

Reflections

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE RIVER OF GRASS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

DAVIE, FLORIDA

APRIL 2013

MINISTER'S CORNER

MADE OF RAIN

by the Rev. Amy Carol Webb



*When clouds pile up on the near horizon
When wind roars over the thirsty plain
Do not despair at the storms arising
For we are made of rain*



One spring morning awhile back these words surfaced after one of those Florida storms that leaves trees bent, branches broken and that feeling in the air that the Earth herself is trying to catch her breath. With that kind of storm aftermath, you survey the damage and wonder how the flora and fauna will recover.

And then Earth sets about healing herself. My first real Florida lesson in this was Hurricane Andrew in 1992, where the morning after I could see the spire of the Biltmore in Coral Gables from my house in South Miami – because all the tops

of the trees were gone. I cried thinking we'd never get back that beautiful hammock of oak and fig and all manner of pines - though I did have a new appreciation for Miami's remarkable sky-scrapes - until just two years later when I had to hire someone to trim my trees, all of them grown stronger in the places they had been broken.

So, on that spring morning awhile back as I once more took stock of a storm's impact, it occurred to me that we, too, are like our Mother Earth. We, too, suffer life's storms to find ourselves bent and broken as they pass. We, too, wonder how we can ever recover. And we, too, set about healing, and often discover ourselves stronger still.



*When you hear the rumbling of the thunder
When your heart spins 'round like an old weathervane
Fling your arms wide to the coming wonder
For we are made of rain*

This is the cycle of life. Earthly life. Human life. The life of the spirit. The life of the heart. This is only taking our place on the Web of All Being of Which We Are a Part – our seventh Unitarian Universalist Principle.

*Blue from the skies falls down into the rivers
That flow through the land to the sea
There the sun warms the waves into mist as it shimmers
Into clouds riding breezes back to you and me*

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BUUKIES BOOK GROUP

Diane Diaz, Coordinator

The bUUKies will be reading *The 19th Wife* by David Ebershoff for their April 17th meeting and *The Story Teller* by Jodi Picoult for the May 15th one. These books can be found at the library or your favorite bookseller.

The bUUKies meet at River of Grass at 7:15 pm.

Come join us! For more information, please contact: buukies@riverofgrassuu.org.



APRIL SERVICES

Apr. 7 *Service and Social Justice*
Theme

Apr. 14 *Faith Development – Youth*
Affirmations

Apr. 21 *Rev. Amy Carol Webb*

Apr. 28 *Marjorie Loring*



WOMEN'S GROUP

Ingrid Furlong, Coordinator



The Women's Group meets on the 4th Monday of each month from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm in the Teen Room. April's meeting will be on April 22nd.

We will be discussing: **Journals, Diaries, and Reflecting on One's Own Life.** How do you tell your own story to yourself? Are you hero, victim, sage, or fool? What are the stories that represent the "best you"? Come join us on April 22nd!

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

www.riverofgrassuu.org
office@riverofgrassuu.org

Newsletter

Editor Esther Sampol
Design & Production Brit Lundell
Copy Editors Diane Diaz & Zena Tucker

Congregational Administrator

Sophia Brown

Board of Trustees

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Marjorie Loring

New Growth

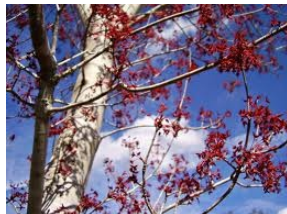
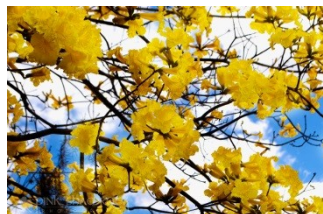


Spring is just around the corner. Up north, the snow will begin to melt (well, hopefully) and the fresh mud will become the fertile soil for new growth. The seasons here in south Florida may not be as dramatic as those seen up north, but the signs of spring are there for those who pay attention to the subtle cycles of the natural world around us. Just ask our resident plant expert, [Alan Meerow](#). “During the springtime”, he says, “look closely at our wetlands and you will see the bright red flowers at the branch tips of the red maples, followed closely by the emergence of red leaves. Watch as the Bald cypress trees begin to leaf out, and take in the new blooms of the yellow and pink trumpet trees that are cultivated throughout our neighborhoods and roadways.”



