



Red River Ramblings

The Monthly Newsletter of Red River Unitarian Universalists ♦ Denison TX ♦ Vol 22, No. 3 ♦ June 2020

SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 2020 *Join us at 11:15 am on our [YouTube channel](#)*

“THIRTY YEARS OF BEING AN ‘OPEN & AFFIRMING’ CHURCH”

The Rev. Salvatore Sapienze, *preaching* [video message]

The United Church of Christ called their “Welcoming Congregation” churches “Open & Affirming” churches. The Douglas, MI United Church of Christ has been an open and affirming congregation for thirty years. We will watch their minister’s inspiring message in celebration of Gay Pride month. *The Reverend [Salvatore Sapienza](#) is the pastor of Douglas UCC. Pastor Sal is a graduate of New York University (NYU) and All Faiths Seminary in New York City. He is a former Catholic monk and an ordained interfaith minister with Privilege of Call in the United Church of Christ.*

SUNDAY, JUNE 14 2020 *Join us at 11:15 am on our [YouTube channel](#)*

“I CAN’T BREATHE!”

The Rev. Abhi Janamanchi, *preaching*

In this time of significant danger and real possibility, a moral fusion movement is necessary to revive and advance our most precious Constitutional and moral values. Join us to learn more about the Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival’s efforts and the digital Mass Meeting & Assembly on June 20, 2020. *The Rev. Janamanchi has served as Senior Minister of Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church in Bethesda, MD since 2013.*

SUNDAY, JUNE 21, 2020 *Join us at 11:15 am on our [YouTube channel](#)*

“FOOD JUSTICE IN A GLOBAL PANDEMIC”

The Rev. Dr. Mark Y.A. Davies, *preaching*

Food Justice in a Global Pandemic is an exploration of issues of food insecurity and food access during the global pandemic and what local communities can do to help the most vulnerable.

SUNDAY, JUNE 28, 2020 *Join us at 11:15 am on our [YouTube channel](#)*

“GRACE THAT MUST BE BELIEVED TO BE SEEN”

The Rev. Dr. Christine Tata, *preaching*

Quick quiz: When you look at a Jackson Pollock painting, do you see: 1) random paint splatter; 2) fine art; or 3) a crime scene? Ask the same question about the whole universe and before you know it, you’re doing theology. Each of us assembles a mental image, a collage, out of the infinite array of moments, things, and thoughts that we encounter, and that’s our reality. But no two are ever alike; how could they be? Where someone sees no work of art, why would they see an Artist? Ponder these and other gentle questions with the Rev. Dr. Christine Tata on Sunday.

THE 2020 SPRING CONGREGATIONAL MEETING MEETS FOLLOWING THE MORNING ASSEMBLY STARTING AT 1 PM VIA ZOOM

The packet of meeting documents will be available on Monday, June 15. The membership will receive a special email with instructions how to join the meeting. Friends are warmly invited to attend as well by sending an email to president@redriveruu.org.

Jim's Jabber

We could use additional help running all the various duties for our church. Some of the positions that stand out are:

- *AV Team is seeking more people to help put together the Sunday service recording and to be technical support for the various online Zoom meetings.*
- *Worship team is looking for researchers that can help us find appropriate available sermons, speakers, and music (this can be done using Google searches) for our online services.*
- *We are still looking for an Outreach Coordinator. This position is even more important today with the building closed and doing virtual services via YouTube and meetings and gatherings via Zoom. We need someone that can help us think out-of-the-box and come up with ways to not only help our members stay connected but also help us attract new people. Marketing and sales experience is not required, but would be helpful.*
- *I think all committees and teams could use help so if there is a particular one you enjoy or feel is important, please contact the team leader and offer to help.*

We are now using Zoom to run the **Adult Forum** and **Conversations sans Calories**. The information on how to connect to these is posted on our website in the Events area. There are also some Teams and Committees that are meeting on Zoom, but not all. Please contact Doug or me so we can get you setup to have your meetings on Zoom.

Don't forget that our Spring Congregational Meeting will be held via Zoom on June 28, starting at 1 pm. We will approve the new budget, committee reports and elect some church leaders. If you can't make the meeting be sure to fill out the online ballot or assign your proxy to someone that will join us on Zoom.

