

# Reflections

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE RIVER OF GRASS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

DAVIE, FLORIDA

SUMMER 2016

## SUMMER IS HEAVEN

Rev. Amy Carol Webb



From the beginnings of human experience, people have wondered what happens after life on Earth. Every culture, every tribe, every era, and age and religion has made stories to try and make sense of the fathomless unknown beyond the known that is baffling enough on its own. We've come up with words – eternity, hereafter, Zion, bliss, rapture, Elysium, Valhalla, Dream Time, Nirvana, utopia, Happy Hunting Ground, paradise ... heaven.



So what might this heaven be?

When I was a kid, I imagined heaven must be a lot like Summer. It just **had** to be grandmother's house, and snow cones, and swimming, and horseback riding, and cookouts and music on the porch, and fresh tomatoes from Grandma's garden, and wrestling my cousins, and the annual litter of Granddad's Boxer pups, and fresh peaches, and better still, fresh peaches in homemade ice cream after long, lazy afternoons in the sunshine -- and, no homework.

And then I grew up.

Summer doesn't mean quite the same things to grown-ups. It is still time we do our best to take a break from the headlong rush of our lives, however too-short that break might feel. And for parents, summertime becomes more about assuring our children have adventures. So what's a grown-up who yearns to once more lay in the grass and watch the clouds to do?

Well ... lay in the grass and watch the clouds. Even if only for a moment. In your back yard, or a park, or the beach. No need to make an expedition of it.

Or maybe you want snow cones. Find snow cones. Make snow cones.

Or peaches, or tomatoes, or cookouts.

Here's the thing: these things of themselves don't make Summer. We do. Summer is in us. Right here in us --- just behind the calendar and the to-do list and bills to pay and the troubles of the world and all the other grown-up "homework" that distracts us from our truest selves and makes us think there's no time or energy or space for anything else until we feel like we can't even breathe.

Summer's right here. Waiting for us to stop for a moment, take a breath, and open the door. To lie down in the grass and watch the clouds. Oh, how badly our hearts need us to do such a thing right now.

I can't wait to be with you again in August – and find out what you saw.



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## 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

Phone 954-723-7877

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**Minister** ..... **Rev. Amy Carol Webb**

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Trustee ..... Kristine Barkley

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Trustee ..... Dave Katz

Trustee ..... Lynn O'Brien

### Committee Chairs

committee contact info at

[www.riverofgrassuu.org](http://www.riverofgrassuu.org)

Caring ..... **Open**

Community Awareness ..... Sheryl Cattell

Concert (Café) ..... Robby Greenburg & Aaron Stang

Facilities Management ..... **Open**

Facilities Rental ..... Ingrid Furlong

Faith Development ..... Tanya Gustafson

Finance ..... **Open**

Green Sanctuary ..... **Open**

Hospitality ..... Bennett Lorman & Drea Kelly

Membership ..... Leana Bresnahan & Deb Kitner

Personnel ..... Audrey Stang, Lynn O'Brien, & **Open**

Service & Social Justice ..... Rick Tucker

Shared Ministry ..... Diane Lade & Janet Schwartz

Stewardship ..... **Open**

Worship ..... Kathy Jens-Rochow

### Other Resources

contact info at [www.riverofgrassuu.org](http://www.riverofgrassuu.org)

Office Administrator ..... Sandy Blair Chibnick

Faith Development Coordinator ..... Deb Ely

Choir Director ..... Gayle Giese

Pastoral Care ..... Riley Cochran & Pat Katz

Web Designer ..... Marjorie Loring & Esther Sampol

## 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.

## STAY CONNECTED!

**I**n between issues of *Reflections* you can stay connected to the River of Grass Congregation the following ways:

- ◆ Sign up for our **weekly email** with events and news that changes each week: send an email to [office@riverofgrassuu.org](mailto:office@riverofgrassuu.org)
- ◆ Visit our **Facebook page**: [www.facebook.com/riverofgrassuu](http://www.facebook.com/riverofgrassuu)
- ◆ Follow us on **Twitter**: @RiverOfGrassUU or [www.twitter.com/riverofgrassuu](http://www.twitter.com/riverofgrassuu)

Visit our **calendar**: [www.riverofgrassuu.org/calendar.html](http://www.riverofgrassuu.org/calendar.html)

(or go to: [www.riverofgrassuu.org](http://www.riverofgrassuu.org) – click on Events – Calendar.)



## FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Zena Tucker



What has our time, talent and treasure given to River of Grass meant to us? What are the ways in which we have achieved our mission and vision? And perhaps, Bart and Lisa Simpson had the right idea when they queried repeatedly, “Are we there yet?”



