

November 2025 ♦ Vol 16, No 5

November 2, 2025 ~ 11:15 am

Blessed Memories

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

It is good from time to time to reflect on the lives of all those who have come before us as a way of recognizing their continued presence with us through memory and influence. Together we can learn from their mistakes, remember the positive good they have done, and celebrate all that is better about our world because they were a part of the human community.

November 9, 2025 ~ 11:15 am

Religion Without Blinders

George Novak, *guest speaker*

When my 9-year-old grandson volunteered to be baptized in 2019, I reacted with mixed emotions. I worked through my ambivalence by composing a letter to him that included congratulations and cautions. The letter is based on my experiences with organized religion, reading history, and otherwise paying attention. *Read George's bio, on page 2*

November 16, 2025 ~ 11:15 am

Transgender Day of Remembrance

Thomas Garland*, *speaking*

Transgender Day of Remembrance is observed annually on November 20th. It is a day to remember the people whose lives were taken or lost due to transphobia, and to bring attention to the violence that the transgender community experiences all too often. Our current administration has incessantly worked to promote distrust, hatred, and all manner of violence against transgender people. Today, we explore the various (and numerous) examples of this bigotry, and the damage and death toll it brings. *Read Tomas's bio, on page 2*

November 23, 2025 ~ 11:15 am

Gratitude and Wonder

Our Worship Team, *leading*

This Sunday's Morning Assembly is based on two worship experiences: *Gratitude & Wonder, a Participatory Worship Service* by Liz Weber and *A Cider and Cornbread Communion* by Dawn Skjei Cooley. In our time together we'll explore gratitude and wonder through our own experiences. Rather than a discourse, there'll be time for personal reflections, storytelling, and for creating something to give away. If you're joining from home, you might want to gather some supplies - a journal or paper, art supplies, or a greeting card. We'll conclude with the Cider and Cornbread Communion.

November 30, 2025 ~ 11:15 am

Finding Gratitude and Justice in Beloved Community

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

It is difficult to feel a sense of gratitude in chaotic times like these. One may even feel a sense of guilt for feeling gratitude in the midst of so much injustice, and yet we still are grateful for the persons and communities working to do good in the world. This discourse will reflect on how gratitude and justice might be held in creative tension with one another as we cultivate beloved community together.

Speaker Bio's...

Meet George Novak, in his own words ...

Before my retirement, I was a Principal Systems Engineer at Lockheed-Martin. I spent 6 years with Motorola as Distinguished Member of Technical Staff. I also did stints as a consultant. Early on, I worked as a machinist and an inspector for Mack Trucks, General Dynamics, and a few other manufacturers. I'm having a wonderful retirement and had a fortunate career due to lots of lucky breaks and 11 years of company-paid night school, which culminated in an Industrial Management MBA from the University of Dallas.

My spouse, Eva, and I have two daughters, a son, and three grandsons. Eva and I built our cordwood retirement home in Soper OK with the aim of minimizing our carbon footprint (and utility bills) through use of solar power, a geothermal HVAC system, and compulsive attention to insulation. We're currently managing the Party in Choctaw County, OK.

I was adopted through a foundling home by two extraordinary people and raised in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Johnstown was a coal and steel producing center until the early 1970's. My parents (and much of Johnstown) were first- and second- , raised through the Great Depression

My adoption was conditional upon my being raised as a Roman Catholic. I am now a 'once-upon-a-time Catholic'. Fair warning: The old saying, "I don't know much about art, but I know what I like" covers my expertise on religion and morality. So, here we go on November 9th.

Meet Thomas Garlaand

Thomas Garland was born and raised in Sherman, TX and holds a deep love for his local community. He knows the effect laughter can have on a person's spirit, and in these trying times, makes it his mission to get everyone around him laughing. Thomas spends his days pursuing his creative endeavors, as well as keeping a close eye on current events pertaining to the LGBTQ+ community.



