

Reflections

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE RIVER OF GRASS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

DAVIE, FLORIDA

APRIL 2020



THIS WATER

Rev. Amy Carol Webb

We use the metaphors of our name, River of Grass, a lot around here – how we flow, how we make our way around obstacles, how we rise and fall together, how we carry on no matter what, how we row together. We love to sing the songs and hymns that deepen these notions in us, no matter what bodies of water those songs and hymns may be about – Peter Mayer’s “Blue Boat Home,” Rose Sanders’ “There’s A River Flowin’,” Coco Love Alcorn’s “The River (Water Heal My Body),” Pat Wictor’s “Love is the Water,” Carla Gates’ “Rivers of Grace.”

And while we often say we’re “in the same boat,” that’s not really true. We’re not in the same boat. We’re in our own boats, in the same water. It’s this water that holds us. This water that connects us. This water that buoys us up in time of trouble, and carries us onward when we haven’t the strength to row. And should any one of us drop a stone into this water, the ripples touch every one of us.



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Sometimes this water is rocky and rapid, sometimes smooth and serene, sometimes wide enough to ride it side-by-side, sometimes so narrow we can only pass through one-by-one. But still, it’s this water that rolls on, this water beneath and between us that hold us together even in our separate boats – even in this time we cannot be together except in spirit, as we learn again what matters, what survives, what holds, what does not change when everything is changing – as we prove once more, this water is Love.

I keep thinking of the passage from Herman Hesse’s “Siddhartha,” where the great teacher says,

Have you also learned that secret from the river ... that the river is everywhere at the same time, at the source and at the mouth, at the waterfall, at the ferry, at the current, in the ocean and in the mountains, everywhere

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KEEPING OUR BELOVED COMMUNITY SAFE:

VIRTUAL SUNDAY SERVICES NOW!

COME JOIN US VIA **ZOOM** FOR OUR VIRTUAL SUNDAY SERVICE AT **10:30 AM**

Come - join with us! The medium may be virtual, but this faith we share, and the love that holds us gets more real every day.

Following the service, we will share virtual Hospitality time with a live chat where we can relish each other's beautiful faces and voices together – bring your beverage!

If you miss our Sunday Service live, you can watch the recorded version [here](#).

FAITH DEVELOPMENT CLASSES

Kids are invited to a Faith Development Meetup on Zoom on Sunday.

Look for an email from Karen or reach out to her at religiouseducator@riverofgrassuu.org.

These meetups require passwords.

12:00 noon: Mockingbirds (Grades 3-6)

1:00 pm: Fireflies (Ages 3-5)

1:30 pm: Dragonflies (Grades K-2)

2:30 noon: Teens (Grades 7-12)

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!

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: send an email to office@riverofgrassuu.org
- ◆ **Visit our Facebook page:** www.facebook.com/riverofgrassuu
- ◆ **Follow us on Twitter:** @RiverOfGrassUU or www.twitter.com/riverofgrassuu
- ◆ **Visit our calendar:** www.riverofgrassuu.org/calendar.html (or browse to: www.riverofgrassuu.org – click on Calendar/Events)



By Daniel Schwen

River of Grass

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

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Adult Faith Development *Open*

Auction Ahysa Boutron, Scott May,

& Carolyn Sant Angelo

Capital Campaign/
Stewardship Rita Cherubini

Caring & Kathy Jens-Rochow

..... Kristine Barkley, Deb Giblin-Davis

& Georgette Lewis

Communication Zena Tucker

Concert/Café Robby Greenberg

Facilities Riley Cothran

Facility Rental Ken Bresnahan

Future Home Scott May

FUUndraising Ken Bresnahan

Interfaith Outreach Linda Morgan Crain

Music Gayle Giese, Linda Lathroum,

Brenda Parker, Anne Smith, & Aaron Stang

Pastoral Care Deb Giblin-Davis,

Pat Katz & Marilisa Lawless

Personnel Rev. Amy Carol Webb

& Janet Schwartz

Second Helping Kip Barkley

Security Rick Tucker

Service, Social Justice,

& Green (SSJGT) Steve Jens-Rochow

Shared Ministry Diane Lade

& Janet Schwartz

Welcoming Congregation ... Kathy Jens-Rochow

YUUn Adult Group Linda Lathroum



FROM THE PRESIDENT

ACCEPTING CHANGE AND UNCERTAINTY WITH GRATITUDE

Scott May, Board of Trustees President

Our lives have changed substantially in the last few weeks due to coronavirus - from sequestering at home, to worship online, to fear for ourselves and others. Uncertainty is all around us. And it's likely it will be with us for a while, and it's difficult to predict for how long.