“NO!” says Homer. “NO!” Say I – over and over. I have so many dreams for our congregation--growing our numbers and commitment, balancing our budget, increasing the number of youth and young adult activities and participation, acquiring video recording capability for worship services, and the list goes on! Wait! A flat tire, a wrong turn, a stop for a meal that turned into a longer-than-planned delay, but bringing much needed respite from the journey.

While on this little respite (Hurray for Summer!), Bart and Lisa take time to jump in the creek, play tag, eat ice cream and forget to repeat their annoying question. Likewise, we too can enjoy the refreshing and luxurious break and take a look around.

Then the creek brings to mind the good things about River of Grass. Remember that great service when we sang “Blue Boat Home” and welcomed so many new members? Remember the beautiful installation ceremony for Rev Amy? Remember those hospitality hours that went on for two (hours)? Remember those thrilling Drum Circles when the rhythms connected our heartbeats to our ancestors and to the earth? Remember the sweet thank you note you received from another member? Remember the LifeNet4Families dining room renovation project and all the other volunteer times; feeling tired of body, but lifted in spirit at the end of each one? Remember the children’s holiday pageant, and how their costumes and bright voices and faces brought such joy? Remember the music? The game nights? The meditations?

Hmmm.... Could it be these joys and spiritual connections are not coincidence? That the gifts we share have already brought us smartly to our congregational vision: “We are a warm and welcoming home for all who enter our doors.”

“Are we there yet?” we ask. And I answer “Why you little . . .” But a friend nudges me, “Say, . . . I think we’re there!”

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## THANKFULLY, THEY PLAY FOR FREE!

By Gayle Giese



At River of Grass, we are very fortunate to have several professional-level musicians who volunteer their time and talents to bring us excellent, eclectic band music about once a month.

What does that entail? Rev. Amy tells us a bit about the service, and we start e-mailing ideas that we think will enhance the message. Because we come from different music backgrounds and have different preferences, the ideas, like our congregation, are diverse. We hope that by providing several music styles, there’ll be something to appeal to everyone--from a quiet, meditative instrumental piece, to a hard-hitting rock song. We listen to the songs and choose 3-4, and set about learning them in our different ways, often listening to them over and over and over again, trying out different accompaniments that work with our small group of instruments. While some songs are learned quickly, in a few sessions, others may take several weeks. We might try to match the iTunes recording, or we might create our own arrangement. Then rehearsals are held, usually two, before you hear the music at church.

When you see these volunteer musicians, please thank them for their time and efforts! While it is fun to play music, it is also hard work. Over all the years at River of Grass, these folks have graciously shared their music with us, and played, as Joni Mitchell wrote, “For free.” (That’s a good song; check it out.)

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## BOARD MATTERS

Toni Cattell, Board Secretary

The River of Grass Board of Trustees met on Thursday June 9, 2016 and made the following decisions:

- ◆ The board approved a policy that congregation members will be considered for all staff positions, except for the office administrator position, which cannot be a River of Grass UU congregation member.  
  
Other members of a congregant's family may be considered for the office administrator position; however, relatives may not supervise one another. "Relative" means a spouse, domestic partner, parent, sibling, child, grandparent, or grandchild.
- ◆ The board approved a short-term task force to identify and schedule the major fundraising events for the coming year. The RoG Art Group will be involved and intends to hold an event at River of Grass UU later in the year.
- ◆ The Board approved a request from the SSJC to use the River of Grass facility for an event on the evening of Sept 14th, 2016. The event will be organized by the League of Women Voters and will present a documentary called "Under the Gun."
- ◆ The Board requests that the Finance Committee make an adjustment to the 2016-2017 budget presented and approved at the May 15, 2016 Annual meeting. The adjustment would increase revenue, and decrease the deficit, for the results of the *Dent the Deficit* campaign, which as of June 11<sup>th</sup> has increased annual giving by \$11,455.
- ◆ The Board also expresses appreciation for the generosity of the members who increased their pledge amounts for the *Dent the Deficit* campaign, and for the awesome gesture by members who agreed to match this additional pledge giving! You all rock!