I hope everyone is staying sane and safe and wearing your masks when you go out. I heard an interview with a medical professional who said that this virus has a protective case, but that this case easily dissolves in soapy water. So wash your hands often. You are not just washing the virus off you, you are also killing it. ❖

Take care, keep safe
and Keep on Truckn' -

Jim

We Did It, Folks!

Connections

IT'S WHY WE'RE HERE

A huge thank you to everyone who answered the call and made a financial pledge for the July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021, fiscal year. We wrestled with line items in the budget, did some practical guestimates, and felt a goal of \$34,660 would reasonably balance next year's budget. The final pledge total came close enough for us to work our financial magic. We will be able to present a balanced budget at the June 28th Spring Congregational Meeting.

While we ended up \$1,550 under the goal with the building closed for several months, if not a full year, we believe we'll manage knowing if situations change and our projected non-pledge income radically changes because we're closed, we can always come back to the congregation and revisit our finances.

We're here for all the various ways our tiny congregation makes connections. Without the only liberal religious community in Texoma, our lives would not be as fulfilled. Y'all rock! ❖

The Three Dudes
Dick, Jim, and Doug

Leadership Candidates

The nominating committee presents the following slate of candidates for congregational consideration at the June 28th meeting:



Jim Holmes, *president*
2020-2022



Jan Fletcher, *treasurer*
2020-2022



Marla Loturco,
committee on ministry
2020-2023



L. D. Clark, *nominating*
2020-2023

'UU World' now twice a year

The UUA's budget for Fiscal Year 2021, which begins in July, cuts *UU World's* publishing schedule from four issues a year to two. The magazine has also ended its digital subscription service, which provided tablet-friendly and downloadable PDF versions of the magazine, but which never attracted more than 200 subscribers.

UU World, a benefit of membership in a UU congregation, will be published and mailed to members **each September and March**. Additional content will continue to be published year-round at uuworld.org.

[Subscriptions](#) for nonmembers in the United States have been reduced to \$15 a year, with discounted rates for multiyear subscriptions. ❖

Treasurer's Report

In the month of April, we had total receipts of \$1,764.93, which included previously unrecorded interest earned on savings and cd's which the bookkeeper we previously used had not recorded. Expenses for the month totaled \$3,244.30. The result was an excess of expenditures over receipts for the month of March of \$1,479.37.

As of April 30, 2020, we had \$2,771.05 available in checking, a total of \$65,120.95 in all savings accounts and a total of \$14,717.67 in Certificates of Deposit. Pledges received by mail in our PO Box are being deposited weekly. All renovation loan payments required to be made this fiscal year have been paid on schedule. ❖

Dick Powell, *treasurer*



June Birthdays

09 - Richard Newlin

Were you born in June? Send the day in June that you were born and next year you will be listed as well. Currently your birthday is not in the church database. ❖

Upcoming Zoom Meetings

Welcoming Congregation - June 7 @ 1 pm

Board of Trustees - June 14 @ 1 pm

Spring Congregational Meeting - June 28

Common Read for June

A special UUA president's column
A message to white Unitarian Universalists.
[Susan Frederick-Gray](#) | 6/4/2020

I wanted to write to my sibling white UUs, to share how my attitude towards policing has dramatically changed over the last fifteen years.

As I watch the news unfold this week, I feel heartbroken and angry. I also feel something else—trauma. As I watched the videos of police cars in New York City and Columbus, Ohio, drive into crowds of people, I felt in my body the fear and trauma of what it was like to be [on the streets in Charlottesville, Virginia](#), when the police stood and allowed armed white supremacist, white nationalist, antisemitic, neo-confederates to attack peaceful, faithful counter-protesters who had come to witness against their hatred.

I also notice how my left arm is hurting. The one that Sheriff Joe Arpaio's deputies tried to break, the one that had scars on it for years from the zip tie handcuffs they used on me when I was [arrested in Phoenix, Arizona, in 2010](#).

These stories I share of witnessing and experiencing police violence are minor compared to the lived experience of many Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color in the United States. Even the violence I experienced in the Maricopa County jail was minor compared to that of the young Latino man arrested with me who was beaten unconscious by sheriff's deputies. My experience is minor compared to the violence Black Americans have experienced for generations at the hands of police, at the hands of white people, at the hands of slave holders.

My experiences are minor in comparison, and I only experienced them because I chose solidarity with communities of color. That choice taught me a lot about whiteness, about policing, and about the United States.

