



Red River Ramblings

The Monthly Newsletter of Red River Unitarian Universalist Church ♦ Denison TX ♦ Vol 20, No. 5 ♦ August 2018

August 5, 2018

Morning Assembly - 11:15 am

A Beloved Community of Resistance and Resilience

The Rev. Dr. Mark Davies, *preaching*

Recently the chances have increased exponentially that the United States will go down in history as the worst global offender in abdicating its moral responsibility to preserve a livable planet. This greatest of all moral failures will be its most well-known contribution in the shortened history of human civilization, unless we do all in our power to stop it. It will take sacrifice, empathy, and loving kindness for all life; and it will require the formation of beloved communities of resistance and resilience.

New UU Orientation today – open to anyone wishing more information about our church. Meets 12:45-1:30 in the chapel.

Sunday, August 12, 2018

Morning Assembly - 11:15 am

Hope Lives Here

Annette Limoges, *Executive Director*
Grayson County Shelter, *speaking*

Grayson County Shelter, our neighbor at the end of the block, is a homeless shelter that is always open (24/7) and welcomes displaced families and singles from Grayson county and beyond (in both Texas and Oklahoma). The shelter is not a government agency of any ilk and relies on the goodwill donations of caring people, along with grants and sales from The Crowded Closet – that well named resale store next door – to cover all operating expenses.

Four times annually our congregation provides a home-cooked dinner for the residents and staff and in odd months, our Share The Bowl donations are contributed to the shelter. Many among us support The Crowded Closet with items no longer needed and regularly shop there. On Sunday we've invited Annette Limoges to come and tell us about the hope that lives around the corner from us.

Sunday, August 19, 2018

Morning Assembly - 11:15 am

Monarch Waystations and the 7th Principle

Linn Cates, *speaking*

As Unitarian Universalists, in our 7th Principle, we promise to respect the interdependent web of all life on earth. At our 2018 Spring Meeting we voted to create a micro-habitat for the threatened Monarch butterfly by creating a registered, certified Monarch Waystation. I will discuss the plight of the Monarch and what we can do in our own yards and communities to ameliorate the ongoing loss of native prairie, the Monarch's habitat.





Sunday, August 26, 2018

Morning Assembly - 11:15 am

Poetry Sunday

with Ron Wallace

Back again to share with us some of his poetry is Ron Wallace. He is an Oklahoma Native of Choctaw, Cherokee and Osage ancestry and is the author of seven volumes of poetry published by TJMF Publishing. He is a three-time finalist in the Oklahoma Book Awards. His work has been recently featured in "Oklahoma Today", "The Long Islander", "Concho River Review", "Cybersoleil journal", "Cobalt", "Red Earth Review", "Dragon Poets Review", "Sugar Mule", "Cross-timbers", "Gris-Gris" and a number of other magazines and anthologies.

-  Meditation ~ 9
-  Adult Forum ~ 10
-  Morning Assembly ~ 11:15
-  Conversations & Calories ~ 12:15



Jim's Jabber

The new Board held its first official meeting on July 15th with all in attendance. Some of the highlights of the meeting:

- Carolyn Cameron was appointed to the Endowment fund committee to join Dick Powell and Doug Strong.
- The Board is planning on having a retreat on Sept 8th. This will be a 10am-4pm meeting run by a facilitator at an offsite location to discuss UU things in general and some specifics of Red River. Will keep you posted on how this goes and the highlights of what was discussed.
- We talked about an article in the UU World utilizing different language and techniques for inviting people to attend UU gatherings. L.D. Clark proposed adding a music component to our 5th Sunday In 4 Lunch Potluck. He will speak to church membership and gauge interested participants.

Almost every Wednesday at 10am Doug and I meet for coffee at CJ's on Main Street in Denison. This is an open invitation to join us. We spend about half the time talking about church stuff and the rest is just babble, some even makes sense.

Our Monarch Waystation

At the spring congregational meeting on May 20, 2018, members voted to create a certified Monarch Waystation on the church grounds. We chose this endeavor as a 7th Principle congregational action for 2018/19. Included as a line item in the enacted budget was \$150 to cover some of the expenses we anticipated in creating and certifying the Waystation. Much of the labor required will be done by volunteers of which there were many by a show of hands. Many of the plants will be donated by members and friends who stated they have native plants they will share. A sign designating our lot as a certified, registered Monarch Waystation will be permanently displayed on the church grounds when certification is completed. Linn Cates was designated to lead the Waystation project and directed to work with Building and Grounds, chaired by Marilyn Alexander.