## WORSHIP SERVICES

SUNDAY AT 10:30 AM

*Our Summer Worship Services are an important part of our congregational life. These services are led by members of our community: They often are more casual, and address a variety of topics of interest to all. Come join us for our Summer Services. Watch for information in our Weekly Email Updates!*

July 3: *Some July 3 Thoughts about July 4 and Principle 5*, Susan Juncosa

July 10: *To Be Announced*, Kip Barkley

July 17: *To Be Announced*, Linda Lathroum

July 24: *To Be Announced*

July 31: *To Be Announced*, Pam Schrimsher

August 7: *To Be Announced*, Wild Pines Covenant Group

August 14: *The Artists Among Us*, Kathy Jens-Rochow

August 21: *To Be Announced*, Rita Cherubini

August 28: *To Be Announced*, Deb & Rob Giblin-Davis

## NEW CHOIR DIRECTOR

Submitted by Zena Tucker



**P**lease welcome Ms. Gayle Giese as our new 1/4 time choir director! Gayle has been a volunteer leader in our music ministry for many years, and holds bachelor's and master's degrees in music performance and a teacher certification. Over the last year, Gayle worked hard to gain a certification with the UU Music Network and will be attending their convention in July. Choir is on hiatus for a few weeks this summer, but practice will resume in early August. Congratulations, Gayle! For more information, email [choir@riverofgrassuu.org](mailto:choir@riverofgrassuu.org).



## CALIFORNIA, HERE SHE COMES!

By Diane Lade, Outgoing Faith Development Co-Chair



**M**ary Warner, our Faith Development coordinator for the past year, left us at the end of May to move to beautiful San Diego. Mary is going with her husband, Ryan Warner, who recently graduated from medical school and will be doing his residency training at the huge U.S. Naval Medical Center on the grounds of Balboa Park.

Mary worked with Rev. Amy Carol Webb to increase the number of intergenerational services, enabling our children and youth to take a larger part in worship as well as share their talents with us. Mary, a University of Miami education graduate who previously taught in public schools, took special care with selecting the perfect Story for All Ages for Sunday services.

A lifetime Unitarian Universalist, Mary is the daughter of River of Grass members Grant Basham and Pam Schrimsher. She grew up in our congregation and the Fort Lauderdale Unitarian Universalist Church.

One of her passions was reinstating programs she remembered enjoying as a kid. Did you like Valentine's Pals, where anonymous pairs of Faith Development students and adults exchanged letters for several weeks before finally meeting each other on Feb. 14? Thank Mary.

Mary's kindness and enthusiasm helped make learning fun for our children this past year. We will miss her but know she always will be part of River of Grass. We send our blessings with the Warners as they head off on this exciting new path.



## AUGUST ARTS WEEKEND

By Diane Diaz

**G**et your summer art groove on the weekend of August 13 & 14 with a museum visit and an art themed worship service!

### Perez Art Museum

Saturday, August 13th the RoG Art Group will be going to the PAMM (Perez Art Museum) in Miami right on Biscayne Bay. There will be at least ten exhibits on view, including Rauschenberg, Motta, Basquiat, Beatriz Santiago Munoz, and Michele Oka Doner among others. Check the museum website for collection details:

[www.pamm.org](http://www.pamm.org).

Admission is free every second Saturday with art activities in the afternoon. So bring the kids as well as your friends! We can eat at the cafe or bring picnic food and sit on the terrace near the bay. Contact Steve Jens-Rochow at [stevejensrochow@gmail.com](mailto:stevejensrochow@gmail.com) for more information and watch for sign-up sheets later in July. Please join us at South Florida's newest world-class art museum.



### The Artists Among Us

**S**unday, August 14th, Kathy Jens-Rochow will lead the worship service featuring several RoG members sharing their experiences creating art and how it moves them. Visualization and inspiration await all who attend.

After service there will be opportunities to talk with members of the recently revived RoG Art Group about interesting artistic activities planned for the coming year and how to get involved. Contact Emilie Henry-Richardson at [saywardhenry@gmail.com](mailto:saywardhenry@gmail.com).

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## FAITH DEVELOPMENT NEWS

Tanya Gustafson, Faith Development Chair



In May, Deborah Ely and I attended the *Teaching as Relationship* workshop, led by Connie Goodbread. Connie is a Unitarian Universalist Credentialed Director of Religious Education with over twenty years of experience. She is currently a Congregational Life Staff member of the UUA Southern Region. She has served as the Program Consultant for Florida, and Mid-South and Northern New England Districts. She also served as the Interim District Executive for St Lawrence District and the District Executive for Mid-South District. She is also an amazing speaker.