Listening to and organizing with Black and brown communities in Phoenix, I learned how my neighbors lived under a virtual police state. Their neighborhoods were constantly surveilled by police, and in Southern Arizona, by Border Patrol as well. Police, sometimes in riot gear, would move through neighborhoods and apartment buildings knocking on doors, stopping pedestrians and people in cars and on bikes, asking for documentation. Listening to Black organizers in Cleveland, Ohio, as part of the Issue 1 campaign in 2018, the story was similar. Police surveillance is constant in many communities of color in the United States.



[Related story](#)

The president of the Unitarian Universalist Association reflects on the spiritual challenges of confronting the resurgence of American white nationalism.

[THIS IS NO TIME FOR A CASUAL FAITH](#)

As white people—especially those with class privilege—we are taught that police protect and serve the community. They are seen as “helpers.” We teach our children if they are lost, in danger, or need help, to look for a police officer. And largely, through most of my life, this narrative has matched my experience. However, the killings of Tamir Rice and Aiyana Stanley Jones are devastating examples of why Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color (BIPOC) cannot teach their children this.

Uprisings are occurring across the country because police have never been “helpers” for most Black people in the United States, nor for most Indigenous people and people of color. As with so many experiences of inequity in this country, white supremacy shields white people from harm while teaching us to disbelieve the lived experience of our Black, brown, and Indigenous neighbors.

The system of policing in the United States evolved directly from slave patrols: groups of armed white men authorized to protect white wealth and white safety, and to control and destroy Black lives. It’s not coincidental, then, that police have frequently been involved in lynchings and the violent enforcement of segregation, including the segregation that persists today. It’s not coincidental that Ahmaud Arbery was murdered by a former police officer, or that we are seeing footage of police literally crushing crowds of Black protesters under squad cars and horses.

The recent news stories of Amy Cooper, a white woman who called the police on a Black man in Central Park when he asked her to follow the rules and keep her dog on a leash; and of Tom Austin, a white man, calling the police on Black tenants in his own building, illustrate exactly what policing in America is: a system rooted in anti-Blackness that assumes and reinforces expectations of white innocence and Black guilt.

What we must come to understand as white Americans is the fundamental role policing plays in upholding white supremacy. The uprisings we are witnessing around our country grow out of generations of injustice for Black communities: voter suppression, environmental racism, mass incarceration, inadequate healthcare, divestment from schools, lack of employment and housing, and more. As the people rise up, sparked by the police crushing the life out of George Floyd in the middle of a pandemic that is killing Black people at disproportionate rates, the response from police and the state has been to yet again try to silence through force the people crying out for liberation, crying out for justice.

This brutal, militarized policing system is necessary to maintain such widespread disparity and racial and economic inequality. It is a tool of oppression and not of safety.

As I write this, I am also thinking about the people I know who serve in law enforcement. These include members of congregations that I have served whom I love. I hold your humanity, your worth and dignity. This is a corrupt and dehumanizing system that is damaging to those who are agents of it and those who are its victims. I think of the words of Julia Ward

Howe, who wrote the Mother’s Day Proclamation designating Mother’s Day as a day when women should leave their homes and all gather in the streets demanding, “Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy, and patience.”

Howe was mobilizing women to demand an end to war. And today, we, white UUs, need to join the Black-led, people of color-led organizing that is demanding we defund policing, defund the system that has created mass criminalization and mass incarceration of millions of Black, brown, and Indigenous people. This system has devastated Black, brown, and Indigenous communities; it has eroded any pretense of democracy, and it has starved our communities of the resources they need—we all need—to thrive.

This system is deadly, and it chokes off the ability of our communities to live and thrive. While our law enforcement, prison, and military investments grow, education, housing, healthcare, and social safety net programs starve. Indeed, we have chosen criminalization to respond to poverty, addiction, mental health issues, and homelessness—all symptoms of the larger divestment from public goods driven by the profit motives of capitalism.

We must demilitarize and defund the police. We must defund and de-carcerate the jails. The notion that these systems create safety is a lie of white supremacy, capitalism, and colonialism. Just as we witness in the commentary on the present uprisings, it has always been to protect wealth and property—not life, and certainly not Black lives. We can’t reform the current system of policing in America. We must find a new way to keep one another safe.

