

# Red River Ramblings

SEPTEMBER 2024 - VOL. 23, No. 3

Sunday, September 1, 2024 - 11:15 am

## Water Celebration

Don Mathis, *Guest Speaker*

Many societies past and present fall into patterns and practices that are not healthy and are good for persons or the planet. This discourse will explore what can be done at the local community level to express love, do justice, and provide support for one another during such challenging times.

Sunday, September 8, 2024 - 11:15 am

## The Problem of Patriarchy

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

The Problem of Patriarchy - to be a truly flourishing society with equal opportunity for all persons requires moving past the patriarchy to which so many still seem to be clinging.

Sunday, September 15, 2024 - 11:15 am

## God Is Not a Christian, Confronting Christian Nationalism

James Talarico, *guest speaker* (video message)

Texas State Representative, former middle school teacher, proud progressive, and eighth generation Texan, James Talarico delivered a sermon on October 22nd, 2023, at his home church about the dangers of Christian Nationalism. It has been viewed 686,100 times. The Worship Team thought we might find it interesting to say the least and his office gave their permission for us to use it as our discourse next week.

Sunday, September 22, 2024 - 11:15 am

## Reflections on Liberating Planet, People, and Religion

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

Joerg Rieger and Terra Schwerin Rowe have recently edited and published a series of essays looking at new ways

Sunday, September 29, 2024 - 11:15 am

## One Love: The Gospel of Marley

Cameron Young, *leading*

- In the year of his 79<sup>th</sup> birthday and the release of the biographical film "One Love", we explore the life, music, and words of Bob Marley, not only as musician, but spiritual leader and... prophet?



All Church Potluck Today - Bring a dish to share and plan on enjoying breaking bread together. Remember to place your food in the kitchen when you arrive.

We welcome Cameron Young back again. You can watch the trailer for the movie One Love [here](#).

Cameron Young (they/them) is a lifelong Texan and Unitarian Universalist who is currently serving on Congregational Life Staff for the Southern Region of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Prior to joining the UUA, Cameron served as a lifespan religious educator in Fort Worth, Texas for five years. Cameron has a Bachelor of Music from Louisiana State University and a Master of Divinity at Brite Divinity School where they are a recipient of the Sexual and Gender Justice certificate and the prestigious Walker Preaching Scholarship. A professional musician and classically trained singer, Cameron has performed in numerous operas, musicals, is a member and co-founder of DFW's Uptown Carolers, a professional Christmas caroling company, and also recorded with Grammy award winner Leon Bridges on his debut album. In their spare time, Cameron is an avid traveler, diehard coffee drinker.

A Unitarian is a person who believes in at most one God.

[Alfred North Whitehead](#)

# A Special Gift

## Merrilee Alexander Kick Donates \$50,000

by Marilyn Alexander

One Sunday about a month or more ago, Merrilee called me and asked how things were going. I said it was a rough Sunday. We found termites in the basement, had a roof leak and the AC wouldn't work in the chapel. My normal fix for the AC condenser was to replace the Buss Fuses, but that didn't work.

She said, "Oh dear, send me an estimate of what it will cost to fix the things that need fixing." We had let a lot of things go as we prioritized work that had to be done, with little funding. I asked Jim to put together a list and get estimates.

The repairs totaled: **\$22,420**, and I didn't know how much she would be willing to help with.

### Termites: \$8062

Remove stuff in basement over rotted wood flooring, remove wood flooring, remove sheetrock on outer walls and ceiling. \$1000

Termite removal. \$4773

Termite maintenance fee. \$723

Materials for basement floor. \$566

### Roof: \$6700

Cover the back door with a metal roof and posts. \$600

Cover back door with porch, labor. \$1000

Repair leak above front porch. \$200

Remove old shingles on back porch roof. \$2100

Clean the back porch and install new rolled roofing.

\$1000

Move AC Units from roof to small 2<sup>nd</sup> floor back porch. \$1500

Repair ceiling in kitchen caused by leak. \$300

### Front Porch: \$1000

Correct uneven tripping hazard

### Quote for Misc Needed Work: \$5052

Finish basement brick work

Repair grout on foundation walls inside and out

Clean gutters

Repair front steps

Paint railings

Fix kitchen counter near sink

Replace broken boards on back steps

Clean back porch and put down new cover

Materials

4 bags of grout. \$40

Box of plaster. \$12

Paint. \$300

### Kitchen repair: \$1606

Install subfloor and wood vinyl. \$1106

Raise counters or lower carts so they will fit after flooring install. \$500

She looked over the estimate and said that everything seemed reasonable, but she wanted some way to beef up our music and that there was a Bluetooth player piano that might help, but they were fairly expensive. I said that if she was going to add that much that our current keyboard would probably do what she wanted and that we really need to renovate the kitchen, since it was the least attractive room in the building. She said OKAY, but she wanted naming rights. She wanted my name on something. Jim came up with Marilyn's Mess Hall and the name stuck.