The *Teaching as Relationship* workshop focused on the central mantra that “Faith Development is all we do. Unitarian Universalism is the faith we teach. The congregation is the curriculum.” For the first half of the workshop, Connie led a discussion of these 3 central ideas. She first presented the stages of faith development, which was first proposed in 1981 by James Fowler, a professor of theology and human development at Emory and a Methodist minister, in his

book *Stages of Faith*. These stages start with complete trust, mature through the search for truth, and culminate in a universalizing faith centered on love. Connie then presented a summary of UU history and explained how the congregation teaches through everything we do or don’t do. In the afternoon, we worked in small groups to discuss what our congregations teach at worship, what we offer for each stage of faith development, and what we are not offering or what needs are not being met. Debbie and I came up with music as something we teach well, and teen groups as something to work towards.

Overall, the *Teaching as Relationship* workshop was motivational and fun! Connie Goodbread is amazing and had great advice for congregations. Debbie and I are excited to start a new year of Faith Development at River of Grass!

## CHILDREN’S SUMMER FELLOWSHIP

By Debbie Ely, Faith Development Coordinator

Thanks to our many volunteers, we have a fantastic Summer Fellowship set up for the children at River of Grass! Our teachers are bringing their ideas and talents to the classroom, and the kids are going to be taking part in a wide variety of fun activities together. All of the age groups will be together for Fellowship. Our plan is to begin most Sundays with worship together, then send the children off to Fellowship with a blessing. We hope your summer is filled with adventure and joy, and we would love to see your relaxed, smiling faces in our Fellowship!



## DO YOU LIKE FOOD? SO DO OUR KIDS!

Debbie Ely, Faith Development Coordinator



Come explore this and other common interests while teaching Faith Development! During the 2016-17 year, we will be focusing on our 5<sup>th</sup> principle of democracy. We will be using the curricula *In Our Hands: A Peace and Social Justice Program* for primary and secondary classes, and *Chalice Children* for our new Pre-K class! You can teach for 1 month or several months as a lead teacher or an assistant. Step up and sign-up to help our congregation and our kids! We need YOU! Sign-up sheets will be available during hospitality hour on Sunday. Please see Tanya Gustafson or Debbie Ely for more information, or email us at [faithdevelopment@riverofgrassuu.org](mailto:faithdevelopment@riverofgrassuu.org) or [fdcoordinator@riverofgrassuu.org](mailto:fdcoordinator@riverofgrassuu.org).



## UU's MAKING SMART DECISIONS ABOUT THEIR MONEY



**I**'ve been a UU and around UU's all my life and one thing I've learned about UU's is that they pride themselves on being a little bit smarter about things than non-UU's. Sure, I'm being a bit facetious but deep down I think you know what I mean. So when it comes to our money and finances, it's no different. We as a denomination tend to dive deep into our decision making where our finances are concerned.

For those of you reading this that are at retirement age, especially if you are over 70 ½, here's a smart bit of info that you are really going to appreciate. And this bit of info is going to help you with your church pledge too! Win-Win! As you may know, if you are over 70 ½ (honest to Yahweh, I have no idea why Congress decided on 70 ½... why not 70 ¾?) and you have an IRA or a 401k or some sort of retirement plan with initials or numbers as its moniker, then you are probably forced to take money out of it each year or face a whopping penalty from the IRS. If the plan is a traditional (non-Roth) IRA then you definitely have to take money out... if it's a company sponsored plan like a 401k, 403b or 457 and you are *still employed* at that organization, then you may get a pass.

This forced withdrawal is called a "Required Minimum Distribution" (RMD) and most people hate it. Why? Because it bumps up your Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) on your tax return which means you may pay more in taxes on your social security, you may pay more for your Medicare premium and it may limit your itemized deductions, meaning you have to pay even more taxes! It really can be a rotten thing!

But there is something new that Congress approved last December for 2016 and beyond that can make a difference... and this is where your River of Grass pledge comes in. It's called a "Qualified Charitable Distribution" (QCD) and was approved as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2016. What it says is that **you are now allowed to satisfy your RMD (up to \$100,000/year) by directly transferring a charitable contribution to a qualified charity.** You have to be over 70 ½ and it satisfies your RMD for the year the QCD is made. What makes this so awesome is that it bypasses your tax return! Which means it keeps your AGI down *and* your taxes on Social Security down *and* your Medicare premiums down!

So I wonder what a really awesome qualified charity might be? Hmm... It would have to be a charitable organization that has 501(c)3 status for this to work. Wait! Isn't River of Grass a 501(c)3 charitable organization? Why yes, it is! So you could make your pledge directly out of your IRA and it very well could mean you are paying lower taxes and lower Medicare premiums than if you took your RMD as a distribution directly to you and then paid your pledge separately. Why? Because when you take your RMD as a distribution directly to you it increases your AGI and your income for Social Security purposes.