When I first began to understand this, I realized I had been so shaped by the idea that policing was inevitable that I was unable to imagine any other way. However, when I think back to what kept me safe in Charlottesville, it was the people I was on the line with who helped me run to safety. It was also the anti-fascists, Antifa. They put themselves between the clergy and the white supremacists charging for us and bought us time to run. It was the business owners who opened as safe houses so we could get off the street, get water, and be cared for. It was the volunteer first responders in the streets and the clergy who helped get people care after the car drove through the crowd, injuring many and killing Heather Heyer. In Phoenix, it was the safety teams trained by Puente Arizona in de-escalation and community care and the volunteer medic teams that kept people safe. More and more our congregations are using this model, and we’ve done it at General Assembly, too: training people to look out for the well-being, the care, the wholeness, and the safety of community without police.

There are a lot of brilliant, heart-centered leaders who have been imagining alternatives to our current systems of policing and prisons for a long time. You can see some of their work linked in the resource list below this message.

I recognize that this may be to some a very radical message; it would have felt that way to me fifteen years ago. I

remember all the questions I had when I first seriously considered that we might need to entirely dismantle the system of policing in this country—all the “what about when’s” and “but how would we’s”. And if you are encountering these in yourself as you read this, I want to invite you and all Unitarian Universalists, and in particular fellow white UUs who have mostly experienced the police as operating in your interests, to pause, and breathe, and open your hearts as you—as we—begin to deeply interrogate this system.

[Related resource](#)

The Unitarian Universalist Association denounces anti-Black racism and the inherent violence of policing.



[STOP CALLING THE POLICE AND START ERADICATING ANTI-BLACKNESS](#)

Pay attention to what is unfolding in the streets and in the halls of power. Stay focused on the actions of the police and the military. If you are committed to nonviolence, ask yourself how this violent, dehumanizing system could ever bring peace or justice. Ask yourself what it would take for us to never have another George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, or Tony McDade killed by police. What would it take for us—individuals, congregations, communities—to make a commitment not to call the police again? What does care and safety and well-being look like when safety is not reliant on militarized police and prisons?

I invite you in this moment to lean into your spirit, to pray in whatever way you do, to ask what your faith calls from you in this moment.

This is a time in our country when so many insidious forces seek to divide us and give us false and empty dichotomies that only lead to more destruction. We need to remember our Unitarian Universalist values in this time. To remember that we are one in creation, one in God, as our Universalist forebears said. We are in this together, and we need each other to survive. These are frightening, devastating times. How we show up in this time, and where we put our hearts, resources, and commitments will define who we are and what the future holds. We must all find ways to support the uprisings. We must find the sources within ourselves to give us courage in this moment to resist, to risk, to sacrifice for this movement that needs all of us to succeed. ❖



[Susan Frederick-Gray](#)

The Rev. Dr. Susan Frederick-Gray is the ninth president of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). She was elected in June 2017 to a six-year term after serving congregations in Phoenix, Arizona; Youngstown, Ohio; and Nashville, Tennessee. She lives with her husband, the Rev. Brian Frederick-Gray, and their son.

Our Leaders

Board of Trustees

Jim Holmes, *President*
Lisa Cates, *Vice-President*
Dick Powell, *Treasurer*
David Dyer, *Secretary*
Sabra Jones, *Trustee*

Committee on Ministry:

Dan Althoff, Elbert Hill, Marla Loturco

Nominating:

Kelly Cofield Dyer, L.D. Clark, Amy Hoffman-Shehan

Team Leaders/Members:

Adult Forum: *Sabra*
Aesthetics: *Carol, Doug, Joyce*
Caring Circle: *Kelly*
Communications: *Doug*
Endowment: *Carolyn, Dick, Doug*
Facilities: *Jim (until we find someone)*
Finance: *Jim, Dick, Doug*
Grounds: *Marilyn*
Long Range Planning: *Jim, Marilyn, Robert, Ronda*
Membership: *Marion*
NTUUC Rep: *Marla*
RE Team: *Tommi*
Safe Congregation Panel: *Dan*
Social Action:
Welcoming Congregation:
Worship: *Dan, Doug, Marla, Robert*

Contact Us

Red River Unitarian Universalists
515 North Burnett Ave
mail to:
PO BOX 1806
DENISON, TX 75021-1806



How to reach us:

- Phone: 903.231.3232
- [Mobile App](#)
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