She was very generous, sending us a check for \$50,000 and with that, we were able to do everything as requested, plus actually pour concrete into the basement instead of installing gravel. We were able to get a new keyboard that had Bluetooth, and we can sell or trade in the other one. And we were able to get a new computer that was badly needed for the AV area, in addition to renovating the kitchen!

We had a great team working today to remove everything from the kitchen and put it in the Emerson Room. It only took 30 minutes after today's Morning Assembly.

Now the ceiling can be repaired, the plywood walls removed, new electrical service for a 240-v range, new tongue and groove flooring, insulation and sheetrock walls, new lighting, new bottom cabinets, and sink and faucet installed. The plumbing will need to be moved so the dishwashers and sink can be positioned more to the south. New counter tops will be installed. The sheetrock will be finished and painted. There will be no upper cabinets. We probably won't need them. We envision most everything being either in drawers or on the corner carousels.

Everyone who works in the kitchen is really excited about what this transformation will mean for us.

Thank you, Merrilee, you are a wonderful daughter and friend to Red River.



# Worship Invites You to ...

## Worship Possibilities!

Please join the worship team during our next meeting on September 25 @ 6:30 pm central time on our normal church zoom link.

Who should attend – anyone who is interested in conversing about our worship services. This is currently a one-time meeting and doesn't mean you have to join the Worship Team; however, you may do so if you are really interested.

I am asking everyone to set aside their current concept of what worship is and how we currently experience it at Red River UU.

We are going to look at possibilities. We have been doing various formats, but all basically have the same thought provoking, fairly quiet, energy level for most of our services.

So, with that in mind, let's talk about playing with possibilities. How can we get people interested enough to get off their phones playing games during the service?

At GA, this summer I watched a panel talk from a church in the northwest. They are much larger than we are, but they started a special type of service twice a month. They have about a 10-minute actual worship service (candles, chalice lighting, affirmation, song) and then break into multiple groups and do 20 min workshops led by members of the church on all kinds of topics. Maybe we could do this every fifth Sunday with three workshops offered twice.

Some congregations begin with a rousing special song every week. For some it is the same one, for others a different one.

Where could we find some younger speakers? What topics?

Bring your ideas and come join the conversation!

Please rsvp to [Marla](#) if you would like to attend, you will receive some additional information which might spark your creativity.

# From the President

## September

It is hard to believe September is already here. The kids are back in school; hay and wheat have been harvested; gardens are struggling through the end-of-summer heat; the Cowboys play their first regular-season game on the 8th, and the summer heat should end sometime this month.

Pumpkin spice everything is available everywhere. Days have been getting shorter since the summer solstice. That doesn't speed up as we approach and pass the fall equinox, but it sure feels like it does.

We have been busy here at Red River UU. Some committees have been in flux. David and I agree that serving on both the Board and the Minister Search Team is an awful lot and are stepping down from the Search Team. Two more volunteers are needed. If you are interested, see Jim. Replacement members will be voted at the fall Congregational Meeting.

Marla and I both presented the sermons we wrote as part of The Shared Pulpit, a course offered by the UUA. I recommend it to anyone who wants to improve their writing, public speaking, and/or understanding of worship.

We have a choir! You know what they say about giving the busiest people the new project. I don't know how Jan, Marilyn, Cindy, Bill, and Doug find the time, but I am so glad they do. Megan has even managed to sing with the choir and serve as Worship Associate—on the same Sunday!

Have a wonderful September.

Jana Norris, *president*

# Minister Search Team

There is no interview activity on our open minister position so the team is currently working on a better list of questions that we need to ask. We also feel that the team should not have any active Board members on the team so we will need to replace 2 positions on the team. Marla, Marilyn, and Jim have said they will remain on the team. A more detailed report will be presented at the Fall Congregational Meeting.

Jim Holmas

# Fall '24 Common Read ...

From the Editor's Desk ... Friends, as we find ourselves starting the third month of the '24-'25 congregational year, I'd like to offer selected "Common Read" articles that *"express our shared covenant as UUs through the seven inseparable and deeply interdependent shared values, all centered around love"* which Marla Loturco shared during last Sunday's Morning Assembly.

