

Reflections

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE RIVER OF GRASS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

DAVIE, FLORIDA

MARCH 2013

MINISTER'S CORNER

UNBOUND

by the Reverend Amy Carol Webb, Minister



(From a true story found in the San Francisco Chronicle.)

You may have heard the true story of a female humpback whale off the Pacific coast that had become entangled and weighted down in a spider web of crab traps and line that weighed hundreds of pounds and caused her to struggle to stay afloat. The 45- to 50-foot female humpback, estimated to weigh 50 tons, was on the humpbacks' usual migratory route between the Northern California coast and Baja California when it became entangled in the nylon ropes that link crab pots.

A fisherman spotted her just east of the Farallones Islands in the Pacific Ocean, and radioed an environmental group for help. Within a few hours, the rescue team arrived and determined that she was so bad off, the only way to save her was to dive

in and untangle her from some 20 crab-pot ropes cinched so tight around her they were digging into her blubber, leaving visible cuts. Crab pot ropes are 240 feet long with 90-pound weights every 60 feet. One rope was wrapped at least four times around the tail, the back and the left front flipper, and there was a line in the whale's mouth.

As the injured whale struggled to stay afloat, divers spent about an hour cutting the ropes with a special curved knife. The whale floated passively in the water the whole time, giving off a strange kind of vibration, the rescuers said. The diver who freed the whale from the rope in its mouth said, "When I was cutting the line going through the mouth, its eye was there winking at me, watching me. It was an epic moment of my life."

When the whale realized she was free, she began swimming around in circles, according to the rescuers. And then it swam to each diver, nuzzled him and then swam to the next one.

Reading this story, it occurred to me that when we are in Beloved Community, we are present in all three elements of this story. It's easy enough to see ourselves in the whale and in the rescuers. Each of us has been or perhaps is today tangled in painful circumstance beyond our control. And each of us has the power to help free those around us who



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MINISTER'S CORNER

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are so tangled. It is not as easy to see ourselves in the systems that create the weighted ropes that threaten life all around us and within us - the tangles of discrimination, poverty, abuse, neglect, violence, ignorance, indifference.

The work of justice and love is the special curved knife we take in hand to free those we find struggling to stay afloat. Gratitude is the gift we offer those who with the courage and compassion to help us get free.

May you and all those you love be surrounded by brave ones who will help you get untangled from whatever binds you. May you be brave of hand and heart to help others loosen whatever struggles, whatever sorrows, whatever fears cut into in their bodies, minds or spirits. May River of Grass dare to take up the special curved knife of love and justice that our faith may free ourselves and our world.

MARCH SERVICES

- Mar. 3 *Wild Pines Covenant Group*
- Mar. 10 *Women's Group, "The Art & Toil of Compassion"*
- Mar. 17 *Rev Amy Carol Web, Congregational Theme*
- Mar. 24 *Marjie Loring, "A UU Passover"*
- Mar. 31 *Deb Giblin-Davis, "Fierce Grace"*

PLEDGE TO GO DARK FOR EARTH HOUR

On March 23, 2013, at 8:30 pm, turn off your lights for 60 minutes to show your commitment to protecting our planet. Earth Hour is an invitation to change your world. We only have one Earth; let's all take positive action for the environment.



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

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 Shared Ministry Diane Lade & Janet Schwartz
 Stewardship Pam Schrimsher & Ken Bresnahan
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STEPPING UP!

Marjorie Loring, Board President



As we, your congregational leaders, look for ways to entice members to step into leadership positions such as on the board or as a committee chair, there's an old adage that rings true: many hands make for light work. There are so many positions that are needed to maintain the health and vitality of UU congregations – including ours!



Your board has started to poll current committee chairs to find out if they will continue in their roles for the 2013-2014 congregational year. As we work to fill vacancies, we would like to hear from you. Is there a role that you have been thinking of trying or would like to hear more about what it entails? This is your opportunity!!! Talk to us!! Step up and let us know that you are interested!!!

If you are you hesitant to step up, perhaps one of the reasons listed below is the cause of your uncertainty?

Unclear expectations of role - are you hesitant to say “yes” because you are unsure as to what will be expected of you?

