

# Reflections



A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE RIVER OF GRASS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

DAVIE, FLORIDA

DECEMBER 2011

## IT TAKES A VILLAGE...

By Marjie Loring, Board President



**T**here is an old adage that says it takes a village to raise a child. It is within that same context that I would like to reflect on raising River of Grass.

It takes a community to raise a congregation – especially an active one! We have a long list of committees, programs and events that we must nurture and support, and they need all of us – not just to survive, but to grow and thrive. As a community we need to support them, value them, and most of all, we need to not take them for granted. It is because of everyone that there is something for everyone!

Right now, having moved through a time of Thanksgiving and looking ahead to the holiday season and the New Year,

we have so much to be thankful for, and so much to look forward to. We are riding a wave of success: we are securing rentals, our events are well attended, the acoustics in the sanctuary are better than ever, and interest in membership is on the rise, but we need to remember that all of this success rides upon the backs of those who continue to show up.

Like the shoemaker's elves in the Grimm Brother's Christmas-time fairytale, members and friends show up and roll up their sleeves to do what needs to be done to make things happen. Whether it is putting together a service, negotiating rental agreements, cleaning chairs during a congregational work day, hanging sound dampening panels, participating in new member classes, balancing our budget, stocking shelves at LifeNet4Families, soliciting donations for our annual auction, setting up the sanctuary and sound system or preparing and selling food for our concerts, showing up – again and again – is vital to the health of River of Grass and it is the critical support needed by committee chairs who trust that they are not in this alone.

It's "all hands on deck" when it comes to making things happen at River of Grass, and those dedicated hands are ours.

I am filled with gratitude for those who continue to show up to help with needs both big and small. I can see in so many ways how it took a community to bring River of Grass this far, and that it will take a community for it to reach the heights of our dreams.

As we move through the holiday season, may the joy of community and the spirit of life and love shower countless blessings on us all.



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## MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

By Leana Bresnahan, Membership Chair

Our next New Member Sunday will be held on December 11<sup>th</sup>. If you are considering becoming a member of River of Grass, please e-mail [Membership@riverofgrass.org](mailto:Membership@riverofgrass.org).

On December 11th, we will also say a fond a farewell to long-time beloved members, Karen Dickson and Dan French, and their daughters, Olga and Luda, who are moving to Michigan. They will be sorely missed.

We will welcome our newest members and say farewell to the Dickson-French family with a potluck lunch in the sanctuary after worship service. There will be a sign-up for the event at worship service on December 4<sup>th</sup>.

## SERVICES

Dec. 4 International Human Rights Day, led by Leana Bresnahan

Dec. 11 Sharing, led by Marjie Loring and Esther Sampol

Dec. 18 Would You Like to Hold the Baby, led by the Faith Development team

Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Service, led by the Music team

## FACILITIES RENTAL NEWS:

### SUNSHINE PRESCHOOL COOPERATIVE

As of November 15th, we have a new facilities rental! River of Grass is happy to welcome the 'Sunshine Preschool Cooperative' on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings. This is a group of mothers with young preschool age children and babies who get together to provide educational activities and fun for their children. They already love our nursery! The mothers rotate teaching and having some free time. They will mostly be using the multipurpose room and the nursery. More information will be forthcoming - this all happened very quickly!

### OUR PRINCIPLES

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;

The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;

Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

### OUR SUNDAY LOCATION

11850 W. State Road 84, Suite 1, Davie, FL 33325

### EVERY SUNDAY

**Worship Service:** 10:30 to 11:30am. **Hospitality Hour:** 11:30am to 12:30pm.

**Faith Development Classes:** 10:45 to 11:45am

### FRIENDLY REMINDERS FOR OUR MEMBERS

There is plenty of parking outside the sanctuary, but please leave the closer parking spaces for our guests and physically challenged worshippers.

All meetings are held at 11850 W State Road 84, Suite 1 in Davie unless otherwise noted.

## River of Grass

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

Phone 954-723-7877

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### Newsletter

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Service & Social Justice ..... Alan Meerow & Judi Oltmans  
Shared Ministry ..... Diane Lade & Janet Schwartz  
Worship ..... Kathy Jens-Rochow

## FAITH DEVELOPMENT GETS BUSY

By Diane Lade, Faith Development Co-Chair

**D**ecember will be a busy month for Faith Development students, their teachers and families. The children will be at the center of a special holiday service on Sunday, Dec. 18. We hope you will attend so you can see how talented our River of Grass young people are.