To that end, I offer you Our Fall Common Read:

*"Inside the Trump Plan for 2025"*

from the July 22, 2024, issue of *The New Yorker*

It is available in 6 formats:

- ❖ Read it as PDF format [here](#) - full pages
- ❖ Read it in PDF format [here](#) - 2 columns per page
- ❖ Read it as a WORD docx [here](#) - 2 columns per page (fewer pages)
- ❖ Read article the Jul 22, 2024 New Yorker magazine [here](#)
- ❖ Listen to the article wherever you get your podcasts (Search the title)
- ❖ Fetch a printed copy from the literature rack in the foyer at church

For those who wish. We will meet after the Morning Assembly on Sunday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> at church, to discuss the article and our reactions. Open to all who have read the article, observers are welcome to come and listen. DMS, *editor*

# It Happens in September

## every SUNDAY

- **Adult Forum - 10-11 am**
- **Morning Assembly - 11:15-12:15**
- **Conversations & Calories 12:15-1 pm**

## every WEEK

- **Mondays - Overeaters 6-7 pm**
- **Tuesdays - Spiritual Perspectives 6:30-8 pm**

## DURING THE MONTH

- **Sept 08 - The Rainbow Team meeting 1-2 pm**
- **Sept 08 - Board Games 2-5 pm**
- **Sept 15 - Board of Trustees 1-2 pm**
- **Sept 21 - NEWSLETTER DEADLINE - 10 pm**
- **Sept 25 - Worship Possibilities - 6:30 via Zoom**

# Earth Day 2025!

The Planning committee for the Texoma Earth Day Festival meets the 2nd Thursday of the month at 6 pm. Anyone who is interested in joining the team or sitting in is welcome to attend.

The 2025 festival will be April 26. We will share the venue with the Sherman Symphony Orchestra, whose spring concert will be at 7:00 that evening.

We are in discussions with the executive director of the Sherman Symphony Orchestra to plan a transition between the festival and evening concert. We plan to have two separate art shows planned for the festival stay on display for the transition time and the reception after the concert.

If you would like to be part of the planning process, please reach out to Amy so you can be added to the email list.

# Money Matters

We started a new fiscal year on July 1. Thanks to everyone for your pledges.

The new year started with a very generous donation of \$50,000 from Marilyn Alexander's daughter, Merrilee Kick. In July, \$15,008.79 was spent on repairs and renovations. That leaves \$34,991.21 remaining in this fund as of July 31.

In the month of July, we had total operating receipts of \$7,680.50. Total operating expenses for the month were \$7,013.74, leaving us with a net profit for the month of \$666.76. The net profit for the month was primarily due to the timing of pledge payments, partly offset by the annual UUA Program Fund expense.

As of July 31, 2024, we had \$16,428.52 available in checking for general operations. There is a total of \$20,755.10 in the bank savings account, including \$4,871.08 restricted for the Minister Fund and \$5,951.89 held in trust for Kat Walston from the sale of her personal effects prior to moving into assisted living. There is a total of \$66,784.40 invested in the UUA Common Endowment Fund. The congregation voted to use up to \$51,000.00 of the UUA Savings Fund for minister compensation.

Carole Harner, *Treasurer*

# Postcard Party Sept. 7

Hello to my postcard writers! Let's finish up the remaining postcards on Saturday, September 7 from 1 – 4 pm. This time we will be at the **Denison Community Center** at the corner of Armstrong and Martin Luther King in Denison. The community center has tables already set up in a better arrangement.

We are mostly finished but there are still 7 batches to be done. Then we still have to stamp all 500. If we have 10 or 15 volunteers, it will go quickly (I hope).

If you took home postcards from Red River UU card party, please bring those back to me for finishing and mailing. I have to report with the QR code on the address sheet when all are done.

There will be snacks but please bring your own drinks. Let's get this colorful project finished.

Thank you,  
Jan Fletcher, Red River UU Social Justice  
Grayson County Democrats  
972-897-5796

# Aesthetic Team Update



Due to a generous gift from Merrilee Alexander Kick, our church home is receiving some needed updates. Part of the gift was directed towards termite treatment and repairs in the basement needed due to termite damage. Part of the gift was directed towards remodeling the kitchen. The

gift is in the name of Marilyn Alexander, and Merrilee requested naming rights for the kitchen.

