

# Reflections

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE RIVER OF GRASS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

DAVIE, FLORIDA

DECEMBER 2014

## FAITHING THE FUTURE

by Rev. Amy Carol Webb



**I**t's always a little peculiar writing on deadline for future publication, not knowing if the words you set down in this moment will have any relevance, any impact when they appear days, weeks, months out. Especially in this era the world races exponentially faster with each passing hour, heralded by the incessant clamor of the 24/7 news cycle. What seems important as I write this may not seem so at all when it appears later in black and white.

And so, writing, it comes to me, is a practice of genuine trust. Of hope. Of faith. Large words, those. One of them in particular for Unitarian Universalists – faith. The word “faith” for many among us is a touchy one, carrying with it connotations of superstition, of magical thinking, of a lack of intellectual rigor or a sign of cognitive confusion, so deeply do we prize reason, rationality, science, logic, proof. To be sure, our world would greatly benefit by increased discipline in our thinking. But I wonder. In the process of mending minds, or for many, healing hearts of a history wielding faith as a weapon, I wonder if perhaps we might miss the very real presence of faith in our lives here and now.

After all, what can we know for sure? Isn't certainty – any kind of certainty – an illusion? Just as it can be argued there is no proof of any supernatural being overseeing the world, it can also be argued there is no proof the sun will rise on our lives again tomorrow. For some it won't. And they will not have expected that. The rest of us take it for granted, but it's really not a given. I trust the turn of a key will open my door or start my car, but there have been times both those simple actions failed to yield expected results – minor annoyances compared with the pain of promises broken by those whose hearts I had believed to be true.



Allegiance to duty or a person: loyalty. This is Merriam Webster's first definition of faith. Not belief in a deity or doctrine. Belief in purpose. Belief in one another. Belief we somehow manage to recover after all manner of disappointment. Belief that gets us up to face another day, to try harder, to work it out, to love some more, and look for the good in spite of it all.

It's illogical. Unreasonable. Probably irrational. But that's what “faith” means to me. Which seems rather more miraculous than even a virgin birth in mid-winter. In this season we witness the light once more overcoming the long, dark night of winter, let us remember that we, too, rise again to the call of justice, the challenge of right living, to the longing of humankind, to the work of hope and peace and forgiveness – all of us living lamps in a shadowed world. Ever faithful.



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## **Have you heard? It's a match!**

**River of Grass is calling Rev. Amy Carol Webb to be our Minister!**

### **Important Upcoming Dates!**

#### **Candidating Week**

**(Minister Meet and Greet)**

**November 30 – December 7**

As part of Candidating Week, our candidate for settled minister, Rev. Amy Carol Webb, will be visiting with groups and individuals. All RoG groups (committees, small groups, etc.) are invited to schedule a meeting with Rev. Amy in order to share with her what the group does and in order to get to know her better, too. Although many of us think we know her well already, there may be some nice surprises in store!

Candidating Week will commence with Rev. Amy in the pulpit on Sunday, November 30th. Shortly after the service, there will be a Q & A session open to all members. Beginning at 2 pm, we will have 45-minute meeting slots available for our RoG groups. Additional meeting times are available also on Monday afternoon, Monday evening, Wednesday afternoon and Wednesday evening.

There will be a pot-luck dinner on Wednesday evening, December 4th at 6 pm, for those members who could not be there on the Sunday before. This will be followed by another Q & A session. There will be time for one or two more meeting slots afterwards, as needed.

Please let Susan Juncosa ([facilities@riverofgrassuu.org](mailto:facilities@riverofgrassuu.org)) know as soon as possible if you would like to have your group meet with Rev. Amy. (If convenient and you can meet at any of the afternoon times, the demand will be lower then.)

#### **Congregational Meeting and Vote**

**(to call Rev. Amy Carol Webb as our minister)**

**Sunday, December 7 - 12 noon**

**ALL members are needed to participate in this important process!**

## SUNDAY SERVICES – 10:30AM

**Sunday, December 7:** *Be Ye Lamps*, Rev. Amy Carol Webb

**Sunday, December 14:** Pageant Sunday: *A UU Nutcracker*, Rev. Amy Carol Webb

**Sunday, December 21:** *Light One Candle*, Hanukkah Service, Rev. Amy Carol Webb  
6:00 pm: *Neshamah* Evening Meditative Solstice Service, *Deep into the Heart*