Last month, I went ‘slogging’ with the Full Moon Daughters in the Big Cypress Nature Preserve. [Christy Schultz](#), our Faith Development Coordinator and nature guide for the trip, assured us that the water levels would not be too high this time of year. In fact, she told us, water that is normally waist to chest deep in September would only be up to our knees or thighs in March. Walking through the mud, the saw grass, and cypress knees in the middle of the Florida Everglades was a lesson in trust for sure, but it came with another lesson that extended beyond my desire to leave alligator territory with all of my body parts! Trust, I discovered, ties together all the things that I count on, hope for, wish for, and work for. It is a pervasive thread that runs through the day to day of my life. It is because of my ability to trust, that I can take risks, see the world in new ways, grow, and move forward. Trust is not found on the clear pathways of my life, it is found in the mud. Mud doesn’t reveal everything to me, instead it appears in my path now and then, and is rich in the very nutrients I need to feed my spirit - waiting for me to take that next bold step of discovery - waiting for me to plant the seeds of my new growth.

We, at River of Grass, are planting seeds, too: seeds of truth and understanding, seeds of love, seeds of hope, seeds of action, seeds of possibility, seeds of faith, and seeds of community. I trust that we will see new growth at River of Grass – growth that will bloom into new life as we continue our journey together into a beautiful and diverse season of spring. May it be so!



MINISTER’S CORNER

(Continued from page 1)

Whatever storms may come, whatever winds may be blowing hard through your life this very moment, know that you will recover, your well of compassion deeper, your horizon refreshed – stronger in the broken places.

*When you feel the tides rising right beside you
When you’re caught up in torrents of time and change
Life’s only filling the well inside you
For we are made of rain*

*Drop by drop of joy and of pain
We are made of rain.*



YOU'RE MY FAVORITE DEPUTY!

Susan Juncosa, Facilities Chair

One of the things I've learned about UU's since joining River of Grass is that we have a bit of a reputation for having a lot of committees. Indeed, the standard joke goes:

How many UUs does it take to change a light bulb?

It Takes 300.

- ◆ 12 to sit on the board that appoints the nominating and personnel committee.
- ◆ 5 to sit on the nominating and personnel committee that appoints the house committee.
- ◆ 8 to sit on the house committee that appoints the light bulb changing committee.
- ◆ 4 to sit on the light bulb-changing committee which chooses who will screw in the light bulb. 3 of those 4 then give their own opinion of "screwing in methods" while one actually does the installation.

After completion it takes 100 individuals to provide input about the method of installation, another 177 to debate the ecological impact of using the light bulb at all, and at least one to insist that back in her day the lit chalice was quite enough.

In our small congregation, we have many committees and you are probably quite happy participating in or heading up your particular one and not looking to add another one at this time. But, I've made an observation. I've noticed that if there is a specific, one-time task for which help is needed, people are more than willing to help if they can—even if they're not part of that committee. For this reason, I am, hereby, "deputizing" every member of the congregation. I've broken it out into five different ways a person can help. They are:

- ◆ Emergency response – needed when a sudden and unexpected event occurs requiring immediate help at the facility. This can range from helping to clean up from a broken window to putting up hurricane shutters.
- ◆ Contractor representative – when someone is needed to wait for the cable person, for instance.
- ◆ Rental representative – when someone is needed to open the facility and show a potential renter around.
- ◆ Set up/take down team – when a rental event occurs which requires rearranging the furniture – and then putting it back again.
- ◆ Facility Steward – someone to 'babysit' the facility during a rental event.

My goal is to get every member of the congregation to sign up for one or more of these roles. In fact, you've probably seen me on Sundays approaching folks with a clipboard. So, once you're signed up, what happens? I will put you on a mailing list for that group. When the need arises for help, I'll put up the Bat-signal for that group. If you can help with that occasion, let me know. It's that simple!

But please, don't think of it as joining another committee – you've only been deputized!



SEDER

Judi Oltmans

The River of Grass Annual Passover Seder will be led by [Rev. Amy Carol Webb](#) this year. Come join us on Monday, April 1st at 6:30 pm. Come try some matzo ball soup and learn about the tradition of Passover.

Passover is one of the most important holidays on the Jewish religious calendar. It is celebrated, in part, with a Seder, a festive dinner when friends and family gather to retell the story of the Exodus from Egypt, sing traditional songs, and share a special, symbolic meal. The Seder will start promptly at 6:30 pm, so, please, come a few minutes early. There is a suggested donation of \$10 for adults. In the spirit of giving, 50% of the Seder proceeds will go to LifeNet4Families and we will be collecting canned food for them as well.



If you would like to attend please email us at: seder@riverofgrassuu.org.