A Personal Reflection

By Marla Loturco

(Member since April 2008)

I share this out of deep love and concern for our congregation:

If Red River Unitarian Universalist Church does not find more volunteers to help sustain our work, our church will not survive in the long run.

This may not be a popular opinion, but it comes from experience and care. I believe it's something we all need to hear and consider honestly.

Here are some realities that many small congregations, including ours, face:

1. Churches that are not growing are in decline.
2. Congregations composed primarily of members over 70 are often in decline.
3. Churches without ministers and with worship teams lacking depth struggle to sustain vitality.
4. When leadership roles go unfilled (for example, Vice President), the church is in decline.
5. When members and friends do not consider regular Sunday attendance important, decline sets in.
6. Small churches where fewer than 70% of adults participate in service or leadership roles are in decline.
7. When communication breaks down—when newsletters and updates don't flow between teams, decline follows.
8. When social time or food becomes more central than shared spiritual reflection, there's a problem.

These are warning signs, and we're seeing several of them now.

I was deeply disappointed by the small turnout at our most recent Congregational Meeting. As a lay-led congregation, and as part of a denomination grounded in congregational polity, the health of our church depends on the participation and engagement of its members. When only a few people show up, we lose the balanced, collective wisdom that makes us strong.

I share this not to criticize, but to call us back to commitment—to one another, to our shared values, and to the beloved community we have built together.

With care and concern,

Marla Loturco

Past: President, Vice President, Trustee at Large, Nominations Team, Committee on Ministry, Social Action Team, Green Team, NTUUC Secretary and Representative,
Current: Worship Team, Web Team, Membership Team, Earth Day Planning Team, Database Administrator

From the Board

In the months we have a Semi-Annual Congregational Meeting, we meet on the second Sunday instead of the third Sunday. As usual in these months, the board meeting was devoted to preparing for the Congregational Meeting and a little housekeeping.

The most exciting thing we have to report is that Pat Bley has agreed to be our Community Outreach Coordinator. We have long wanted to have a presence at more community functions. Now we can make that happen. Pat will investigate opportunities in Denison, Sherman, and Durant. She will also help us be present with some flair. Let's have some art to sell at art fests (I'm looking at you, you creative members and friends!), costumes for Doc Holiday and Dia de los Muertos, pollinator-friendly plants to sell at Earth Day, etc.

To help us even more, Jack is going to give us a class on Not Being Boring when we staff a booth! We'll post a date soon. I figure if I can muster 20% of her confidence and people skills, I'll be golden. I tried that a few years ago when we were part of the United Way's Maker's Mart. It was much more fun than just sitting there.

The Fall Meeting didn't cover any new ground, which is part of our problem. We have covered the same ground for 25+ years and—I know this is going to be shocking—nothing has happened in 20-some-odd of those years.

I asked for your dreams and visions of a thriving, flourishing church. Keep dreaming! And share! It's time to shake things up and reach beyond our comfort zone. Let's start by upping our energy levels at church. We are glad to be there and happy to be among our friends. Act like it! Put some pep in your step or face my wrath! Remember, even without Jack's tutelage, we are Not Boring People.

Both the Caring Committee and the Monarch Way Station are in serious need of help. The requests are posted separately.

As part of the Emergency Preparedness Team, I'm going to get recertified in CPR and First Aid. If you are interested in doing this, let me know soon so I can make arrangements. The more trained members, the better.

Last, there is an easy way you can help from home: Go to the church's and Rainbow Team's Facebook pages. Comment, like, and share posts. It greatly affects our algorithm. You can also write posts. Let's get our social media easier for seekers to find.

With love,
Jana Norris, president

2 Social Media Events

Social media Made Useful: Review What Works (and What Doesn't)

for North Texas UU volunteers! During this interactive session, we'll look at real examples from participating congregations and walk through simple ways to strengthen your online presence, so your social channels reflect the warmth, welcome, and values of your community.

Monday, November 17 – 7:00 pm via Zoom – meeting in the Gil Alexander room.