Classes on Dec. 4 and Dec. 11 will be at the usual time but dedicated to preparing for this service.

Other Faith Development activities coming this month:

- ◆ **Holiday Gathering:** Come share some holiday cheer, deck our halls and get your photo taken with the Man in Red! The first intergenerational holiday gathering in our new home will be from 6:30 to 10:00pm on Friday, Dec. 9. There will be food, crafts, a holiday sing-a-long and more fun. Please sign up for the potluck dinner, or volunteer to lead a craft, by emailing: [FaithDevelopment@riverofgrass.org](mailto:FaithDevelopment@riverofgrass.org). There also will be a sign-up sheet in the fellowship hour area.
- ◆ **Beacon Youth Holiday Party:** Our youth group will be getting together at 4:00 to 7:00pm, Sunday, Dec. 11 at the Weston home of **Carolyn Sant Angelo** and **Scott May**. There will be a cookout and caroling through the neighborhood. More details to come. All River of Grass high schoolers and their friends are invited. Watch the weekly electronic update for more details.
- ◆ We will be offering **Our Whole Lives** – a lifespan program that couples human sexuality with ethical living – for teens next year. OWL will begin in early February and run through the end of the congregational year. Parents will be receiving information this month. But anyone interested can contact [FaithDevelopment@riverofgrass.org](mailto:FaithDevelopment@riverofgrass.org).

## TRICK OR TREAT FOR UNICEF

**O**ur congregation collected \$498.81 for UNICEF by trick-or-treating during service on October 30, and by collecting from family, friends and neighbors on Halloween. Also collected on the same day were numerous foreign coins, four flattened lucky pennies, and three impressive buttons. If you would like to claim any of the items just mentioned, please see Janet Schwartz on Sunday. If you still have a UNICEF box to turn in, please place it on one of the tables in the hospitality area on Sunday. Thank you for your generosity.

## HALLOWEEN SPOOK-TACULAR

*Everyone had a ghostly good time at the first River of Grass Halloween Spooktacular on Oct. 30, hosted by the Faith Development Committee. Witches (and their costumed canine companions), ninjas and other creatures prowled our halls, visited the Haunted Teen Room Laboratory, feasted on treats and gave their lungs a workout in our Spooky Sounds contest. Thanks to all who made this event a big success.*



## ... AND SERVICE IS OUR LAW

### SERVICE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE REPORT

By Alan Meerow and Judi Oltmans, Service and Social Justice Co-Chairs

**D**ecember is a busy month for all of us, but it is a time when our thoughts should also turn to those in need locally and around the globe. We are running two programs concurrently, Guest At Your Table (GAYT), which benefits the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC), whose good works promote human rights and economic and environmental justice around the world, and our annual holiday Angel Tree, on behalf of ChildNet. Please give generously as you are able to make both drives a success for our loving community.

**Guest At Your Table.** A FAQ on this program was distributed in a weekly email in November (and is also available at the SSJC station in the hospitality area), but here are some important facts:

- ◆ Final Sunday for contributions: **January 8, 2012.**
- ◆ Preferred way to contribute: check made out to “River of Grass UU” with “GAYT” written on the memo line.
- ◆ Giving rates qualifying for UUSC membership: \$40.00 General, \$75.00 General (dual), \$10.00 Student/Youth, \$20.00 Student/Youth (dual), \$20.00 Senior, \$40.00 Senior (dual).
- ◆ Send or give contributions to the River of Grass office, or hand to **Alan** or **Judi**, SSJC co-chairs, at service.

The holidays are here, which means it's time for our “adopt a wish” **Angel Tree!** We'll be helping the ChildNet agency again this year by providing holiday gifts to 35 underprivileged children through the “adopt a wish” program. ChildNet's mission is “...to protect Broward's abused, abandoned and neglected children.” Please help by selecting a child's wish list from the tree and purchasing at least one of the items listed.

Each child has selected three wishes. You're not obligated to purchase all three items. Whatever you are able to purchase from their wish list will be greatly appreciated. The gifts should not be wrapped, but please keep the “wish list” tag with your gifts. This is your chance to make a difference in a child's life and make a wish come true! **December 11** will be the last Sunday to bring in your gift.

Thank you to all the volunteers who helped at our River of Grass Saturday Volunteer Day at LifeNet4Families on November 12th! **Riley Cothran, Gail Goddard** and her children, **Bev Kaufman, Liz** and **John Perez, Vern Sibble** and **Zena Tucker** worked in the LifeNet4Families dining area and pantry, serving a meal to the homeless, stocking shelves, and preparing boxes for the needy families in the community.