Change and uncertainty can be challenging, even in normal times. So in today's world, it's wise to expect that emotions are likely to become more intense - in ourselves, our friends, our family, etc. Thus, this is an opportunity to be gentle and kind with each other, and with ourselves.

When emotions arrive, it can serve us to pay attention to them, feel them, name them, acknowledge them, and accept them. In essence, giving emotions a seat at the table. Why? Well... because they *are* here, and they are part of our human experience. And trying to cover them up, or deny them, or pretend they are not there, simply doesn't work. That's not how our bodies and minds function. Of course, accepting emotions doesn't mean we have to like them. Instead, acceptance is simply acknowledging the reality that these emotions are in fact here. And resistance to reality is the recipe for suffering. So it's wise to acknowledge and accept our emotions, as best as we are able.

This is beautifully captured in a poem by Rumi, called "Guest House":

This being human is a guest-house.

Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness, some momentary awareness comes as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!

*Even if they're a crowd of sorrows, who violently sweep your house empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.*

They may be clearing you out for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice, meet them at the door laughing, and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes, because each has been sent as a guide from beyond.



As we navigate today's world, practicing gratitude can also serve our well-being - simply by being thankful, showing appreciation, and maintaining a sense of wonder for life's unfolding mysteries.

Research has linked gratitude with a wide range of benefits, including strengthening the immune system, feeling optimistic, experiencing more joy and pleasure, and feeling less lonely and isolated. Studies have found that counting blessings and gratitude writing reduces the risk of depression as well as mitigating it. So it's not surprising that many successful people keep gratitude journals. Consider starting one!

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LIFENET WARRIORS!

Judi Oltmans

In March we had an amazing group of volunteers who came to LifeNet4Families to help take care of the needs of the less fortunate in Broward County. Thank you all for your dedication to LifeNet and the people they serve. Members of the River of Grass Choir: Gayle Giese, Geri Mikulski, David and Blanche Biklen and Jorge Rodriguez volunteered together at the LifeNet pantry on March 14th. They were joined by newcomers to the River: Eva Ainsley and her mom Alison, and Natasha Baez and Laurel Forbus Baez. Choir Director Gayle Giese said “This group of 9 was fabulous! We worked so well together! We prepared food bags for about 160 families. Kaidian at LifeNet was a great coach and also showed us a video about the history of LifeNet. Such a great place!”

At this time, LifeNet4Families continues to provide to-go meals to their clients. All volunteering has been cancelled until further notice to ensure the health and safety of volunteer groups and individuals.

ACCEPTING CHANGE AND UNCERTAINTY WITH GRATITUDE

(Continued from page 3)

According to Psychology Today magazine, “Gratitude is the most powerful correlate of happiness. When we’re feeling grateful, our body calms, and we feel at peace in all realms of our lives. It’s impossible to feel grateful and stressed at the same time. This is a basic principle in psychology called “Reciprocal Inhibition”; we can’t feel two contradicting states at once. And the best part about gratitude is that it’s easy to access in little time.”

So, in today’s world, with coronavirus, the economy, and quarantine, can we feel gratitude? Well, even with all of those challenges, there is still an opportunity to notice small, everyday things.... Like a tasty cup of coffee, a soft pillow, or a hot shower. Or walking in nature, seeing the birds and flowers. Noticing the air we breathe, seeing a smile over a zoom call. Even waking up each morning, with another chance to start over again.

Gratitude extends beyond ourselves. It strengthens relationships and benefits others, as even a tiny gesture can ripple outward into something much bigger.

Gratitude comes when we slow down, pause, and savor whatever we’re grateful for. Quickly saying ‘thank you’ as a reflex, is not the same as embodied gratitude. In order for the feeling of gratitude to take hold, we need to slow down and breathe-in whatever we are thankful for. Staying with it for 10, 20 or even 30 seconds, savoring it. That’s how to best bring gratefulness into our body and heart. And gratitude seems to sink in more by speaking it out loud, or writing it down and sharing it with others.