During this interactive session, we'll look at real examples from participating congregations and walk through simple ways to strengthen your online presence, so your social channels reflect the warmth, welcome, and values of your community.

Free for NTUUC-member congregations.



*Leading this event, **Nellie Wu** is a strategic marketer and creative problem-solver with many years of experience helping brands grow—from global names like BMW and MoMA to independent retailers in the quilting and craft industry. She's led B2B sales, built content strategies, managed digital campaigns, and produced educational video content, with a focus on what truly resonates with both people and product.*

She loves collaborating and good systems and brings clarity and momentum to every project. In her free time, you'll find her stitching a new improv quilt, exploring indie bookstores, or on the hunt for the world's next greatest bakery.

A Conversation on Mutual Aid with Special Guest (video) Dean Spade!

Dean Spade writes that “mutual aid is the radical act of caring for each other while working to change the world,” and that is exactly what this presentation and local events are all about.

We'll learn about what mutual aid can do, what it looks like, and how we can use our creativity to participate in it. We'll also learn about what values can ground us spiritually in this kind of community-based work.

Join the Red River Unitarian Universalist Social Action Team Sunday, November 23 at 1:30 in the adult forum room to watch a video presentation and take part in a discussion afterwards. This is an opportunity to enrich our lives. **Contact Jan Fletcher with any questions.**

Thanksgiving Dinner at church

For the last 3 years a small group of folks gathered at church at 2 pm on Thanksgiving afternoon for a Thanksgiving dinner. While the participation has dwindled, those gatherings felt good about assuring it happened.

I'm going to give it another year – “where two or more are gathered” is the motivation and anyone who wishes to join in is warmly invited.

The system is drop dead easy: 1) Sign up on the sheet hanging on both bulletin boards at church saying how many are coming with you, and what your food contribution will be. We gather at 2 pm – and depending on how many come, we'll be in the Carolyn Cameron room or the chapel.

So, dear ones, don't be alone on Thanksgiving. Come join me and anyone else who wants to come. Email me [here](#).

Doug

Help ~~Wanted~~ NEEDED

Our butterfly gardens need TLC. We are having a **Work in the Garden Day this Saturday, November 8th beginning at 10:00 am.** (Rain date 10/15.) The beds are in bad shape. They need to be put to bed for the winter with help for their root systems so they can grow strong this winter and burst forth in the spring. We need to dig in some compost, Azomite (trace minerals), bone meal, and dried molasses, then mulch them with cardboard and wood chips. I am supplying mulch and amendments. Bring cardboard to go under the mulch to suppress weed seeds. Even if you can't stay, please drop corrugated cardboard off. Some financial help would be appreciated, too. We pride ourselves on being a Monarch Way Station. Please come help so that we continue this tradition. It's more than I can do by myself. Let me know if you can. Jana Norris

The Caring Team desperately needs new members.

It is not usually very time-consuming. The team calls and/or sends cards to members who are ill, who have suffered the loss of a family member, etc. They visit members in the hospital. Some members of the Team drive folks to doctor's appointments. The Caring Team is the embodiment of beloved community. Contact Susie and share this ministering with our church family.

Money Matters

For the fiscal year-to-date period of July 1 through September 30, we had an operating net profit of \$9,420.40. This was due to the timing of pledge donations, partially offset by expenses for yardwork.

We continue to expect to have a loss this fiscal year due to lower pledges and additional expenses for yard work.

As of September 30, 2025, we had \$25,294.71 available to be used for general operations in our bank checking account, \$9,952.35 available in our bank savings account, and approximately \$22,307.49 available in our UUA savings fund. The amount available in the UUA savings fund varies based on market value. In addition, we have the following restricted amounts: \$4,871.08 in our bank savings account restricted for the Minister Fund; \$5,951.89 in our bank savings account held in trust for Kat Walston; \$318.00 in our bank checking account for share the plate; \$16,152.83 in the endowment fund; \$51,000.00 restricted in the UUA Savings Fund for minister compensation; and \$21,053.06 restricted to cover continuing repairs and renovations to the building and to increase visibility in the community in order to grow membership.