To address this, the board will be working with those who have held these committee positions in the past to clarify the expectations and time commitments involved. We want our volunteers to give their time and talent because what they do for our community feeds their heart and soul, not so it can stress them out and drain them of their energy!

Receptivity to change – are you hesitant to say yes to change in our congregation because you would be expected to follow in the same footsteps as your predecessor?

*If we are resistant to trying a different approach or considering a new angle or idea, we know that people will lose their motivation. Having to do it exactly like it has always been done is a real deterrent to progress. If hands are tied and creativity is suppressed, we will not **grow**. So bring on the new ideas!*

We will not only be looking for committee chairs but also committee members! This is where the many hands make light work comes in. The Board needs leaders (chairs) to run the committees, and the chairs need members to help make it all happen. Not having enough members on a committee can put an unnecessary burden on both the members and the committee chair.

What all this means is that you should not wait to be approached for participation on a committee. If there's one out there that interests you, talk to us. Let us know of your interest or special talent. Your River of Grass community needs you! This is one more way that we offer stewardship and live out our covenant.

A SEASON OF RENEWAL AND REBIRTH

Deb Giblin-Davis



It is the season of Passover, Easter, the Spring Equinox, Earth Day, and marshmallow peeps. It is the season of renewal and rebirth, of gatherings and meals together where we tell stories of death and sacrifices, of loss and love. **And it is the season of hope.** For those of us who have lived in our sub-tropical climate for a long time the drama of renewal and rebirth and the hope of anything green is not as dramatic as for our neighbors in northern latitudes and, yet, even we South Floridians can get excited about Spring this time of year.

As a religious community we bring many different traditions and different meanings to this time of year. What do we have to offer as a religious community during this season of hope? There are many stories in our congregation. Stories of people who have suffered or experienced challenging events and have come out on the other side - have maybe even experienced a blessing!

Please join us Easter Sunday, March 31, as we hear stories of hope, resurrection and renewal in a service entitled “Fierce Grace” or, maybe even, “Please Rise in Body or Spirit”.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Leana Bresnahan, Chair

Hear ye, hear ye, there is still time...it is not too late! To all of you who yearn to make this world a more just, peaceful and loving place, and who look to make River of Grass, as Rev. Amy commented in her sermon on February 17th, not just a place of refuge, but also a place from which to transform this community and this world....the circle of love that is River of Grass remains open and welcoming to all those who are committed to Unitarian Universalist principles. On March 10th, the Membership Committee will offer a class that is a requirement for formally becoming a member of River of Grass.



The Pathway to Membership Class is a lively four-hour class that introduces newcomers to congregational leaders, explains the wide variety of congregational programs and activities and how to get involved in them, teaches the main tenets of the Unitarian Universalist faith, gives you a quick rundown of two millennia of UU history, PLUS an even quicker overview of River of Grass History. All of that for the low low price of.... ABSOLUTELY FREE!!! The only thing you have to bring is your lunch! We even provide the drinks and desserts! So, if you are feeling a pull to Unitarian Universalism, if you feel you have found your spiritual home at River of Grass, if you want to become part of a community that is ready to set the world on fire for love....please sign up for the Pathway to Membership class, either after worship service, or by e-mailing membership@riverofgrassuu.org.

We will also have a New Member Ceremony on Sunday, April 7th during which we will welcome new members into membership. If you wish to join, in addition to taking the Pathway to Membership Class, we ask that you have a short get-acquainted meeting with our Board President, [Marjie Loring](#). Please e-mail me at membership@riverofgrassuu.org if you wish to be part of that service, and I will help you along the path. River of Grass members, be prepared....we'll host a potluck New Member Lunch after service that day. So please sign up to bring something to share...and remember to bring a description of what ingredients your delicious dish contains so that we can ensure those of us who have food allergies remain safe.

Join River of Grass. Heal your spirit and help heal the world. As Bob Sima sang at our River of Grass Café Concert on February 15th.....BE THE CHANGE!

Thanks to all of you who participated in our 14th Birthday Celebration/Charter Sunday Service on February 24th. We were thrilled to welcome a couple of former members back that day, and to receive digital greetings from a few more. Our lives go on in endless song..... many blessings to all!