During these unprecedented times, taking care of ourselves and each other is of utmost importance. Responding with kindness. Reflecting on what we can be grateful for. These are things within reach, and can help serve our well-being and each other.



THIS WATER

(Continued from page 1)

The river is everywhere. The River – our River – is everywhere. We are not in our building right now, nor can we be contained by it. And yet we are everywhere. This water, this Love that hold us, surrounds us even now – maybe more than ever – is everywhere. We can feel this Love wherever we are, right now, at the same time, flowing out from the Source. We can feel its currents in our hearts, lapping up against the sides of our boats. We may not know when we can safely gather in the same room again – and we love one another too much to risk it again too soon. But we know we are still in this Love together. And that this Love will carry us back, even if we can’t know when.

So, yeah, our River metaphors still hold, as metaphors do when they are true. We still rise and fall and flow and row this River together. This water. This Love.

FAITH DEVELOPMENT

SHELTER IN PLACE

Karen Gonzalez



When I worked as a public-school teacher, I had to be trained to respond to a variety of possible emergencies – each coded with a different color dot on the back of my nametag for easy reference. A Code Brown told us to shelter-in-place, due to a chemical spill, for example. I never actually heard this code called and we never had to practice it. And now, we have all mastered the art of a Code Brown response!

When we are told to seek shelter, we find someplace safe; thus The Town of Davie called their order to shelter-in-place, “safer at home”. Our homes have now become not only our emergency shelters; but also our workplaces, our classrooms, our playgrounds and our worship spaces. How do we create worship spaces in our homes? Is it enough to open our laptops to the miracle that is our tech team? Some of our families are creating home altars on which to place their homemade chalices. A special cloth, a sounding instrument to signal moving into sacred space, special

tokens of remembrance, pictures of beloved family members – the near and the far and the forever missed. All of these can be a part of a family altar or worship space. Singing our favorite hymns together, sharing joys and sorrows and sharing in a meditation or reading can help our families to stay spiritually connected during this time of physical separation.

Many UU families around the country are finding comfort in practicing Sabbath rituals around a chalice and they’re sharing their spaces online. You, too, can take a picture of your altar and then post it to Facebook or Instagram with the hashtag, #uuchalicehome. And, on Sunday mornings, add your laptop to your altar as we worship together!



PROPOSED POLICY CHANGE

Scott May, President

At the March 18th Board of Trustees meeting, the Board proposed a change to the Policy on Policies. The current policy only allows for policy changes after proposed changes have been announced in the Newsletter. The proposed policy changes allow for policies to be changed at Congregational Meetings by congregational vote, as well as after announcing the proposed changes in the Newsletter or Weekly Email.

If you have questions or feedback regarding the proposed policy change, please direct them to Scott May at president@riverofgrassuu.org.

Proposed Policy Change – new text in **bold**, removed text in ~~strikethrough~~

14. Policy on Policies

- A. These Policies are established by the Board of Trustees of River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation and are subject to change by the majority vote of this Board **or the majority vote of members at a congregational meeting**. These policies in no way alter the Bylaws of the Congregation.
- B. The Board of Trustees may amend one or more of these policies at their discretion, subject to the process set forth in 14C, but will review the entire set of congregational policies no later than once every two years.
- C. **There are two methods to amend, add, or remove policies. ~~New policies shall be:~~**
 1. **Method One – Newsletter or Weekly Email feedback:**
 - a. ~~1.~~ Reviewed at one Board meeting **and approved for gaining member feedback via the official Newsletter or Weekly Email.**
 - b. ~~2.~~ Announced in the next copy of the congregational Newsletter **or Weekly Email requesting member feedback** with a contact person listed.
 - c. ~~3.~~ Approved or rejected at a Board meeting following publication in the Newsletter **or Weekly Email,**

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*There are many reasons to LOVE River of Grass!
We are a music-rich congregation, with depths of talent and skill.
Our pianists, band, and choral musicians are dedicated
to Music Ministry, which calls us to select
quality, appropriate, and relevant music, perform it well,
and involve all who are interested
so that we may enhance the worship service, touch hearts,
and deliver the message in a way that words alone cannot.*