**Wednesday, December 24:** *Following a Star*, Christmas Eve Service, Rev. Amy Carol Webb

**Sunday, December 28:** *Peace, Love, Joy*, Elaine Silver



## DECEMBER CALENDAR



Click [here](#) for the River of Grass December Calendar (or go to: [www.riverofgrassuu.org](http://www.riverofgrassuu.org) – events – calendar)

### 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 11:30 am. **Hospitality Hour:** 11:30 am to 12:30 pm.

**Faith Development Classes:** 11:00 am to 12:00 noon

### 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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Faith Development ..... Karen Gonzalez & Diane Lade  
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Green Sanctuary ..... Steve Jens-Rochow  
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Pastoral Care ..... Riley Cothran, Pat Katz, & Marjorie Loring  
Personnel ..... Audrey Stang, Janet Schwartz, & Open  
Service & Social Justice ..... Rick Tucker  
Shared Ministry ..... Diane Lade & Janet Schwartz  
Stewardship ..... Ken Bresnahan  
Worship ..... Carolyn Sant Angelo

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Marjorie Loring, President  
Board of Trustees



### THIS HOLIDAY SEASON, WE HONOR A MINDFUL GIFT FROM THICH NHAT HANH

**A**t River of Grass, Thich Nhat Hanh is seen by many as a spiritual mentor that leads us in covenant both with ourselves and with one another. Our RoG **Covenant of Right Relations** is anchored in his wisdom and has helped us successfully navigate the challenges and changes of congregational life. I believe that his wise words have brought out the best in us, both as individuals and as a community of faith.

Recently, Thich Nhat Hahn suffered a serious brain hemorrhage. While he is still in critical condition, he is demonstrating awareness and even reaches out to touch the nursing attendant. Healing energy is being sent his way from all over the world. I ask you to stop at the end of this sentence and take a minute to add your healing thoughts to the stream of loving energy that moves toward him through our interdependent web.

When I breathe in, I breathe in peace.

When I breathe out, I breathe out love.

No matter how many breaths Thich has left, his life has touched millions, including us, and he will never leave us.



Thich's gift of mindfulness to us:

Here are two short phrases he weaves into breathing or walking that can help us be more present, loving, grounded, and aware in daily life. If you don't already, consider trying these out as an experiment in your daily life through the hectic month of December.

- ◆ You may take three steps while breathing in and say "Breathing in, I calm my body" and then with the following three steps "Breathing out, I relax."
- ◆ "Breathing in, I notice the colors all around me, breathing out, I smile." Then shorten to "Breathing in, colors, breathing out, smile." Even if we don't feel like smiling, the simple act of doing a half-smile sometimes can change the tension in our faces, which in turn affects our mood.

The holidays can be a hectic time of year for us. These two gifts will keep on giving if you open yourself to them every day.

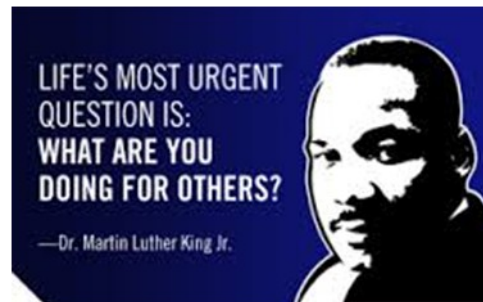
Namaste.

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## MARTIN LUTHER KING MARCH

**O**n Monday, January 19th, 2015, the River of Grass UU congregation will be participating in the Martin Luther King March in Fort Lauderdale.

This will be our first time in many years participating in this annual parade. **We're looking for volunteers to march, make posters, and decorate a car for those who want to participate but cannot walk the parade distance.**



For more information contact Zena at [ssjc@riverofgrassuu.org](mailto:ssjc@riverofgrassuu.org).

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## BOARD MATTERS

by Zena Tucker, Board Secretary

**D**id you know that your River of Grass Board of Trustees meet monthly on the second Thursday of the month at 7pm? Did you know that all members are welcome to attend? Did you know our President, [Marjie Loring](#), provides the agenda ahead of time and it can be provided to you by emailing her at [president@riverofgrassuu.org](mailto:president@riverofgrassuu.org)? Did you know that the board is made up of elected members of the congregation who are committed to serving the needs of the congregation and planning for our future – voluntarily! Did you know that each board member has memorized Roberts Rules of Order completely and follow it to a tee? Just joking on the last part, but all the rest is accurate!