To date we have added 50+ appropriate host and nectar plants to the existing beds. We were spared

This week I discovered from our conversation that we have a Facebook page!! I'm not sure who was more surprised, me for finding out or Doug for learning that I didn't know about it. Anyway, after we both recovered from this information, I wondered how many of you out there have not seen it.

You can get to it instantly via the 'RedRiverUU' app by tapping the **more** option at the bottom of the **home** page, then the **Facebook** tab.

On Sunday afternoon, July 29th Linn Cates and I went to the First Unitarian Church in Dallas for the North Texas Unitarian Universalist Congregations' meeting and dinner for Board Presidents and Vice Presidents. This was a great opportunity for all to meet, greet and share information about our different congregations.

In November NTUUC is planning a big meeting to get feedback from the 13-member congregations regarding how best NTUUC can assist our individual churches in the near future. I will keep you posted as I find out more about this meeting. (Note: Our NTUUC rep, Marla Loturco, discusses this in more detail in her article in this month's newsletter.)

Finally, a shout out to Bruce Cameron for building two sets of steps to ease getting on and off the chancel stage. These look great and are very functional.

Jim

the labor-intensive work of digging a new plot for the Waystation by deciding to utilize the existing flower beds. Thanks to Marilyn for her vision and her timely involvement. Because of it we have been able to move quickly and will probably be spotting the migrating Monarchs this October already! And thanks to all the willing hands who have already dug in the dirt and those who have said they will. And thanks to those who dug up seedlings and transplants for us to plant at church. And thanks to the church members for voting to do this conservation work as an all-church endeavor.

All the new prairie plants have temporary signs giving the common name for each species. More permanent signage is in the design stage presently. As we all get more familiar with our native plants, we will want to expand pollinator habitat by planting native species in our own yards, fields, municipal grounds, workplaces, and schools.

Questions? Contact: [Linn Cates](#)

Come One, Come All

You are invited to attend three different North Texas Unitarian Universalist Congregations (NTUUC) events:

Equipped for Action – Training for UU Volunteers

1st Unitarian Church Dallas

August 11 from 8:30 to 4:15. FREE!

Come carpool and attend! Registration is available on the NTUUC website. Check with Marla if you have questions.

The Rev. Annie Foerster will be giving the kick off remarks entitled “Jumping In On Time!”

There are several topics with each one being a morning or afternoon session:

1. Spiritual Practices and Self Care, with Annie Foerster leading.
2. Side with Love social action will be presented by Rev. Nathan Hollister who leads a mission church Sacred Fire Unitarian Universalist in Central North Carolina.
3. There will also be a roundtable discussion on how Side with Love can be used in NTUUC and our individual congregations lead by Beth Ferree from Oak Cliff.
4. Intruder and Emergency Preparedness for those wondering about Security.
5. Small Group Ministries, and
6. Youth Ministry.

The First NTUUC Summit of Congregations

November 10, 2018. Save the date now.

Location TBA

This will be something new. We have never held a general meeting with all the congregations invited. This is an important event with some special questions being asked. Your input is desired and important. We want to make NTUUC an organization that can enhance our 13 congregations. Come help us decide how!

We'll explore

- What is a North Texas Unitarian Universalist Congregation?
- What could North Texas Unitarian Universalist Congregations be?
- What can bring us together.

Some suggestions which have been made already include:

1. Connection and training
2. Grow and Spotlight UU in North Texas
3. Social Justice
4. Big UU
5. Platform Endowment

Pride Parades in Dallas & Ft. Worth

Dallas: Sept 16, Fort Worth is Oct 8.

Planning is also taking place for the Pride Parades in Dallas and Fort Worth. Both have a good UU showing and you are invited to participate. More information will become available as the parade dates approach.

If you have questions or want more information, please contact Marla Loturco

Treasurer's Report

For the fiscal year ended June 30, 2018, we had total receipts of \$66,467.10, including the NTUU Grant of \$7,910.00. Pledges and weekly offerings increased \$6,826.66 compared to the prior fiscal year. Total receipts increased \$14,736.66, compared to the prior fiscal year.

Total expenditures totaled \$46,282.71, compared to \$45,896.12 in the prior fiscal year. The fiscal year just ended includes a \$10,473.66 addition to fixed assets, mainly the new elevator.

As of June 30, 2018, cash (including cd's, savings and checking) totaled \$84,061.80, an increase of \$15,532.14 over June 30, 2017. All required Renovation Loan payments have been made and are reflected in the financial statements.