RIVER OF GRASS BAND

MONTHLY MEMBER FEATURE

Aaron Stang

You see him playing one of his many cool acoustic or electric guitars with the River of Grass Band, but did you know that Aaron Stang is a Grammy award-winner (*Henry Mancini: Pink Guitar*) and the author of numerous guitar methods including *Sound Innovations for Guitar* and *The 21st Century Guitar Method*? He is also a recipient of Duquesne University's Lifetime Achievement Award and has produced DVDs for legendary musicians such as Albert Lee, Rufus Reid, Frank Gambale, Jerry Lee Lewis, and others.



As a music publisher for CPP/Belwin, Warner Bros. Publications, and Alfred Music, he oversaw the creation of countless songbooks for many great artists including Carlos Santana, Pantera, Jackson Browne, Green Day, Led Zeppelin, Rush, Dream Theater, the Rolling Stones, Joni Mitchell, and Jimmy Buffett, to name a few.

Some of you are familiar with Aaron's guitar and duo work with River of Grass musician Gary Gonzalez on their CD called *One Foot in the Present, One in the Past*. Veteran members may recall that Aaron brought Janis Ian to our own River of Grass Café! For many years, Aaron booked the talent for our fundraising Café Concert Series. He can still be seen setting up and running Sound at most of these events.

Aaron holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in jazz guitar and also studied graduate-level classical guitar at FAU, where he played several concerti with the orchestra, including the Rodrigo Concierto de Aruanjez. He also played at the Grand Café in the Grand Bay Hotel in Coconut Grove, did studio recordings for local artists, TV, and streaming commercials for resorts in the Florida Keys and elsewhere.

He can now be heard playing with our very own River of Grass Band, with Dan McGrath's Hot Java Band, the Mike Norris Jazz Orchestra, Carlos Panera's Last Flight Out, the Florida Wind Symphony Jazz Symphonia, and at contradances with familiar local fiddler, Allen Giese.

PROPOSED POLICY CHANGE

(Continued from page 5)

reviewing all member feedback provided.

d. 4. If approved, made available **at Sunday service,** in the Board meeting minutes, and in an updated policy manual on the website within two weeks following passage.

2. Method Two – Congregational vote:

a. Reviewed at one Board meeting and approved for inclusion at an upcoming Congregational Meeting for discussion and vote.

b. Policies approved by the congregation to be made available in the congregational meeting minutes, and in an updated policy manual on the website within two weeks following passage.

D. A copy of the policy manual shall be available online and in the congregation office at all times.

Getting to Know UU's

FAMOUS UNITARIAN

Kathy Jens-Rochow

E.E. CUMMINGS (1894-1962) POET

"I'd rather learn from one bird how to sing than teach ten thousand stars how not to dance."



As one of the most innovative poets of his time, Cummings experimented with poetic form and language to create a distinct personal style. A typical Cummings poem is spare and precise, employing a few key words eccentrically placed on the page. Some of these words were invented by Cummings, often by combining two common words into a new synthesis. He also revised grammatical and linguistic rules to suit his own purposes, using such words as “if,” “am,” and “because” as nouns, for example, or assigning his own private meanings to words. Despite their nontraditional form, Cummings’ poems came to be popular with many readers. Stanley Edgar Hyman wrote “Cummings has written at least a dozen poems that seem to me matchless. Three are among the great love poems of our time or any time.”

Source: Poetry Foundation

GIVE COMPOSTING A TRY!

Judi Oltmans

If you're sheltering in place and looking for an outdoor activity that will also help the environment, try composting. Here's a [Compost Tutorial](https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/sarasota/natural-resources/waste-reduction/composting/quick-tutorial/) (https://sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/sarasota/natural-resources/waste-reduction/composting/quick-tutorial/) from the University of Florida that will show you how to compost at home in 5 easy steps.

Why compost? Did you know that composting:

- lowers your carbon footprint
- keeps food waste out of landfills
- reduces methane emissions from landfills

Food waste and yard trimmings are the single largest component of landfills (from [epa.gov](https://www.epa.gov/)).