What's the latest going on with the board? As one might expect, lots of discussion in anticipation of the planned vote on a settled minister on December 7. We heard a report from the Ministerial Settlement Committee and by the time you read this, you'll have the findings from them too. The board is deeply grateful to this committee for their due diligence, frequent meetings, and HARD WORK! Three cheers for [Ken Bresnahan](#), [Kathy Jens Rochow](#), [Janet Schwartz](#), [Susan Juncosa](#), [Toni Catell](#), and [Riley Cothran](#)!



Other activity centered around preparing logistically for the Congregational Meeting and our Board Auction event. In

business matters, the board approved Faith Development's request for the toiletries collection to benefit LifeNet4Families (ongoing now). The Service and Social Justice Committee requested permission for River of Grass participation in the January 15, 2015 Martin Luther King Jr. Day parade in Fort Lauderdale. This was also approved so look for more details on this exciting event soon. Many thanks to these committees for enabling generous outreach to our community!

If you have any questions about board activities, contact [Zena Tucker](#) at [secretary@riverofgrassuu.org](mailto:secretary@riverofgrassuu.org).

## ROG RENTAL INFORMATION

**P**RE-Juvenation Yoga started on Monday, November 24th – Prepare for the busy holiday season with



relaxing, rejuvenating yoga led by Mariah Chadukiewicz. She will lead a three-class series on Monday evenings (Nov. 24, Dec. 1 and Dec. 8) from 6:30-8:00 pm. Each class will consist of 90 minutes of classical Hatha yoga including breathing and deep relaxation. The cost of the class is \$30

for the 3 week series, or \$12 for weekly drop-ins. Participants should provide their own mat. All levels are welcomed. Please contact Mariah at [mariahsea.prema@gmail.com](mailto:mariahsea.prema@gmail.com) for more information.

## AUCTION NEWS

by Sheryl Cattell, Toni Cattell, and Esther Sampol



**T**he River of Grass Silent Auction and Bingo Night has only 3 small requests:

1. **Mark your calendars** now for our 2015 Auction and Bingo night scheduled for **Saturday, March 28, 2015**. Okay, now put your pencil (or smart phone) down and ...
2. **Go find all the baskets you won** last year and put them in your car to bring to service next Sunday. Whew. That was easy, right? And ...
3. **Think of ONE really big silent auction gift you can donate or ask to be donated:** perhaps a party, a B&B stay at a relative's or a friend's home, or a request to a company or business that you frequent. For example, many of you know that Sheryl and Toni spent some time in Sedona this summer and, as a result, we have 2 days and 1 night at The Boulders Resort & Spa and 3 days and 2 nights at the AZ Biltmore (value \$1,100). And all we had to do was just – ask! All they can say is “no” – but, most times, you will get a “yes”!! So, go for it – **go ask!!!**

Please remember that the donation request letters and our charity tax status can be found on our website on the Auction page ([www.riverofgrassuu.org](http://www.riverofgrassuu.org) – events – congregational events).

And, remember, the holidays are the **best time to ask for donations**. It's before the end of the tax year and it's also when everyone is in a giving mood. Let's go River of Grass! Let's start the good work of planning for our biggest fund raiser of the year!

## FAITH DEVELOPMENT NEWS

Ginger Parrish, Director  
Faith Development

*"It's the most wonderful time of the year!"*

Edward Pola and George Wyle



**H**o, ho, ho! Happy holidays! Faith Development may not have regular classes this month, but check out all the fun things we have going on!

