



RED RIVER RAMBLINGS ♦ JANUARY 2024 VOL 25, NO. 7

Sunday, January 7, 2024 - 11:15 am

Reflections on the Eight Principles: *Principle Three: Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations.*

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

How can we both embrace and accept one another in our differences while also growing together spiritually in a diverse community? Read Mark's bio [here](#).

Sunday, January 14, 2024 - 11:15 am

Seeds for the New Year

the Rev Dr. Sofia Betancourt, *video message*

What seeds are you planting for the new year? How are you weaving your magic into your relationships with others? How can we center beauty and goodness and love in all that's ahead? These questions are at the heart of this special morning that will also include a charming children's story ***Bridge of Flowers*** by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha.

Sunday - 11:15 am, January 21, 2024 – 11:15 am

Reflections on the Eight Principles: *Principle Four: A free and responsible search for truth and meaning.*

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

It is important to be open to the truth wherever it may be found, but what is the truth and how do we know when we find it? Is the meaning of our life something that is given to us, or do each of us create our own meaning for ourselves? Read Mark's bio [here](#)

Sunday, January 28, 2024 - 11:15 am

Whose Body Is It, Anyway?

Sarah Berel-Harrop, *leading*

Reproductive Justice (RJ), as defined by the thought leader Sister Song, is "the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities." We'll explore how the RJ framework evolved and how it can inform our justice-seeking, grounded in our Unitarian Universalist values. Read Sarah's bio [here](#).

Marilyn's Musings

A new year begins with hope for new beginnings. At Red River UU, we are hoping to find our first contract minister. Lots of churches are looking and there are few ministers available, so the process won't be easy. However, we have an active congregation and our Texoma area is experiencing tremendous growth. This would be a great place for a minister to locate and be able to be successful in guiding the growth of our church.

This is our year to be an ambassador for Red River UU. There are many people in our area that have never heard of us, but would like to be a part of our congregation if they only knew about us. Talk to people and invite them to visit. Let's make an effort to reach out to others in our community this year.

Have you contacted Marla to volunteer to be on either the worship team or to be a worship associate? Please do that soon. Our Morning Assembly programs depend on you.

Our congregation was able to help provide holiday gifts for a family of a mother and daughter who have been able to leave the shelter, but still have needs. Gifts of dishes, mixing bowls, small bookcase, age-appropriate books for the daughter, sheets, bedding and blanket, as well as a \$200 gift card so the mother can purchase clothing for her daughter and herself that will fit and be to her liking. I'm sure we all hope they have a wonderful holiday.

Planning has begun for the Earth Day Festival. This year they will focus on the benefit of trees as a response to the clear cutting currently underway in Texoma.

The Welcoming Congregation's Family Holiday Gathering was a huge success. There were about 28 people attending and there were some people new to visit Red River UU as well. We even had some of those new people attend our Sunday Morning Assembly. This is a wonderful outreach program.

Remember, Red River will be hosting the Denison Chamber of Commerce for a ribbon cutting and open house on March 6th from 3:00-5:30. Put this on your calendar so you can help with food, tours or introduce Red River UU to the community.

"As for wishes for the new year, I wish you strength, perseverance, patience and love to endure what will be a very challenging 12 months. May we all find the grit and kindness to survive and come out better humans in a better society. Hold tight onto each other. Love like your life

depends on it." (Quoted from Sam DeBree, good friend in Montana, who foresees this contentious election year and major wars threatening democracy with autocracy on the horizon.)

Marilyn Alexander, *president*

a New Year's Prayer

By Don Mathis

It's Possible
to be at peace
to be healthy
to let go of the past
to be accepting of change

It Is Possible
to share my strength with
others
to allow others to share with
me

It Is Possible
to build, to create
to travel to new places
to find the calm in the center

It Is Possible

Ed. Note

Don Mathis sent in the above poem just after I finished compiling the newsletter and it deserved a special spot on this, the first of January. The reference to 'prayer' was mine, not Don's.

DMS

A Way to Grow our Church



WHAT RELIGION AM I? ASK THE BELIEF-O-MATIC®

Congregations, and especially UU congregations, often find that personal invitations to a friend or co-worker is the most effective way to share who we are as a faith. Ours is a religious path decidedly different. Yet, many of us find it both awkward and fearful to actually extend an invitation to someone you feel would really enjoy learning about us. To help bolster your skittishness, try out the Belief-O-matic quiz.