SERVICE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Judi Oltmans & Steve Jens-Rochow, Co-Chairs

LifeNet4Families - Saturday Volunteer Days

Thank you to our LifeNet4Families volunteers in March! YOU made a difference! We appreciate your hard work and dedication to LifeNet4Families. On March 9th, **Steve, Rick, Bennett** and **Daniel, Natalie and Jennifer**, and **Lavonte** and **Xavier** were our LifeNet volunteers. They worked together packing boxes of food for needy families, marking out bar codes on the bags of bread, taping up the boxes and stocking the shelves with canned foods. There's a job for everyone!

Our next LifeNet4Families Saturday volunteer day is April 13th. If you can't make it, no worries, as we have more dates coming up: May 11, June 8, July 13 August 10, September 14, October 12, November 9, and December 14.



Look for our May 11th Annual Postal Food Drive sign-up in April. We'll need lots of volunteers for that event! Sign-up sheets are available at the back of the sanctuary or you can email us at ssjc@riverofgrassuu.org.

RIVER OF GREENS!

Deb Giblin-Davis, Coordinator



If you have ever dropped by River of Grass on a Tuesday afternoon, you may have seen boxes and boxes of beautiful fresh organic fruits and veggies and wondered what in the heck was going on. It's the River of Greens Organic Produce Buying Club!

What is a buying club?

River of Greens is an organic produce buying club that buys organic produce in bulk at wholesale prices and shares the discount with members. As a buying club we have the power to buy directly from farmers and distributors – that means that the food is fresh – from farmer to you! We provide a healthy, affordable, eco-friendly, food buying opportunity to the community at large and to our members. River of Greens offers a pre-paid bi-weekly mixed variety share to our members at a fair price. A mixed variety share changes according to market, season and availability. Each member receives somewhere between 25-35 lbs of fresh, certified organic produce for \$40 per share.

How does River of Greens fit in with the mission of River of Grass?

At the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly in June 2011 a *Statement of Conscience on Ethical Eating* was passed.

- ◆ “The three-page statement calls on UUs to “eat ethically” by becoming aware of the ways that our food choices affect our health and the planet’s health. It makes references to industrial farming, condemns mistreatment of animals and workers in food production, encourages a diet based more on plants than animals, and invites all of us to seek out and advocate for food that is raised responsibly.
- ◆ It invites congregations to work for food justice so that everyone can have adequate, nutritious food.
- ◆ A goal of River of Greens is to empower its members to take back control of their food source – to support local farmers as much as possible and to start the process of becoming aware of the ways our food choices affect our health and planet’s health.
- ◆ In the future it is our hope that the River of Greens group will be the catalyst for looking at ways we can implement the ethical eating guidelines as individuals and as a religious community.

For more information contact us at: freshgreens@riverofgrassuu.org or please leave a message at our congregational office at (954) 723-7877.

CHERISH THE EARTH

Christy Schultz, Faith Development Coordinator



Earth Day is April 20th, a time when we remember to cherish our mother, the Earth.

What can you do as a family to show respect and love to our Mother Earth?

The Seventh Principle of Unitarian Universalism, “*Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part*”, reminds us of our place in the universe and how we are all connected. On Earth Day we take the time to remember our connectedness and dedicate ourselves to planting trees, cleaning our shores, or just getting outside and appreciating our mother.

Before we talk about April, let’s talk about what happened last month. March was a very exciting month for our children and youth. The youth held their very first Beacon Youth CON at River of Grass, with great success. We had 30 participants, including youth from Jacksonville, Orlando, and Sarasota. The kids volunteered at the Tri-County Humane Society and did excellent work and they also heard from a speaker on farm animal rights and ethics. The kids are ready to travel to other congregations now for future CON’s.

The elementary groups began their Rites of Passage Programs during their Sunday Class time while the Early Elementary group is learning all about the Seven Principles. The Late Elementary Group made their own chalices and designed their own chalice lightings. Some of them will go one step further and become Chalice Lighters during our services on Sundays. Come and support their programs on April 14th and see them in action!

*April will be full of celebration –
more celebrating of spring, of our children, of the flowers and of the earth.*



On April 14th, the Faith Development Committee and the children and youth of River of Grass will be leading the Sunday Service. Come join us to see and hear our children and learn about what they do during their Sunday programs.

On April 21st, join us at River of Grass for a special Earth Day Sunday. Do something special for the earth, which in turn, means you are doing something special for you, your family, and the rest of creation.

On April 28th, join us at River of Grass for our annual Flower Communion Service. Reginald Zottoli, a UU author, wrote “The significance of the flower communion is that as no two flowers are alike, so no two people are alike, yet each has a contribution to make. Together the different flowers form a beautiful bouquet. Our common bouquet would not be the same without the unique addition of each individual flower, and thus it is with our church community: it would not be the same without each and every one of us. Thus this service is a statement of our community.”