Carole Harner, Treasurer

Earth Day Update

Earth Day Festival planning committee meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 5:30 at the church. We have started planning for the 18th Annual Texoma Earth Day Festival, which will be held on April 18, 2026. The theme will be Planet vs Plastic. We are working on design ideas for the t-shirt in the hope that we can take orders in advance of the festival. We have added the event to local community calendars and festival websites. Registration is open for vendors and sponsors, and the registration forms can be downloaded from the festival [here](#). We are actively seeking workshop leaders, entertainers, and organizations to provide children's activities.

We would love to have more people on the planning team. If you are interested in joining us, please speak to Amy or show up at our next planning meeting 10/18..

SOME UU HUMOR TO FILL EMPTY SPACE

Why don't UUs sing very well? Because we're always looking ahead to the next line to see if we agree with it.

If you've given up on organized religion, you'll love Unitarian Universalism. UUs aren't that interested in heaven because they don't like gated communities.

UUs' favorite Christmas movie is "Coincidence on 34th Street." (Coincidence instead of miracle.

Our Non-Resident Poet

My Gospel

by Don Mathis

I believe in life, laughter, love, and all that –
a person you can count on to watch your back.

I think everybody should seek their own way
and no one has the right to force you to pray.

I support your freedom to do as you please
just so long as you don't hurt me or the trees,

for everything is precious on Planet Earth –
and I confirm and respect everything's worth.

I see the dignity of every person
and seek equity in human relations.

An aspect about my motivation
is my desire to increase social action.

I will engage to improve the common good
and I'll start right here in my own neighborhood.

Truth and meaning and the right of one's conscience
are keystones of my community's essence.

What is important in my association?
Liberty, Justice, and Human Compassion!

I always strive for democratic process
and I respect the web of all existence.

For I know we are all interconnected
and we're happier when we're all accepted.

Other minds may reject it but it's a key
to stay open to new possibilities.

Love is the spirit and service is the call.
This is my affirmation to one and all.

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Aesthetics Committee

The Aesthetics Committee has approved new locks for all of the restroom doors that will indicate whether the restroom is occupied or vacant. In addition to making it easier to know whether the restroom is occupied or vacant, the new locks will also be easier to use than the old slide locks.

The Aesthetics Committee is charged with approving donations to the church that could impact the look of our building and grounds. Members of the team discuss changes to our physical space before making any decisions. If you are considering the donation of an item to the church, please speak with Jana Norris or me.

Amy Hoffman-Shehan

5th Sunday Potluck Nov 30



*It's Potluck Sunday – Let's Feast Together!
We do this on the 5th Sunday of a month, and you
know what that means ~ it's Potluck Sunday!* 🌈

Bring a dish to share - savory or sweet, homemade, or store-bought - and join us after the service for a time of good food and great company. Whether you're a seasoned chef or a snack-bringer extraordinaire, there's always a place at the table for you.

Let's celebrate community, connection, and the joy of breaking bread together. See you at the table!

Rainbow Team Update

In October I delivered a message about National Coming Out Day and how it was so important to me in the context of my grandfather's bisexuality and his life in the closet. If you missed it, just check it out on our YouTube channel, Red River UU.

There are many closets in our lives – childhood abuse, trauma, victimization by others in power – and some are more private than others. While you don't necessarily have to scream your emergence to the whole universe at once, I hope you heard what you needed to rack open the door and begin to heal and live as your true, beautiful selves.

In October I volunteered at the Grayson PRIDE Halloween Drag Show – Scream Queens, Killer Heels, and it brought back lots of lovely memories. I tried to remember the first drag show I saw and I truly couldn't. I've seen so many, all over the US actually, and I've loved them all! So much talent and dedication in these beauti-

Continued on next page

ful souls. It takes a lot of work and money to be a drag queen and it's a passion that doesn't ever really pay for itself.