All bank accounts have been reconciled monthly with no exceptions noted.

Dick Powell, *treasurer*

Making life easier

Want something to appear ...

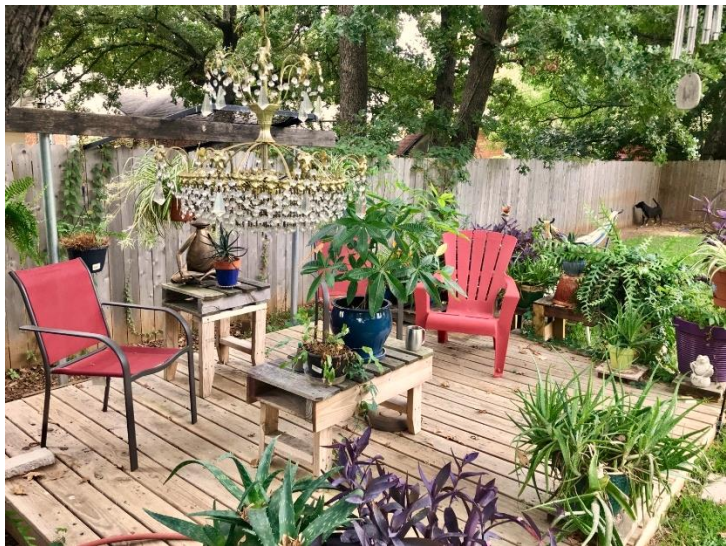
- On the **CHURCH APP?**
- In the **NEWSLETTER?**
- In the newly named **Wednesday UPDATE?**
- In the **SUNDAY MORNING PROGRAM?**
- On the church **CALENDAR?**
- Even updates for the church **DIRECTORY?**

This is **the only** email you need:

news@redriveruu.org

New Chandeliers

The next time you walk into church – look up! The foyer and the stairs to the upper lobby now have new matching chandeliers. And for those who are mourning the loss of the crystal tear drop chandelier, you spirits will be uplifted knowing it is enjoying a new life adorning the private outside living area in a loving member's home:



G.O.T.V. Banners

On July 29, 2018 the Bryan County Federation of Democratic Women utilized the Red River UU's **Get Out The Vote** "It only takes 6 minutes" Voter Registration Banner at the Durant Farmer's Market. Beginning at 9am volunteers helped with information, sample ballots and registrations. Finishing at Noon, Marilyn Alexander, Lydia Roper and Ronda DeCaire had 7 applications to turn in to the Election Board. The banner is a big part of a successful morning. Come visit us and the Market the first Saturday of every month thru October. Thank you, Red River UU for the use of the banner.

Ronda DeCaire
President BCFDW

The Everything Email

news@redriveruu.org

Use it to have your news appear ...

- ♦ On the **CHURCH APP**?
- ♦ In the **NEWSLETTER**?
- ♦ In the newly named **Wednesday UPDATE**?
- ♦ In the **SUNDAY MORNING PROGRAM**?
- ♦ On the church **CALENDAR**?

Friday Night Flicks ~ August 17



“FIRST REFORMED”

Our Friday Night Flicks for August is “First Reformed” starring Ethan Hawke, Amanda Seyfried and Cedric the Entertainer on **Friday, August 17 at 6 pm**. The run time is 1:53 hours

Some reviews of this month's selection:

There are powerhouse movies that knock you for a loop and take weeks to recover from – and then there is [Paul Schrader's](#) First Reformed. Not only is this faith-in-crisis drama one of the legendary writer-director's most incendiary films ever, it's one of the year's very best – a cinematic whirlwind that leaves you both exhilarated and spent. Like the screenplays he wrote for Martin Scorsese (notably Taxi Driver) and the tormented works he's made about the wages of sin (Hardcore, American Gigolo, The Comfort of Strangers, Auto Focus), Schrader – raised as a strict Calvinist – has never lost his obsession with the war between flesh and spirit.

Paul Traver, Rolling Stone

First Reformed asks us to take another look at what we think we know about politics, religion and other things we like to argue about, and asks nothing more than our quiet attention.

A. O. Scott, NY Times

This might sound convenient because writer-director Paul Schrader also wrote Taxi Driver, but this drama could be viewed as a companion piece to that classic.

Michael Ordon, Common Sense Media

Religion, First Reformed suggests, is easy. It's faith that's hard.