Thank you to Karen Gonzalez, Geri Mikulski, and Scott May for taking home our River of Grass compost in March. Thank you also to the Hospitality volunteers, we couldn't do it without you! Our River of Grass compost takes on new life in the compost piles of our members' homes.

Go green!

CAN YOU SEE IT?

Kathy Jens-Rochow, Membership Co-Chair

Many of you may remember the pure joy when you walked into your new home. Finally, a place of your own. You looked out the window and smiled at the sun. Heck, you probably smiled if it was raining.

You may also remember the anxiety and stress you felt leading up to this big moment. “How can I save and still pay the rent, the car payment, the everyday expenses?” “Will I ever find the perfect home?” “Will I be able to afford this?” “Oh, my goodness, this much paper and all this legalese. What am I getting myself into?” “This is a really big commitment!”

Well, that is exactly what our beloved community is going through and will be experiencing for a while. So, take a deep breath.

Finally, a place of our own. Can you see it? Space . . . look at that play space for the kids . . . look at that kitchen . . . classrooms! . . . ah, the dream.

Now the hard part, getting there. Just like we had to do to be able to buy our own home, we will need to dig deep, spend carefully, save, save, save. We are so fortunate here at the River. We have some very thoughtful, careful individuals who over the years have taken care of our money. So, we have a nest egg. But this is not going to be enough. For the next 3 years, we need to save more.

So, yes, take that deep breath. Feel the love and strength in this wonderful community we call our spiritual home. Your pledges to both the Annual Prosperity Drive and Capital Campaign are needed to make our dream a reality.

You can do this!

We can do this!



APD CAMPAIGN BEGAN ON 3/29.... YOU'LL BE HEARING FROM YOUR CAMPAIGN STEWARDS!

Rita Cherubini and Kathy Jens-Rochow, Co-Chairs,
Annual Prosperity Drive 2020-2021

3/29 was the Kickoff for this Campaign! You should have received pledge packet by now. Please open them and read the words of what River of Grass means to many who gave us their feelings quoted in this brochure. These haven't changed and now need steadfast commitment of all of those promises and expectations by you, our Members and Friends. Even though our doors are closed, the bills still go on!

So, have you been thinking of how you will support River of Grass with your new 2020-2021 pledge? We hope you have. And in consideration of your thinking, a Steward, one of your friends at ROG, will be contacting you to discuss your Annual Prosperity Pledge. Also, right on our website is a digital version!

Go to www.riverofgrassuu.org. Under Donations, hover over “Donations” and “Stewardship” will be a choice; click on that and the scroll down to the pledge card. Fill in the blanks and Click “Send” and it heads out to the appropriate person at The River. Save postage, delay and a trip to the post office!

Remember, Virtual Worship will be available this Sunday at 10:30. Stay tuned on how to connect! Our Caring team is making calls to everyone...you are never alone at The River!

Thank you for your generosity.

You are in our hearts!

COVID-19 RESPONSE UPDATE

Scott May

The River of Grass faithful is actively responding to COVID-19. As of March 17th, all face-to-face gatherings of any kind were suspended or moved on-line, and our building is closed. March 22nd was our first virtual Worship Service. Welcome to our new norm! We are grateful that many members and friends are in self-quarantine, doing their part to protect themselves as well as reduce the spread of the virus, and only venturing outside when absolutely necessary. Our extended Caring Team has coordinated a ‘network of contacting’ to help ensure our community is communication and cared for.... and our Covenant Groups are a large part of this. There is deep gratitude for the way our community cares for each other, remains flexible, and is diligent in responding to this unprecedented situation! Take a deep breath. Allow any feelings and thoughts to be as they are. Know you are supported. Stay safe!



MONTHLY MONEY SHOT

Brit Lundell, Treasurer

Two graphs depicting the Congregation's monthly financial state. The first shows our monthly operating account balances over the past 5 years. The second shows our actual deficit and income as a percentage of our total operating expenses for the current fiscal year to-date (i.e., since July 1, 2019) as of the end of **February 2020** and compares that to the figures for the previous 4 years. Additional details are provided in the monthly financial reports and the Treasurer's report to the board, which are posted on the wall directly facing the business office each month. If you have any questions, please feel free to speak with the Treasurer or with members of the Finance Committee.