A bastion of queer expression, drag can come in many forms – trash, camp, and performance. There are pageants all over the world that are just like Miss America where the performers make lesbians fall in love with their femininity.

Grayson PRIDE has found some of that talent from our area and abroad (pardon the pun). Their next show will be in early 2026 and I'll be sure to keep you up-to-date. If you've never seen a show in person, you should plan to add it to your bucket list and fulfil it soon!

This month I am thankful for my Family of Origin and my Family of Choice. Life is all about connections for us social animals and we all need more true connections in our lives.

COMING DECEMBER 6TH – FRAMILY HOLIDAY CELEBRATION!! From 2-4 pm in the Sanctuary we will have a traditional holiday potluck for our Family of Choice and more! White Elephant Gift Exchange, Sweater Contests and more! Meats provided by the Rainbow Team and cooked by Jack. Put it in your calendars now!

Jack, Rainbow team lead

Tour Texoma Family Shelter

During the Fall Congregational Meeting folks expressed an interest in visiting the Shelter and the board has been working with the staff there to set up a date. Jack reports: *We're about to schedule the tour for the Grayson Family Shelter*. We have a long history of helping the shelter, from having their exec director speak during a Sunday Assembly, to giving their leaders space to hold board of trustee meetings without being overheard. Loof for more details in the UPDATE if the tour happens during November.

Decolonizing Thanksgiving

As we approach the Thanksgiving season, join us in exploring Bioneers' "Decolonizing Thanksgiving" — a powerful, justice-oriented toolkit that challenges traditional Thanksgiving narratives and centers Indigenous perspectives. Rooted in interfaith values of truth-telling and community, this resource invites us to reimagine gratitude through the lenses of land ethics, history, and accountability. Use this guide to deepen your personal reflection or as a small-group conversation starter: *How does my Thanksgiving practice connect with land, story, and responsibility?* Explore the full resource at bioneers.org/decolonizing-thanksgiving.

Our various teams

The first name is the team leader

Adult Forum: Jim, Amy, Cristin, Marilyn, Marion

Aesthetics: Amy, Jana

Audio Visual: Jim, Carole, Liz, Marla

Caring Circle: Susie

Choir: Marilyn, Bill, Cindy

Children's R.E. Teacher: Jack

Children's Clothing Swap: Amy, Cristin, Jim, Sherilyn

Communications: Amy, Doug, Marla

Earth Day Planning: Amy, Bruce, Cristin, Jan, Jim, Marla, Megan

Endowment:

Facebook Admin: Amy

Finance: Carole, Jim, Marilyn

Good Times Team: Marilyn, Amy, Andrea, Bill, Carole, Cindy, Elbert, Eva, George, Irene, Jim, Lisa, Liz, Marion, Pat, Samuel, Susie, Walter.

Greeters: Susie, Amy, Jack, Sherilyn

Grounds: Marilyn

Historian: Marla

IT Support: Jim

Membership: Susie, Amy, Doug, Marla

Minister Search: Jim, Liz, Marilyn, Marla, Walter

Monarch Way Station: Linn, Sherilyn, Susie

Moveable Feast: Susie, Amy, Bruce, Carole, Cindy, David, Doug, Irene, Jan, Jana, Joyce, Kelly, Liz, Marilyn, Marla, Michelle, Walter. This event, usually monthly, is open to everyone who wishes to participate. Speak with Susie if you're interested.

Music:

NTUUC Rep: Marilyn

Publications: Doug

Rainbow Team: Jack, Amy, Billie, Cristin, Jana, Jamie

Social Justice:

Strategic Plan: Jim, Bruce, Marilyn

TxUUJM Rep:

Web Team: Jim, Hannah, Marla

Worship: Marla, Eva, Marilyn, Megan, Susie

Worship Associates: Marla, Cristin, Jana, Marilyn, Megan, Thomas

Please Note: Changes happen. If your team's listing is wrong, email news@redriveruu.org with updates. Keeping this list as current as possible is important for us all. Thanx.