Ever wondered what religion you are? Are you sure your faith is the best choice for you? Take a religion quiz to find out! Answer 20 questions about your concept of God, the afterlife, human nature, and more, and Belief-O-Matic® will tell you what religion or spiritual path (if any) best suits your beliefs. The link is [here](#).

And 2 more Ways

Happy New Year to All. In 2023, Red River Unitarian Universalist Church joined the Sherman and the Denison Chambers of Commerce. This is part of our Outreach Program. I attend various meetings and provide church brochures to both Chambers and newcomers who contact them.

On **Tuesday, February 27** Red River will provide breakfast snacks for the Plug-In Texoma meeting in Sherman at 8 am. I would appreciate any volunteer offers of food or serving help for this outreach opportunity.

On **Wednesday, March 6**, we will host a Ribbon Cutting and Open House for the Denison Chamber at 3 pm. This event gives us the opportunity to show off our building. We will need food and drinks to serve as well as volunteers to conduct tours of the building. If you are interested in these opportunities, please contact me to discuss. Contact me, Jan Fletcher [here](#).

Minister Search Team

Monday, November 27, 2023

8:17 AM

I met via phone with our UUA representative, Cameron Young with the UUA Southern Region office. Cameron asked questions on our sources for funding a minister and to see if we had any questions that he could answer or help us get answers. Cameron was very helpful and had some good incite and suggestions.

We discussed the salary and compensation package, and he said once we get into that area of interviewing, he will point us to the appropriate UUA representative to help us. He will also send us some contract templates to help us in creating the appropriate contract with our chosen minister. Cameron will also check on the status of the Chalice Lighters grants.

After the conclusion of the phone call, Cameron approved our application, and we are now live on the UUA Minister portal. I checked it out and the way it works is that now ministers can search postings and apply to any that they might be interested in. Unfortunately, we cannot see the ministers that are active on the site. We can see all the UUA churches that are searching for ministers. It is awkward to get an accurate count, but this is what I saw. There are over 50 churches seeking a contract minister. In the Southern Region there are 16 churches seeking a contract minister but only 9 have completed and approved applications.

Cameron's last words with me were to be patient. There are more openings than there are ministers so it may take a while.

The Team will contact Cameron in January after we recover from the holidays and overeating to see if he might have some insight into helping our search. We will also see what Cameron has found out about the Chalice Lighters grants.

The Team did not meet in December. In our January 2024 meeting we will review our meeting with Cameron and work on defining our next steps.

Your Minister Search Team:

Jim Holmes, David Dyer, Jana Norris, Marilyn Alexander, Marla Loturco

Money Matters

In the month of November, we had total receipts of \$2,269.00. Total expenses for the month were \$2,432.19, leaving us with a small net loss for the month of (\$163.19).

We had a net profit for the fiscal year-to-date of \$3,234.03. The year-to-date net profit was primarily due to higher other income, partly offset by costs to improve building security and the timing of various other costs.

As of November 30, 2023, we had \$13,299.31 available in checking. There is a total of \$20,747.33 in the bank savings account, including \$4,667.08 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 Endowment Fund for minister compensation, if needed.

Carole Harner, *treasurer*

Chair Yoga

The weekly chair yoga under the leadership of Marsha Runnels meets each Tuesday from 10-11 am in the chapel. It is a gentle impact approach which leaves participants feeling spiffy when done. Newcomers are always welcome.

Spiritual Practices

Revitalize your love of truth and understanding by studying with us each Tuesday evening 6:30 – 8 pm in the chapel. Good conversations in a caring atmosphere. Newcomers and the curious are most welcome to come.

January Birthdays

03 Bill Holloway | 05 Hannah Peterson | 09 Kelly Cofield-Dyer
26 Megan Hutchinson

Social Justice & YOU

As we close out 2023 and prepare for 2024, we need to look into our hearts. Our Unitarian Universalist beliefs call us to be active supporters of Social Justice.

What does Social Justice mean to a UU? Social Justice encompasses racial equality, equality between sexes, protecting our environment, upholding the worth and dignity of everyone.