The volunteer days are scheduled for every other month this year and our next one will be on Saturday, January 7<sup>th</sup>. This is a great way to give back to your community and put our covenant words “...service is its law” into action! Someone from the Service and Social Justice committee is usually there to help. We have a donation basket for LifeNet4Families at the SSJC corner in the hospitality area on Sundays for canned food, dry goods and especially peanut butter. You can also deposit clothing items for LifeNet4Families in the same basket used for the food donations.

*“The best way to  
find yourself is to  
lose yourself in the  
service of others”*

*- Ghandi*

## BOARD MATTERS

By Susan Juncosa, Secretary

**T**he Board burned the candles at both ends as the November 9 meeting lasted until midnight. Why such a long meeting? Trying to keep up with all that is going on with the congregation and the many committees and activities! It appears the congregation is using floodlights instead of candles...OK, enough with the strained metaphor and on with the notes.

- ◆ The Treasurer reported that things are looking good. Fiscally, we are actually running a little under the projected budget, thanks to a number of factors, including the incredible job members are doing of keeping up with their pledges. Please talk to members of the Finance Committee for more details.
- ◆ Without a doubt, the busiest committee at this time is Auction. The only thing longer than this group's ‘to do’ list is their ‘done’ list. The biggest problem at this time is getting the tickets sold so that the caterer can know the correct number to serve. Solicitation of donations continues and volunteers will be needed the week before and during the auction event.



*(Continued on page 7)*



## FULL MOON DAUGHTERS

By Diane Lade, Full Moon Daughters Facilitator

**W**ant to make a big impression on everyone else in the campground? Try scarf dancing on a bridge in the beautiful Florida Keys at sunset. The Full Moon Daughters did exactly that during this year's camping trip to Bahia Honda State Park on November 11-13, extending a sunset tradition started last year. We had a record Bahia Honda attendance of 24 women and girls, who slept under the stars (well, a couple stayed in hotels) in one of Florida's most lovely parks.



*The Full Moon Daughters scarf dance at sunset on the old railroad bridge at Bahia Honda State Park, in the Florida Keys.*

We also visited the Turtle Hospital in Marathon, shared fabulous campfire meals together, went for long walks on the beach, and did crafts projects at an oceanside pavilion. Next year: more kayaking and snorkeling, which the wind prohibited this year.

If this sounds like fun to you, we are already making plans for Bahia Honda November 2012, as reservations must be made 11 months in advance. Come join us! Full Moon Daughters is a group for women and girls who want to connect to their spirituality through nature and the outdoors.

### COMING UP SOON

- ◆ Our winter solstice party on Sunday, Dec. 18, at **Deb Giblin-Davis'** house. We will have a potluck supper, holiday singing around the campfire and a homemade gift exchange. Watch the weekly electronic update for more details.
- ◆ Our next camping trip will be to Fort DeSoto, near St. Petersburg, on Feb. 18-20. There will be biking, fishing, kayaking and more fun on this amazing peninsula at the mouth of Tampa Bay.

Full Moon Daughters is open to all River of Grass members, their friends and family. Interested? Contact us at [FullMoonDaughters@riverofgrass.org](mailto:FullMoonDaughters@riverofgrass.org) to get on our electronic email list.

## **dUUDES DO BISCAYNE BAY!**

**By Allen Giese, dUUdes Facilitator**

**T**he inaugural River of Grass **dUUdes** event was a smashing success as nine of River of Grass's bravest dUUdes hit the high seas and conquered the reef in Biscayne Bay. There was a slight chop to the seas and a nip in the air as the season's first cold front hit South Florida, but nothing stops these dUUdes from living their values in the seventh UU principle and seeing first-hand the beauty of the earth we live on. The reef was spectacular as was the colorful sea life, including many species of tropical fish and even a few jelly fish. Reef sharks knew they were no match for dUUdes so they stayed home.

Following the snorkeling the dUUdes met up at a local restaurant for more camaraderie, good food and cheer. It was an awesome day for all.



*dUUdes hanging and waiting for their ride to the reef: (L-R) Jon Kitner, Alan Meerow, Mike Miller, Steve Tepper and Jake Tepper (in back), Riley Cothran, Scott May, Andrew Giese and Allen Giese*

**F**eeling like you are missing out? Make sure you sign up for the next dUUdes event: Saturday, December 10<sup>th</sup> at 11:00am at John U. Lloyd Beach State Park in Dania, where the dUUdes are doing nothin' but just chillin' out on the beach. We'll be grilling, playing games, and basically just hanging out enjoying each other's company and stories. What a great way to "chill-ax" during the hectic holiday season! Rumor is that Santa will be dropping off some real Wisconsin Brats for the grill! If you've never had one, well, you just haven't lived a full life.