FAITH LIKE A RIVER: ADULT FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Maddi Gutfreind, Chair



Adult Faith Development starts again for the second half of the year with another Tapestry of Faith curriculum, “Faith like a River: Themes from Unitarian Universalist History”.

Faith like a River explores the dynamic course of Unitarian, Universalist, and Unitarian Universalist (UU) history—the people, ideas, and movements that have shaped our faith heritage. While our history is largely influenced by and centered in Europe and North America, this program includes a broad a range of stories, people, and locations. It invites participants to place themselves into our history and consider its legacies. What lessons do the stories of our history teach that can help us live more faithfully in the present? What lessons do they offer to be lived into the future?

The class will be offered on selected Tuesday evenings from 7:00 to 9:00 pm, meeting in the Multi-Purpose Room and will be facilitated by **Maddi Gutfreind**. Proposed meeting dates are: March 26, April 2, April 16, April 30, May 14, May 21 and May 28. Look for the sign-up sheet in the hospitality area after service on Sundays. For more information, please contact: adultfd@riverofgrassuu.org.

RIVER OF GRASS CAFÉ AND COFFEEHOUSE

Gayle Giese

On Friday, April 12th, the River of Grass Café and Concert Series will present AMY CAROL WEBB!

The first time I heard Amy perform, I knew that she was a great musician with a great voice, but what really impressed me was that she held the audience gently in the palm of her hand. We were so engaged, hanging on her every lyric and, later in the concert, singing along with all the passion we could muster.

Of course, Amy is also our wonderful, kind, talented minister. However, on April 12th, she will switch hats to performer mode and pull out all the stops! Her songs are diverse, dreamy and reflective one moment, and rockin' and rollin' the next. With songs like "No Hands but Ours," "Stand," and "Love Doesn't Care," she moves us toward social justice. When she sings (I am) "With You, Without You," we believe that love truly conquers all. Amy is a prolific songweaver, having just released a new CD, *Welcome Home: Florida Songs, Florida Friends, Vol. 2*. Visit www.amycarolwebb.com to listen to some songs and read about all of Amy's CDs.

Listen: [Amy Sings I COME FROM WOMEN](#) as she sings about her Oklahoma Native American roots.



It's not just the River of Grass Congregation who thinks Amy is special. She was called an "Act to Watch--taking up the road Carole King, Janis Ian and Joni Mitchell have trod," by *Billboard Magazine*. The *Miami Herald* named her "40 to Watch in the Next Millennium"; she was the sole songwriter named among philanthropists, activists, and cultural visionaries. The *Miami New Times* awarded her the title of "best solo musician." She was a finalist in the Kerrville New Folk Songwriting Competition, and a winner at both the *Music to Life* (2008) and *Unisong International* (2007) competitions.

So . . . let's pack the house!! Tickets: \$ 15.00 Advance Purchase (\$20 at the door).

Go to: www.riverofgrassuu.org - click on Events to purchase tickets

Doors open at 7:30pm - Music starts at 8pm

Come hungry! Our creative River of Grass chefs are preparing something *yummy!*

Our May Shows featuring Janis Ian (Friday, May 3rd & Saturday, May 4th) are Sold Out!
Check out our River of Grass Café [Facebook](#) fan page for all the latest news!

GET YOUR SPIRITUAL ART GROOVE ON, AMIGOS!

Diane Diaz, Spiritual Art Group

After an inspiring month in Mexico, taking art workshops and seeing demonstrations, I was enthralled by the ancient process of making "papel amate" - handmade bark paper- and the cultural meaning of working with it through cutouts, collage, inks and/or paints to depict gods and spirits as well as worldly themes.



I brought back sheets of the paper in various tones and everyone is welcome to join the Spiritual Art Group for a hands-on workshop – all materials and tools will be supplied.

There will be Mexican music and drink and botanas for added inspiration.

Save the date: Friday, April 26 - 7pm at our facility.

Vengan todos!. For more information, please contact: spiritualart@riverofgrassuu.org.



FULL MOON DAUGHTERS

Diane Lade, Coordinator

The Full Moon Daughters enjoyed a hike (slough) in the everglades in March. We made our way through a section of the Big Cypress National Preserve, led by our Faith Development Coordinator, [Christy Schultz](#), and it was an amazing adventure. The group hiked out across the wet prairie (well, it was more of a muddy prairie) and into the heart of a Cypress Dome. We enjoyed nature from a very different perspective: ankle deep in mud and then knee deep in water. What could be more fun?