NOMINATING COMMITTEE PRESENTS CANDIDATES TO BOARD

Gayle Giese, Nominating Committee

The nominating committee presented a slate of candidates to the Board of Trustees, which was approved by the Board as follows:

- ◆ [Marjorie Loring](#), President (2 year term)
- ◆ [Leana Bresnahan](#), Vice-President (2 year term)
- ◆ [Gary Gonzalez](#), Treasurer (1 year term)
- ◆ [Troy Gies](#), Trustee (2 year term)
- ◆ [Natalie Corp](#), Trustee (2 year term)
- ◆ [Audrey Stang](#), Trustee (1 year term)



These candidates' names will appear on the slate to be voted on at the Annual Congregational Meeting on Sunday, June 9th, 2013.

[Zena Tucker](#) will remain as secretary for another year, and [Tom Robinson](#) will continue his term as trustee for one more year. [Ken Bresnahan](#), [Diane Diaz](#), [Grant Basham](#), [Janet Schwartz](#) (for [Maddi Gutfreind](#)), and [Deb Giblin-Davis](#) will complete their terms in June of this year.

We thank and applaud all board members for their great service to our beloved community!

SPRING IS IN THE AIR!

Christy Schultz, Faith Development Coordinator



On March 21, 2013, we will celebrate the first day of spring: a time for celebration and renewal of life. On the vernal equinox, the night will just about equal the day – allowing the shift to happen – the gradual lightening as we head into summer. Here in Florida, Spring doesn't mean the melting of snow or the blossoming of flowers that are awakening to the warmth and sun, we have that year round. Spring in Florida means busier streets due to the tourists visiting our beaches, it means sunny skies and beautiful days, and it means a final reprieve before the rains and the heat.

Enjoy this time to celebrate life with your family and your community. Commune with nature and breathe the fresh Spring air. Visit River of Grass and commune with your spirit, your community, and your family. It is a time for children and parents to play together, love together, and worship together.

We will be celebrating with you here at River of Grass this month. Eostre was the Norse goddess of Fertility, her symbol was the very appropriate egg, symbolizing new life and birth. We will continue the tradition of honoring new life in the spring season with our annual Easter Egg Hunt and Festive Hat/Bonnet Parade:

EASTER HUNT AND FESTIVE HAT PARADE: MARCH 31!!



River of Grass will have its Annual Egg Hunt and Easter Hat Eggstravaganza on Sunday, March 31! Parents who want their children to participate are asked to bring a dozen plastic eggs, stuffed with a treat, for hiding.

(Please remember: All treats need to be nut free, from nut-safe manufacturers, as we have kids with severe allergies. Thank you!) Please bring the eggs to the hospitality area no later than 10 am. We also invite children and adults to wear their favorite festive Easter bonnet/hat to service and join us in the Festive Easter Hat Parade!

If you have any questions about the Egg Hunt and/or the Hat Parade, or would like to donate or volunteer, please contact [Christy Schultz](mailto:Christy.Schultz@riverofgrassuu.org), fdcoordinator@riverofgrassuu.org.

In other News: The Youth Group is very excited to be hosting our very first Beacon UU Youth CON (conference) here at River of Grass on March 1-3. It is a Social Action CON, aptly named "Felines & CONines" – named after the cats and dogs we will be supporting when we volunteer at a local animal shelter. Youth from all over the Florida District are invited here to River of Grass to attend the CON. There will be a lot of celebrating going on!

The children and youth continue to celebrate every week at River of Grass! Our classes are consistently attended, and the kids are consistently inspired, educated and entertained.

Our Rites of Passage Programs for the Elementary groups and the older youth/teens have begun: The Principle Pals program is the first of three milestones that mark the spiritual path of Unitarian Universalist children. This program teaches the younger children about the seven principles of our faith tradition. Through discussions and activities that relate to each principle, these lessons will be the foundation for their ongoing spiritual journey.

The second spiritual milestone that marks the path is the Kindlers of the Flame program for late elementary school-aged children. This program seeks to teach our children about the history and meaning of our Chalice, to support families in adopting and nurturing the chalice lighting at home and to prepare the children to be Kindlers of the Flame during worship.