Future dUUdes events include a campout in beautiful Highlands Hammock State Park up in Sebring, February 18<sup>th</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup>. Also we'll be bicycle riding the Shark Valley loop in the Everglades National Park under the full moon on May 5<sup>th</sup>.

**dUUdes... Mark your calendars!**

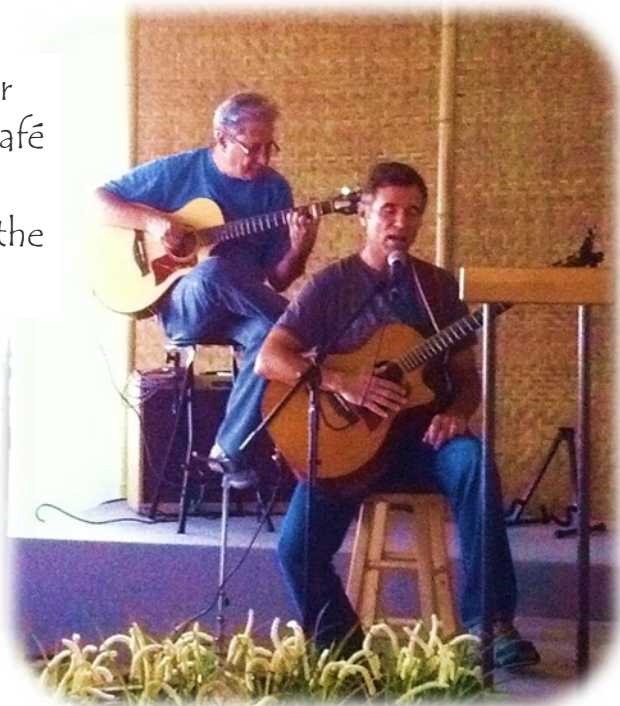
## RIVER OF GRASS **HOLIDAY** CAFÉ AND COFFEEHOUSE

I hope you enjoyed the beautiful and talented Maria Rivas in November! Thank you for supporting the congregation through our concert series. Bringing friends to our concerts is a great way to introduce them to River of Grass and to have a great night out – fine friends, fine food, fine music!

We invite you to our first holiday concert PARTY, Friday, December 16<sup>th</sup>. Several local talents will be performing: Carrie Lynn Kaplan, Arlene Boumel (both are singer/songwriter/guitarists); Ellen Bukstel and Dr. Bob are back by popular demand; and, of course, some of our very own River of Grass musicians!



Check out our River of Grass Café [Facebook](#) fan page for all the latest news!



Only \$5 at the door! Bring a potluck dish and enjoy the festivities!  
Doors open at 7:30pm. Music starts at 8:00pm.

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR OUR UPCOMING RIVER OF GRASS CAFÉ SHOWS!

January 27	Al Petteway and Amy White
February 17	Ronny Cox
March 16	Tim Farrell
April 20	Paul Zisholtz, Aaron Stang and Gary Gonzalez
May 18	Hunter Altschul and Joel Zoss

## BOARD MATTERS

(Continued from page 4)

- ◆ The Facility Committee has spent hours constructing and installing about half of the ‘Phase One’ sound panels. Feedback as to audio quality is solicited.
- ◆ The Concert Committee presented numbers showing the increasing popularity of the Café events with a growing audience of non-members.
- ◆ Faith development is planning holiday events and the teens are preparing to paint their room as well as sponsor a CON(vention) in the spring.
- ◆ The Membership Committee has been doing an outstanding job of tracking attendance and keeping tabs on new and departing members.
- ◆ Service and Social Justice continues to volunteer for LifeNet4Families every other month. They will be sponsoring an Action of Immediate Witness, which was adopted by the Unitarian Universalist Association at General Assembly this past summer. This Action is a drive for a constitutional amendment to overturn the Supreme Court’s ‘Citizens United’ decision.
- ◆ And the Worship Committee is happy to have dual projectors up and functioning for services. The facility just keeps getting better and better.

Envisioning Day and conversations among members have made it clear that there is a strong desire for a more frequent presence of professional ministry in the pulpit. To this end, the Board has been looking at the options of ministry available to us. Motions were passed to proceed with acquiring a UUA ‘pulpit supply’ minister for five additional Sundays this fiscal year. A ‘pulpit supply’ minister is hired by and reports to the Board, and has responsibilities limited to the Sunday morning worship service.