Our April Event – a Full Moon Kayaking Trip

Here are the details -

- ◆ Where: Oleta State Park in North Miami Beach
- ◆ When: Thursday, April 25th, 7:00 pm
- ◆ What: A guided Full Moon tour. It's a two hour paddle (we must be there by 7:00 pm, paddling starts at 7:30 pm). We paddle for an hour and 15 minutes to a private beach where there will be a bonfire waiting for us. We enjoy the moon, nature, and s'mores (and each other's company) while listening to live music for 20 minutes or so, and then we paddle back and arrive at the center between 9:00 - 9:30 pm.
- ◆ Cost: \$45 pp (\$20 if you bring your own kayak!)

If you want to participate in our April nature event, please contact us at fullmoondaughters@riverofgrassuu.org for more details and to reserve your spot.

See you on water, along the trail and under the stars.

THREE, THREE, THREE CHOIRS IN ONE!

by Gayle Giese



We call it Tri-Choir! This year, like most, three Unitarian Universalist congregations in our area got together to form a larger, stronger, mightier, mega-choir (we are only mega by UU standards). This spring, the Unitarian Universalist Church of Ft. Lauderdale, the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Boca Raton, and our own River of Grass UU Congregation have joined forces to present three choral works to be sung at a worship service at each congregation. The choristers enjoy singing and socializing with members from other congregations, sharing music tips with each other and the musical directors, and participating in worship services elsewhere. We also enjoy hosting and welcoming members from other places at our congregation.

We invite you to welcome all the tri-choir participants when they sing at River of Grass *for the first time* on **Sunday, April 28th**!

Each choir director from each congregation has selected a piece of choral music. The selections this year are: “For the Beauty of the Earth,” arr. by John Rutter (selected by Stephanie Nixdorf of UUFBR); “Turn the World Around,” arr. by Roger Emerson (selected by Susan Friend of UUCFL); and “Omnia Sol (Let Your Heart Be Staid),” by Z. Randall Stroope (selected by me).

The River of Grass choir is busy rehearsing the pieces and is enjoying them very much! We hope you will attend service on Sunday, April 28th to hear another wonderful service presented by **Marjie Loring**, share flowers for flower communion, welcome our tri-choir friends, and revel in the beautiful choral music!



BOARD MATTERS

Zena Tucker, Secretary



Last month's "Board Matters" took an unexpected, but much needed, hiatus due to personal reasons. This installment will catch us up on the current board activities. Fortunately, the mid-year congregational meeting provided an excellent overview of River of Grass activities, so my task here is minimal.

The new website is here! The new website is here! Our media team, [Esther Sampol](#) and [Marjorie Loring](#) have finished the monumental task of rebuilding our River of Grass web presence and presented the finished product to the board at February's Board meeting. The board enthusiastically agreed it was ready to unveil to the public.

Our financial standing continues to be on firm ground as our pledge income is on track and income from the auction and café concerts are at or above expected levels. At our last meeting, [Janet Schwartz](#), our treasurer, informed us about a new UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association) program called Generously Investing for Tomorrow (GIFT). The UUA Southern Region will be piloting this new program whereby the annual dues to the UUA will be calculated not by the number of members, but by a percentage of annual operating expenses. This will replace the Annual Program Fund for UUA dues. If you would like to learn more about GIFT, see Janet or the UUA Southern Region website: <http://www.uusouthland.org/gift.html>.

As for other decisions, the board enthusiastically approved the Service and Social Justice proposal for a River of Grass booth at the City of Davie's Spring Egg Hunt which was held on Saturday, March 30th. The booth not only gave us the opportunity to build our visibility in the community, but to have fun as well!

Much of our last board meeting was spent on planning to prepare for our next congregational year. Keeping our vision for the future in mind, what programs and ministries may we feasibly expand? What new ministries are desired? The board is developing our proposals and passing them on to the Finance Committee to calculate the costs. Much depends on the results of our Annual Budget Drive and the continued generosity and stewardship of our awesome members! Our intention is to provide these proposals to you at our Annual Meeting on Sunday, June 9th.

As we prioritize the myriad of programs and tasks, I am glad we have the River of Grass Vision to guide us: *We are a warm and welcoming spiritual home for all who enter our doors. We promote quality worship services and our diverse programs for adults and children. We promote connections with one another and with the larger Unitarian Universalist community.*



APRIL CALENDAR

For a complete listing of our activities for April 2013 (and beyond), please check out our 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! Be sure to check out our Facebook page, too.

COMING UP IN MAY

Saturday, May 11 – 21st Annual Postal Food Drive

Friday, May 17 – Friday Night Jewish Dinner - An Auction Event
(For tickets, please contact: auction@riverofgrassuu.org)