SERVICE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Steve Jens-Rochow and Judi Oltmans



Thank you to our LifeNet4Families volunteers in January and February! We're very fortunate to have such amazing and dedicated volunteers here at River of Grass. On January 12th **Steve, Zena and Rick**, **Elyse**, and **Ken and Leana** were our LifeNet volunteers. On Saturday, February 9th our volunteers were **Ken, Natalie and Jennifer, Lavonte and Xavier, Christy and Cedar, Gayle, Chance, Elyse and Judi**. Everyone works as a team: packing boxes of food for needy families, marking out bar codes on the bags of bread, taping up the boxes and pushing the carts loaded with boxes to the warehouse. There's a job for everyone! Our upcoming LifeNet4Families Saturday volunteer days are: Mar 9, Apr 13, May 11, Jun 8, Jul 13 Aug 10, Sep 14, Oct 12, Nov 9, Dec 14. YOU can make a difference in our community by volunteering. Sign-up sheets are available at the back of the sanctuary or you can email us at ssjc@riverofgrassuu.org.



UPCOMING EVENT: SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVIST TO SPEAK ON JUSTICE SUNDAY

Passionate Social Justice activist Kindra Muntz will be at River of Grass on Justice Sunday, April 7, 2013, and talk about the importance of Move to Amend's grass roots campaign to pass a Constitutional Amendment overturning Citizens United. She is the Chair of the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Florida, which "is a statewide justice ministry that empowers the voice of Unitarian Universalist values in the public arena." She will also talk about the connection between spirituality and activism.

SPRING IS IN THE AIR!

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Children participating in the program are required to write a Chalice lighting, write a paper about the meaning of the Chalice, meet with the minister to discuss their paper and chalice lighting and serve 2-3 years as Kindlers of the Flame.

Our third and final milestone celebrates the transition from childhood to young adulthood. Growing into maturity is a momentous occasion in many religions, and Unitarian Universalism is no different. During our Affirmation program our participants will be challenged to reflect, articulate and practice their UU faith. Our program consists of four major parts: pairing youth with adult mentors from the congregation; discussions and retreats that emphasize self-awareness and UU identity; service to the congregation and community; and a culminating affirmation ceremony. This final ceremony gives the congregation an opportunity to welcome the youth into the adult community. Those Affirmed will be given an opportunity visit Boston as a group and to then join the congregation upon completion of the program.

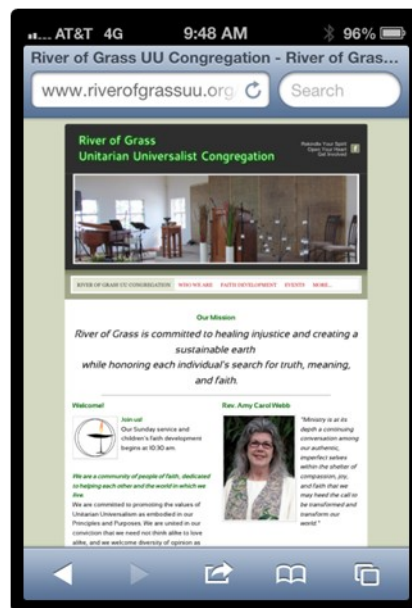
Come Celebrate With Us!!



RIVER OF GRASS HAS A NEW WEB PRESENCE!

Have you explored our new River of Grass website yet?

Go to: www.riverofgrassuu.org and check out our new home on the web!



RIVER OF GRASS CAFÉ AND COFFEEHOUSE: FRIDAY, MARCH 15TH - 8:00 PM

KAREN MAL AND LAURIE MCCLAIN

Karen Mal is best known for her sweet voice and her poetic and somewhat didactic songwriting. She is also known in the industry as a first-call session singer with a gift for harmony. Trained in theater and voice at Long Island University, Karen worked in regional theatre in Door County, WI for several years as an actor and musical director/composer before settling in Austin to play music full-time and focus on songwriting. She has been recognized professionally for her songwriting, including Portland Songwriters Association (2002) and has been a finalist in the prestigious Kerrville New Folk Competition in Kerrville, Texas (2001 and 2002). Karen's recordings have featured her own songwriting, as well as material from the traditional Irish folk repertoire, appropriate for this concert near St. Patty's Day! She usually performs solo and accompanies herself on mandolin or guitar. However, at the River of Grass Café, she will be joined by singer-songwriter Laurie McClain. Listen at: [Karen Mal](#)