Speaking of Envisioning Day, the Board will host a Congregational Meeting in February to share the results of Envisioning and to continue the discussion. Eventually, we will be developing a five-year plan. This meeting will follow a tailgating potluck lunch on Sunday, February 5. This informational and conversational meeting will include a first look at the finance committee’s budget options for 2012-2013. The length of the meeting is sure to be limited as members demand to leave in order to watch the Superbowl later that day!

Finally, the Board adopted a Board Statement of Purpose of its own for the year. It’s a wonderful summation of the thoughts and feelings which came out at the Board retreat back in October.



# DECEMBER 2011

Thu.	1st	9:00am-12:00pm 6:30-8:00pm	Facility Rental (Cooperative Preschool) Facility Rental (Yoga Class)
Fri.	2nd	8:00am-9:00pm 12:00-6:00pm	Auction Setup Day Auction Basket Day II
Sat.	3rd	9:00-11:00am 7:00-10:00pm	Wildpine Covenant Group Annual Auction
Sun.	4th	10:30-11:30am 10:45-11:45am 11:30am-12:30pm 11:30am-1:30pm	Sunday Service Faith Development Classes Hospitality Hour Membership Committee
Tue.	6th	9:00am-12:00pm 7:00-9:00pm	Facility Rental (Cooperative Preschool) Women's Night Out
Wed.	7th	9:00am-12:00pm 6:00-6:45pm 7:00-10:00pm	Facility Rental (Cooperative Preschool) Vespers Board Meeting
Thu.	8th	9:00am-12:00pm 6:30-8:00pm 7:00-9:00pm	Facility Rental (Cooperative Preschool) Facility Rental (Yoga Class) Men's Group
Fri.	9th	6:30-10:00pm	Holiday Intergenerational Event
Sat.	10th	9:00am-12:00pm 6:00-10:00pm	dUudes Outing at John U. Lloyd Beach State Park Congregational Workday Facility Rental (Contradance)
Sun.	11th	10:30-11:30am 10:45-11:45am 11:30am-12:30pm 11:45am-12:15pm 4:00-7:00pm 5:00-10:00pm	Sunday Service/New Member Recognition Faith Development Classes Hospitality Hour Board Report Back Beacon Youth Holiday Party Holiday Boat Parade (Auction event)
Mon.	12th	7:00-9:00pm	Finance Committee
Tue.	13th	9:00am-12:00pm 4:00-7:00pm	Facility Rental (Cooperative Preschool) River of GREENS
Wed.	14th	9:00am-12:00pm 6:30-9:00pm	Facility Rental (Cooperative Preschool) Facility Rental (Blake School)

Thu.	15th	9:00am-12:00pm 6:30-8:00pm	Newsletter Deadline Facility Rental (Cooperative Preschool) Facility Rental (Yoga Class)
Fri.	16th	7:30-10:00pm	Holiday Gathering & Concert
Sat.	17th	6:30-9:00pm	Spiritual Arts Group
Sun.	18th	10:30-11:30am 11:30am-12:30pm 12:30-3:00pm	Full Moon Daughter Winter Solstice Party Sunday Service Hospitality Hour Swamp Rose Covenant Group
Tue.	20th	9:00am-12:00pm	Facility Rental (Cooperative Preschool)
Wed.	21st	9:00am-12:00pm 6:00-6:45pm 7:15-9:00pm	Facility Rental (Cooperative Preschool) Vespers bUUKies Book Group
Thu.	22nd	9:00am-12:00pm 6:30-8:00pm 7:00-9:00pm	Facility Rental (Cooperative Preschool) Facility Rental (Yoga Class) Men's Group
Sat.	24th	5:00-6:00pm 6:00-7:30pm	Christmas Eve Hospitality Hour Christmas Eve Service
Sun.	25th		Christmas/No Sunday Service
Tue.	27th	4:00-7:00pm	River of GREENS
Wed.	28th	6:00-6:45pm	Vespers
Thu.	29th	6:30-8:00pm	Facility Rental (Yoga Class)
Sat.	31st	3:00pm-2:00am	New Year's Eve Party (Auction event)

## JANUARY HIGHLIGHTS

Sun.	1st	New Year's Day
Sun.	8th	Guest At Your Table Collection
Fri.	27th	Al Petteway and Amy White in Concert
Sat.	28th	It's Not a Yard Sale Party