Our Social Justice Team focuses on our individual preferred issues. We would invite you to join us in 2024 to make our world more inclusive for all people. Let's live our UU Principles and work to end racism, gender bigotry, the climate crisis, the immigration crisis, reproductive justice and more make our world more inclusive for all people. Let's live our UU Principles and work to end racism, gender bigotry, the climate crisis, the immigration crisis, reproductive justice and more. Jan Fletcher, *chair*

Welcoming Committee Update

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! The LGBTQIA + Welcoming Congregation Team thanks you all for your many contributions and accolades in 2023! Our Reboot was incredibly successful.

We took the first part of the year to settle in & work together to plan for Pride and the holiday events. We were also present & supportive at Grayson Pride Organization's Pride Prom, their Drag show at Austin College and the Transgender Day of Remembrance Memorial.

The Grayson Pride event was smaller than expected, however the weather cooperated to a "T" and the venue was gorgeous. We gave away 2 baskets full of items that Jack & others asked local businesses to donate. The donations totaled over \$1,700!

Also, several members of our Team were on the front lines supporting Max Hightower & his family in the fight against transphobia in the Sherman ISD. Both Amy & Jack spoke at the initial school board meeting & Jack's Mom, Sherilyn, protested outside with community members. Hearts & minds were touched, and this battle was won by the people in Pride hats.

Both Friendsgiving & the Family Holiday Celebration were hugely triumphant and worked to give a safe, loving space for our LGBTQIA+ family and our allies. These events went very smoothly because of the massive efforts of the entire Welcoming Congregation Team who cooked, set up, cleaned and hosted.

To finish off 2023 and begin 2024 on great foot, Adrian hosted another Nerdy New Year's party with board games, snacks, pizza and a white elephant gift exchange. The "Nerdy" gifts included D&D materials, a 007 board game, a vintage Star Trek model set & a satchel for a Nintendo Switch. We are so proud of the work we've done in our community and of the positive impact we've had. We can't wait for 2024!

Our next event is coming in February so watch for the announcement!

From our non resident Poet

2023 News of the Year – Don Mathis

The past year had 12 months of news.

Here's the top stories you may choose.

Pope Benedict, born with German nationality, they buried him in Vatican City.

Chinese balloons drift across our sky.

The wreckage debris was sent to the FBI.

A train's hazardous cargo derails in Ohio.

As poison spread, folks were ordered to go.

Banks in California are in misery.

First Republic's failure makes US history.

Tornado strikes Alabama and Mississippi tearing apart towns like Silver City.

Pentagon documents leak to the internet about attacks on Ukraine and the Russian threat.

The WHO declares the end of COVID-19.

Charles and Camilla become King and Queen.

Excessive pressure deep in the ocean causes the submersible Titan implosion.

Summer temperatures were the highest yet.

Planet Earth felt like a briquette.

Trump faces 91 charges in four cases.

Will his trials affect the presidential races?

United Auto Workers won't be ignored; they strike against Stellantis, GM, and Ford.

At a festival, Hamas killed 300 or more.

The next day, Israel declares war.

Surgeons at NYU were able to install the first transplant of a human eyeball.

Texas governor signs a mandate criminalizing illegal entry into the state.

2023 had these headlines and more.

Stay tuned to see what's ahead in 2024.

Our Leaders

Board of Trustees:

Marilyn Alexander, *President*

Amy Hoffman-Shehan, *Vice-President*

Carole Harner, *Treasurer*

David Dyer, *Secretary*

Don Rogers, *Trustee*

Committee on Ministry:

Carolyn Cameron, Elbert Hill, Jim Holmes

Nominating:

Jana Norris, Jim Runnel, Walter Norris (not related to Jana)

Our Various Teams:

Adult Forum: Marilyn, Jim, Amy, Marion

Aesthetics: Amy, Jana, Adrian

Audio Visual: Carole, Don, Jim, Marla

Caring Circle: Carolyn, David

Communication: Amy, Doug, Marla

Endowment: Carolyn, Doug

Facilities: Jim, Carole, Marilyn

Grounds: Marilyn

Long Range Planning: Jim, Marilyn

Membership: Marion

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

Moveable Feast: Elbert, Marion

NTUUC Rep: Marilyn

RE Team: David, Marilyn

Safe Congregation Panel: Marilyn

Social Justice: Jan

Web Team: Hannah, Jim, Marla

Welcoming Congregation: Adrian, Amy, Cristin, Marla, Jana, Jack, Sherilyn, Thomas

Worship: Dan, Jan, Jana, Marla

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Useful Links

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