The Aesthetics Team has been working with Marilyn Alexander and Jim Holmes (facilities chair) to select materials and design the layout. Work on the basement and treatment for termites are largely completed. Work on the kitchen will begin Monday, September 2.

The entire kitchen will be gutted, including removal of the wooden walls. They will be replaced with fire resistant Sheetrock walls. The existing flooring will be covered with cement board and luxury vinyl plank flooring to prevent damage from potential leaks. The new lower cabinets will be mostly drawers, with a couple of narrow full height cabinets for storage of trays and cookie sheets and a tall pantry cabinet for storage of all our tablecloths and cloth napkins. We chose cabinets with solid plywood boxes and hardwood fronts. The countertops will be solid quartz. We will eliminate most of the open wall shelves since we should easily be able to fit most of our kitchen items inside the many drawers. We are creating a new labeling system to make it easier to keep the kitchen organized. The project is expected to take 2 weeks to complete, and we hope to resume use of the kitchen by the 3rd Sunday of the month.

# Facilities Report

Starting September 2, we will be remodeling the kitchen. It should be finished by September 14. The Emerson room will be used to store materials that are needed plus the dishes and other items that we need to remove from the kitchen before work. If you use the Emerson room for meeting, please move your meeting to the Alexander room.

# September Birthdays

14 Shanna (Jack) Bolerjack  
20 Samuel Cates  
26 Paula Blackshear  
29 Kat Walston



## Connect with Us

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# From our non-resident poet

## Labor Day: In Praise of Workers

by Don Mathis

The need for unions is still evident as we reflect on Labor Day

Many small businesses are forced out of the competition by large businesses. Corporate officers fatten their salaries at the expense of employees on the bottom rung. Job scarcity makes it hard to switch employers so management can refuse to offer amenities beyond a subsistence level.

Samuel Gompers worked to change these injustices. Born in 1850, Gompers went from a factory worker to become the first president of the American Federation of Labor. His quest for workers to receive higher wages, shorter hours, and collective bargaining was cut short by illness. He died in San Antonio 100 years ago after attending the inauguration of Mexican President Plutarco Elias Calles.

A statue of Gompers (below) on Market Street in San Antonio was erected in 1982 for the AFL-CIO convention. Sculptor Bette Jean Alden portrayed Gompers with a contract in his hand to symbolize the beneficial agreements that can come between capital and labor.



The pedestal of the statue had a plaque which read:

*"What does labor want? We want more school houses and less jails. More books and less guns. More learning and less vice. More leisure and less greed. More justice and less revenge. We want more... opportunities to cultivate our better nature."*  
—Samuel Gompers.

These are words to remember on Labor Day.

## Our Leaders

### Board of Trustees:

Jana Norris, *President*  
Amy Hoffman-Shehan, *Vice-President*  
Carole Harner, *Treasurer*  
Don Rogers, *Secretary*  
David Dyer, *Trustee*

### Committee on Ministry:

Elbert Hill, Jim Holmes, \_\_\_\_\_

### Nominating:

Liz, Paula, Marilyn

### Our Various Teams:

*The first name is the team leader*

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

**Aesthetics:** Amy, Jana, Adrian

**Audio Visual:** Jim, Carole, Don, Marla

**Caring Circle:** David

**Choir:** Marilyn, Bill, Jan, Byron, Cindy, Doug

**Earth Day Planning:** Amy, Marla, Jan, Megan, Cristin

**Endowment:** Doug

**Facebook Admin:** Amy

**Facilities:** Jim

**Finance:** Carole, Jim, Marilyn

**Grounds:** Marilyn, Paul

**Historian:**

**Long Range Planning:** Jim, Marilyn

**Membership:** Paula, Marla, Doug, Amy, Adrian

**Minister Search:** Jim, David, Jana, Marilyn, Marla

**Monarch Way Station:** Lynn, Paula

**Moveable Feast:** Elbert & Marion

**Music:**

**NTUUC Rep:** Marilyn

**Publications:** Doug

**Rainbow Team:** Jack, Adrian, Amy, Billie, Cristin, Jana, Olivia, Sherilyn, Thomas

**RE Team:** Jack

**Safe Congregation Panel:** Jana

**Social Justice:** Jan

**Web Team:** Jim, Hannah, Marla

**Worship:** Marla, Dan, Jan

People stopped calling themselves Freethinkers because it was so specifically German and anything German was terribly unpopular because of the two world wars. My family became Unitarians instead - it's the same sort of thing.

[Kurt Vonnegut](#)