*)

Phone: 903.231.3232

Web: www.rruu.org

E-News: [announce\[+suffix\]*](mailto:announce[+suffix]*)

Facebook:

RedRiverUnitarianUniversalistChurch

*Church email suffix: @rruu.org