- ◆ On Friday, December 5, we will have our second annual Holiday Movie Night at 7 p.m. This year's movie will be the 2009 animated version of the beloved Charles Dickens classic, *A Christmas Carol*. Participants are asked to bring a snack to share as well as one toiletry item per person to contribute to the Secondary class's toiletry collection project for LifeNet4Families. Pajamas, sleeping bags, and/or lawn chairs are also in order for getting comfy! This event is open to the community, so please bring friends and family and help us to spread the word about all the great things that River of Grass has to offer.
- ◆ Our girls will rock out on Saturday, December 6 from 2 to 4 p.m. as they meet for a Girls Rock Jam with **Rev. Amy**! All girls ages 10 to 18 who play an instrument are invited to come out and share in the fun! This activity is also a community outreach project, so please tell your friends, share it on social media, and help us to get the word out there!
- ◆ Our annual Holiday Gathering will take place this year on Friday, December 12 beginning at 6 p.m. The holiday gathering is a party for all ages at which we will deck the halls, eat, craft, carol, and generally make merry! Many hands make light work, so everyone is asked to bring a snack for sharing and to sign up to help with either setup, cleanup, crafting, or post-holiday decoration removal.
- ◆ The Secondary class will be collecting toiletry items to donate to LifeNet4Families through mid-December. Please help us to help those who rely on LifeNet by donating any or all of the following: soap, shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste, toothbrush, dental floss, disposable razors, and/or shaving cream. On Saturday, December 13, our Secondary students (and anyone who would like to join them) will deliver these items to LifeNet.
- ◆ This year's Holiday Pageant will take place on Sunday, December 14 during service. The theme? *A UU Nutcracker*! Clara, the Nutcracker, the Sugarplum Fairy, and all your other favorites will be there, so we hope you will join us as we re-envision this holiday classic for our UU holiday season!
- ◆ What better way to end the year than with fun and fellowship in the great outdoors? On Sunday, December 28, Faith Development students will meet at a local park to relax, play, and enjoy the last Sunday of the year together. Please stay tuned for more details!



## IT'S A MATCH!

### from the Ministerial Search Committee



As a product of a very deliberate and intentional process, your Ministerial Settlement Team is unanimously overjoyed to announce our candidate for River of Grass' Settled Minister – The [Rev Amy Carol Webb](#).

For the last 5 months, your Ministerial Search team has been hard at work applying the UUA guidelines to our unique circumstances for selecting a settled minister at River of Grass. You completed an extensive survey and attended cottage meetings, telling us where you think we are today and your hopes and dreams for tomorrow. We put these into documents which articulate who we are as a spiritual community; what we are

looking for in our programming and services; and what qualities, strengths, skills, and abilities we are looking for in a Settled Minister. [Rev. Amy](#) did the same focusing on herself, her skills, hopes & dreams. We then exchanged them, read and discussed them.

Since we have been blessed to have [Rev. Amy](#) as a consulting minister over the last couple of years, we may have thought we already knew her and River of Grass. But the truth is, from what we have learned thru this process – discerning both who we are and who she is – we feel even more certain that she is the right spiritual leader to take us into the future.

#### Here are just a few of our reasons:

1. Her vision of Ministry matches ours, hand in glove: “In my ministry, I seek to awaken, enliven and harness that force toward hope and healing for a confused and chaotic world, that we might make sense of this time and meaning for our lives.”
2. Her commitment to growth is real and grounded: “I seek a congregation eager to take on the mantle of truth-seekers and light-bearers for a world hungry for hope, fervently committed to the work of justice, fiercely compassionate, and fired up for this remarkable faith we share.” Together, we know there are many in South Florida looking for this.
3. She is clearly “at ease” with how she connects with people – on a personal level as well as through her sermons and music. Her natural connection with our “young’uns” is awe-inspiring, while at the same time we’re convinced she will make the perfect emissary to lead and represent us with the greater religious community in Broward and Florida.
4. After excessive analysis of your input, our team concluded that we at River of Grass ARE musical. We’re comfortable concluding that River of Grass is a natural next step for her to apply her musical ministry.
5. Her life journey is...RICH. Her arriving to us now seems – both to her and to us – to be the next, natural step in a progressively inspirational and incredible life journey. This just seems like it was “meant to be.”

#### So what's next?

**Candidating Week: November 30 – December 7:** [Rev Amy](#) will bracket the week, leading worship on both Nov 30 & Dec 7. During the week there will be opportunities for committees and individuals to meet with her, ask her questions and hear her ideas. Please take advantage of the opportunity to know her better and for her to learn more about you.

**Congregational Meeting and Vote after Service on Sunday December 7:** We will conduct our congregational meeting and vote.

**Important to Note:** Article 7 of our by-laws states: “60% of the membership shall constitute a quorum” to call a minister.” (And 90% of those present need to cast an affirmative vote to call [Rev. Amy Carol Webb](#) as our minister.)