QCD's can only be made from an IRA or individual retirement annuity... not from anything else, including inherited IRA's, SIMPLE IRA's or SEP plans. And be sure to obtain a letter from the charity acknowledging your donation!

To me, that sounds like something a UU would do... now that's a smart decision!

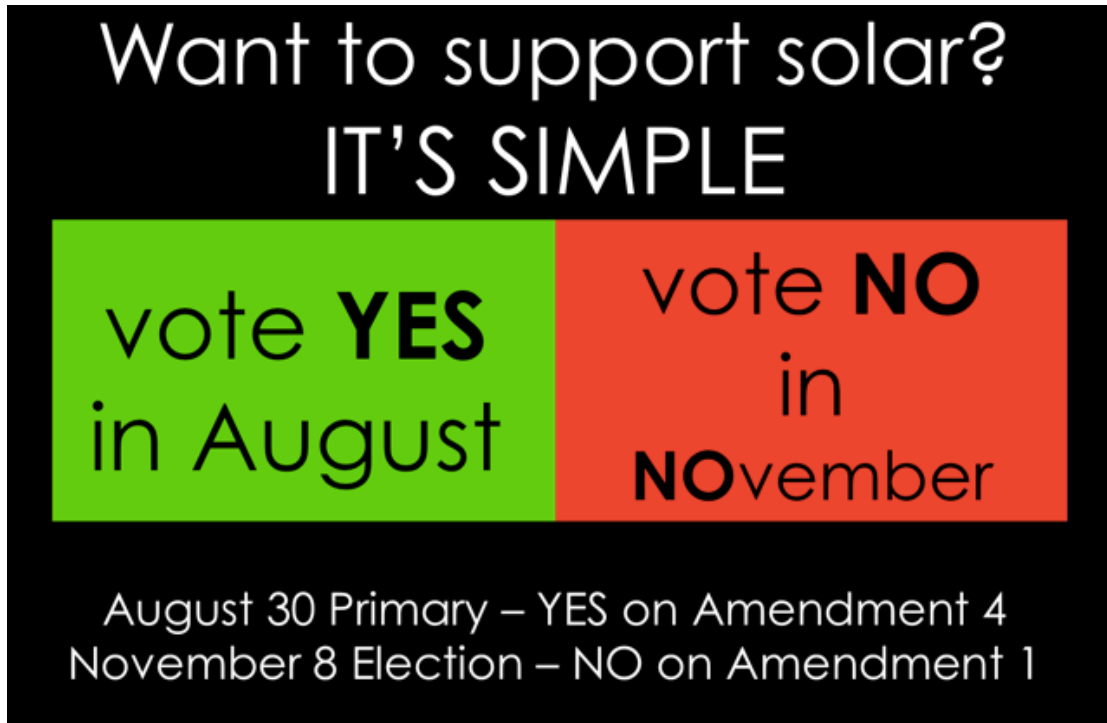
**Allen Giese, ChFC, CLU**

*Allen Giese is a charter member (along with his wife, the ever lovely Gayle Giese) of River of Grass and is President of Northstar Financial Planners, who manages the investment accounts for River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation and River of Grass Capital Fund. If you have any questions about this article please feel free to reach out to [allen@northstarplanners.com](mailto:allen@northstarplanners.com) or (954) 693-0030.*

## DO NOT BE FOOLED:

**VOTE YES 4 SOLAR IN AUGUST; VOTE NO ON SOLAR IN NOVEMBER**

By Steve Jens-Rochow, Green Sanctuary Committee Member



**V**ote yes for Amendment 4 on the August 30 Florida Primary ballot. It would eliminate tangible personal property and real estate taxes on solar systems, making solar power less expensive. This would lower the cost to lease or buy solar panels for your home.

In November Amendment One, the deceptive solar amendment sponsored by FPL, will be on the ballot. Do not be fooled by the words; they make it appear that this amendment is coming from the Solar Choice people. This is the good amendment that many of you signed, the amendment that was overpowered and blocked by FPL so it did not get enough signatures to be on the November ballot.

November's Amendment 1 will make it much harder for the public to access solar power. It would dramatically increase the power companies control over solar power in Florida.

Remember: vote Yes 4 Solar in August; vote NO on Solar in NOvember. <http://www.yeson4.org>

Steve Jens-Rochow [GreenSanctuary@riverofgrassuu.org](mailto:GreenSanctuary@riverofgrassuu.org)

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