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

Laurie McClain moved to Nashville, TN, in 1997 with three daughters in tow after spending most of her life in Lincoln, Nebraska. She has managed to make a name for herself as a formidable songwriter and engaging performer on the national folk & Americana scene while being a mom. "Laurie is a true artist. She opens hearts and sings from a place of depth and love. She held my tough NYC audience with her masterful storytelling, strong lyrics and vulnerable voice, moving them to tears and laughter. If she is performing anywhere near you, run to see her. You will not be disappointed; you will be transformed." - [KUNfm](#) [KUNfm](#) [Hci gYCbWhsYfNYC](#). Listen at: [Laurie McClain](#)

Tickets are \$15 in advance or \$20 at the door.

To purchase tickets for any coffeehouse event, go to www.riverofgrassuu.org and click on the "Events" tab. Select "River of Grass Café. Purchased tickets will be held for you at the front door on the night of the performance. Doors open at 7:30 pm. Music starts at 8:00 pm. Drinks and delicious food from our River of Grass chefs are available. Come hungry and bring your friends!



Upcoming Concerts: Amy Carol Webb – April 12th – Singer-songwriter who touches our hearts with each original song; each concert is special. Amy is a favorite local folk entertainer.

Janis Ian – May 3rd and 4th – amazing renowned entertainer, best known for her Grammy hit songs "At Seventeen" and "Society's Child," and she just won another Grammy! Get your **Janis Ian** tickets now for the Friday, May 3rd show (Saturday, May 4th is sold out). **There are only a few tickets left; buy yours now!**

MARCH REV. AMY CAROL WEBB WEEKEND AT RIVER OF GRASS



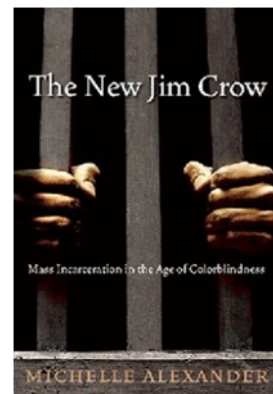
Saturday, March 16th, from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm:
Pastoral Care Counseling, River of Grass Office

Sunday, March 17th at 12 noon:
UUA Common Reader Guided Book Discussion,
River of Grass Multi-Purpose Room

Rev. Amy Carol Webb will be leading a book discussion on the 2012-2013 UUA Common Read: *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander (The New Press) on **Sunday, March 17th** at 12:00 noon (after her service and hospitality time). Grab some tea, coffee, or juice and join us for a lively guided discussion.

Michelle Alexander, an attorney who is a civil rights advocate and litigator, asserts that crime-fighting policies and systems in the U.S., such as the “war on drugs” and the incarceration system, disproportionately and intentionally affect Americans of color. She describes multifaceted, lifelong discrimination and disenfranchisement that affect people who are branded “felon.”

Buy it. The [UUA Bookstore](#) is supporting this Common Read with a 10% discount on orders of 5-9 books and 20% off orders of 10 or more books. Your [purchase of *The New Jim Crow*](#) from the UUA Bookstore supports the work of our Association. *The New Jim Crow* is also available online where e-books are sold, and in public libraries.



Watch the author’s speech. At General Assembly 2012, her presentation drew a large crowd, and [can be viewed online \(58:15\)](#).

Discuss it with our group. The Unitarian Universalist [discussion guide to *The New Jim Crow*](#) helps groups reflect on the book and consider together what steps they are called to take, as people of faith, in response to Alexander’s call for awareness and action.

MARCH Calendar

For a complete listing of our activities for March, 2013 (and beyond), please check out our new [Google](#) online calendar. Either click [here](#) for the calendar or go to: <http://www.riverofgrassuu.org/calendar.html> for all the latest events in our congregation!

COMING UP IN APRIL

RIVER OF GRASS ANNUAL SEDER DINNER MONDAY, APRIL 1ST AT 6:30PM



This year, Passover begins the evening of March 25th and ends the evening of Tuesday, April 2nd. On Monday, April 1st at 6:30 pm, River of Grass will hold its Annual UU Seder Dinner. To participate in this event, please contact seder@riverofgrassuu.org.