Paul Asay, Plugged In

Social Action Update

Most of our Social Action in July was with the LGBTQ Welcoming Congregations Committee. So far The LGBTQ Welcoming Congregation has completed:

- 2 Meet Ups - most recent was a picnic.
- A morning assembly: "What's Up With all the Pronouns?"
- Asterisks have been placed by authors/lyricists that noted "lifting up LGBTQ sources" (3 in July)
- the Sunday morning Greeters have been trained in being Welcoming

Our committee has people on it interested in:

- getting more LGBTQIA brochures
- outreach to colleges in the Fall
- Adult Forum education
- review the bylaws to align with what the UUA is doing with the national bylaws
- verbiage to add to the Facebook page and newsletter
- hosting a Bizarre Bazaar

Our next meeting is Sunday, August 5th @ 12:45 pm in the Church Library.

Everyone is welcome to join the committee, or sign up at [MeetUp](#) for future events.

Rebecca Crystal, *facilitator*

August Birthdays

- 06 - Linda Tracy
- 09 - Peter Nichols
- 10 - Lisa Cates
- 18 - Penny Armstrong
- 29 - Carolyn Fridley
- 31 - Doug Strong

Leader' Installation

During our morning assembly on July 15th we officially welcomed those elected at the Spring Meeting.

To the Board: Jim Holmes, Linn Cates, Dick Powell, Kelly Cofield-Dyer and L.D. Clark; Dan Althoff, Committee on Ministry; Amy Hoffman-Shehan, Nominating.

We also appreciated those completing their services:

Helen Schulze, president; Lanan Shelton, Nominating; Carole Harner, Committee on Ministry.



Moveable Feast ~ Aug 25

The August moveable feast will be an outing to Farmstead in Colbert (on the main street, 117 S. Franklin). We will gather at the restaurant on **Saturday, August 25th at 1 pm.**

Farmstead emphasizes fresh farm-to-table cuisine, gluten-free and vegetarian options. Since it is a kindness to let a restaurant know if several are coming at the same time, please email [Marion](#) to let her know if you're going to join the feast.

LGBTQ Welcoming ~ Aug 5

will meet on **Sunday Aug 5th @ 12:45** in the Church Library

Worship Team ~ Aug 12

The Worship Team took July off. They will meet on **August 12th at 12:45** to start working on the 2019

Endowment Committee ~ Aug 13

will meet on **Monday, August 13th @ 10 am** at the Cameron's home in Pottsville.

Board of Trustees ~ Aug 19

meet on **Sunday August 19 at 1 pm**, in the Chapel. Board meetings are open to all who wish to attend.

Our Common Read for August ~ 6 min read



[Rev Dr Sparky](#)

Looking for wisdom and insight and light and more time to read. I play with poems sometimes.

Jul 20

Why are you?

Think of the last time you were confronted with, or engaged with, someone whose worldview was clearly at odds with your own—drastically, 180 degrees, no-common-ground, different. An alien perspective. Your Uncle Al. Your Uber driver. Your prospective brother-in-law. What do you do? How do you deal with such people? How do you understand them? It's all but required now to speak of the “great divide” between factions in the U.S. and elsewhere, and to show how that divide is manifest in religious beliefs, political positions, and fundamental questions about the nature of humanity. So we approach each other warily and obliquely until we can't help ourselves and we burst out with, “Who even *are* you?” Understandable. But if we really want to communicate, we will ask, not “WTF?” but “Why are you who you are? How did you become the person you have become?”



Potential cherries. Photo by [Karolien Brughmans](#) on [Unsplash](#)

“Why, sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast...”

Most people—we’ll say True Believers—have a central Big Idea that also accrues ancillary or subordinate beliefs, based on the sources, affirmations, attributions, quotes, or memes that support the original Big Idea. The bibliography, if you will. And a True Believer may not be religious at all, but can be deeply committed to a worldview, -ism, or -ology. We are all True Believers in some context or another. But let me extend an

example in the religious realm (since that's what I went to school for).

Christianity has a central Big Idea that is articulated in a huge dataset of Biblical texts, apocrypha, church teachings, liturgies, social traditions, and personal experiences. Even when Christianity was only a few centuries old, that dataset had grown large enough to fuel schisms and arguments lasting all the way to now. In fact, the realm of Christian thought is so vast that it can support virtually any idea—usually just by quoting something in the Bible. [True: nearly every idea someone might propose could be justified or supported by some Christian source or precedent.](#)

Shakespeare had it right: “The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.” (And yes, that’s Shakespeare, not Moses.)