**Therefore, your participation is crucial to move forward.**

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## SERVICE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

by Rick Tucker, Chair

### LIFENET4FAMILIES – NOVEMBER 8TH VOLUNTEER DAY



**T**hank you to Ken, Ed, Gary, Alan, Roy, Rick, Steve Jens -Rochow, Bennett, JoAnn, and Lisa Joy for volunteering to help at the LifeNet4Families pantry on November 8th. They were joined by the NOVA University Delta Phi Epsilon sorority, and together they packed and loaded up 5 pallets of food for the needy. Quite an accomplishment! A big thank you to goes out to members of the Men's Group who came to volunteer!

If you'd like to join us at our next LifeNet4Families Saturday Volunteer day, we volunteer there once a month. It's a wonderful way to spend a Saturday morning - and remember, this is a great place for teens to earn their service hours. **Upcoming dates are December 13th, January 10th and February 14th.** You can sign up at the SSJC corner at the back of the sanctuary or email us at [ssjc@riverofgrassuu.org](mailto:ssjc@riverofgrassuu.org).

Can't make it to LifeNet? Every Sunday you can bring canned foods for LifeNet4Families to River of Grass and place them in the basket at the SSJC corner. They are always in need of peanut butter and canned meats such as tuna, chicken or beef.

### THE GUEST AT YOUR TABLE (GAYT) PROGRAM

**T**he annual fund drive has kicked off for the holiday season and it's your opportunity to help the UU Service Committee in their human right efforts around the globe. The scope of their efforts is too large to list but everything from education to relief efforts are covered under the UUSC. UUSC is our voice all over the world and our donations keep those much needed programs operating where they are needed most. Please consider making your annual donation now using the envelopes provided at the SSJC table. See [Steve Jens Rochow](#) or email [ssjc@riverofgrassuu.org](mailto:ssjc@riverofgrassuu.org) for more information.

## ANNUAL GIVING TREE DRIVE

by Zena Tucker

**O**ur Giving Tree gift drive to benefit abused and neglected children is on-going and will be completed on Monday, December 8.

Thank you, in advance, for your generosity for the children of Broward County!



And thanks to the RoG children and youth for decorating the tags, adding a personal touch to our gifts. Many thanks go out also to [Georgette Poland](#), [Pixie Wright](#), [Diane Diaz](#), and [Lynne Joshi](#) for setting up our Giving Tree in the hospitality area and for coordinating sign-ups during the drive.

If you've taken a wishes tag, please bring your unwrapped gift with the tag attached no later than December 8. We will take the gifts to ChildNet and they will distribute your gift directly to children in need. See [Zena Tucker](#) or [Diane Diaz](#) or email [ssjc@riverofgrassuu.org](mailto:ssjc@riverofgrassuu.org) for more information.



## GREEN SANCTUARY NEWS

by Steve Jens-Rochow, Chair



### OUR PLACE IN THE WEB OF LIFE: AN INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR RIVER OF GRASS AND OUR COMMUNITY

This highly-engaging, five-session class created by the UU Ministry for Earth ([uuministryforearth.org](http://uuministryforearth.org)) invites participants to look deeply at the consequences of their actions on people and the environment—at first, close to home and then further away in communities across the nation and world. The intent of this environmental justice curriculum is to help congregations identify specific environmental injustice in their own communities, with a focus on racism and economic privilege.

We will explore and bring to greater awareness our congregation's impact on our local community and beyond by asking: how is our behavior unwittingly affecting groups of people and entire communities as well as fragile ecosystems? Participants will wrestle with what it means to be faithfully and justly part of an inter-connected web of life by utilizing film, music, participatory research, visual mapping, ethical reflection, meditation and ritual.

The goal for the Green Sanctuary Committee is to create a long term environmental justice project that actively promotes justice for people affected by environmental injustice. We will discover the impact of our values and behaviors on other humans and our planet's limited natural resources. And, we will do serious justice work using lively and creative methods, and have fun!

The curricula will be offered on Mondays at 7:00 pm. The dates are January 12 and 19, February 9 and 16, and March 9. Please sign-up in the Hospitality area. Attendees will download the curricula from a link which will be sent to them.

Please direct your questions to: [Steve Jens-Rochow](mailto:SteveJens-Rochow@riverofgrassuu.org) at [greensanctuary@riverofgrassuu.org](mailto:greensanctuary@riverofgrassuu.org) or [Maddi Gutfreind](mailto:MaddiGutfreind@riverofgrassuu.org) at [adultfaithdevelopment@riverofgrassuu.org](mailto:adultfaithdevelopment@riverofgrassuu.org).