That’s why sometimes, a self-described Christian’s words or deeds may appear inconsistent with the Big Idea of Christianity. The non-believer then calls the True Believer to account, saying something like, “How can you, *as a Christian*, tolerate or support [insert today’s atrocity]?” I think this is the wrong question. It’s vague, confrontational, and unlikely to get a constructive answer. A better question for the True Believer would be more *specific*, like this: **“Out of all the diverse teachings of your faith, many of which are universal and/or admirable, why have you chosen to follow *this* one instead of *that* one?”**

See? We are not attacking their faith, or their sincerity, or even their Big Idea. We just want to know how they got to a particular conclusion. **Because, as we all know, the devil and the divine are in the details.**



Details in a Jainish temple. Photo by [Amisha Nakhwa](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Here is an example most everyone will find familiar. From the very beginning of the

slave trade in America, people cited various Bible passages that they claimed authorized the practice. So I want to ask why those Christian slaveholders in the U.S. **chose to follow** the Biblical passages that seem to support slavery **instead of those that seem to condemn it**. What motivated that choice? Some apologists would say they were insufficiently Christian; others surmise that they couldn't give up their power and position or racism. Possible, of course, but I can't really know without inquiring.

But this particular choice is *not* central to Christianity's Big Idea, which we know because numerous abolitionists fought to *end* slavery out of precisely their Christian faith. By now, most thoughtful Christians understand that there are *better* biblical teachings they can follow: "Look, Vern, here where Jesus says we are supposed to love our neighbors just as we love ourselves, and do unto others like we want them to do unto us, and all that. I think Jesus probably meant that stuff, don't you Vern? Vern?"

So the best answer for the True Believer would be to admit that the slaveholders had that part of it wrong. Their biases, greed, or self-serving frailties led them to adhere to the *worst* ideas in the dataset, not the best. A spiritually mature believer in any faith will pick out the good bits and de-commission the bits they no longer believe support their central Big Idea.

Moreover, in that growth process of reflection and selection, we may discover an even more fundamental Big Idea, beneath even the faith stance or the ideology. For instance, do we believe that human beings are essentially good, or essentially evil, or both? Is the universe a friendly, bountiful place, full of wonders, or is it a dangerous, hellish gulag where people like you are cheated and drained and victimized? Is the human drama one of sin and redemption? Attachment and enlightenment? Self and self-transcendence? If we get to that core, it may explain many of the choices we have made in a way that our professed ideology does not.



We all “cherry-pick” our beliefs, because we are adults who make choices that define who we are.

I'm a True Believer also, with a cherished Big Idea. My Big Idea is affirmed in countless texts, sources, experiences, and faith traditions, so that I suppose I could be described as a universalist, post-Christian, Jesus-following, agnostic, mystical, socialist, iconoclastic, libertarian, bleeding heart, nihilist. ([“No, Donny... nothing to be afraid of.”](#))

Life, they say. Photo by Mohammad Amin Masoudi on Unsplash

But I don't swallow everything whole, and I try to be aware of how *my own biases and frailties* determine *which* of those sources I will choose or follow. This is how many non-traditional spiritual seekers proceed. They look for the best of ideas, the greatness and the goodness of humanity's encounters with the divine, and they choose which ones touch their hearts, minds, and souls. They pick cherries to go in the bowl of their Big Idea, though they may also diversify with a banana or a kumquat.

So if you question how my smaller, ancillary ideas align with my Big Idea, I'm sure we will find some absurdities. I don't mind too much, though, because I know that among those myriad choices, nobody gets the right answer all the time. **Sometimes I have picked a**

sour cherry. I'm allowed to spit it out.

How I live my life: last cherry sweetest

Let me share a small compulsion I have, for a laugh and a last word. I adore cherries, when they are in season and ripe and huge and just as sweet as anything. I eat them whole, in luscious, luxurious mouthfuls. However, I know that even in a bowl of the sweetest cherries, there will also be sour ones—and *I can't tell by looking*. I want so badly to end on a sweet morsel, not a sour one, that I eat the last few cherries in *two* bites, not one. I look for the sweetest one, and set it aside, saving it for last.

*So maybe it's not about the cherries you pick,
my friends. It's about the ones you swallow.*

And the ones you save for last.



Tick tock... Photo by Dave on Flickr. Life, they say. Photo by [Mohammad Amin Masoudi](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Want to read other submission by Rev Dr Sparky? Here the link to her blog:
<https://medium.com/@mct2051>