# Reflections

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE RIVER OF GRASS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION DAVIE, FLORIDA

DECEMBER 2012

#### MINISTER'S CORNER

#### **REASONS FOR THE SEASON**

Rev. Amy Carol Webb



It's that time of year. The time of year I swing into a lot at the mall to wait for a parking space behind a car with a bumper sticker declaring "Jesus is the Reason for the Season." And I think, "well, yes ... and no."

Jesus is *a* reason for the season. Along with the Romans' Saturn, the Japanese' Ameratsu, the Norse' Odin, the Hindu's Gonesha, Egypt's Ra, Iran's Mithra and the Hopi tribe's Spider Woman. As it turns out, December holidays

celebrating the coming of light and prayers for peace date as far back as human history, sprung out of ancient Solstice celebrations marking the seasonal return of the sun. December 21, known in Earth oriented traditions as the Winter Solstice, marks the longest night of the year in the Northern

hemisphere due to Earth's tilt on her axis, with each day thereafter bringing more hours of sunlight till the arrival of Spring. It's no surprise then that this season came to symbolize more than just the rising sun, but also rising spiritual consciousness, such as the Buddhist Bodhi Day when the Buddha received his enlightenment, the Zuni and Hopi Soyal with16 days of tribal reflection, renewal and purification, and the ancient Germanic Yule, celebrating the Goddess Brighid's fire piercing the darkness of spirit and mind.

It's easy to see why the early Christian church decided to celebrate Jesus' birth at this time. Though Jesus' actual birth date is unknown, early in the fourth century church leaders aligned Christmas with existing ancient holidays with the first recorded Feast of the Nativity held in Rome on December 25, 336 c.e. Not coincidentally, much of what we inherit as Christmas tradition – the hanging of wreaths and holly, decorating evergreen trees, gathering around fires, feasting and exchanging gifts – derives from the Winter celebrations that came before.

Right about now, it's quite likely some conservative media host might chime in to say I've just declared "War on Christmas." But I have not. Far from it. Actually, my aim is to strengthen Christmas. By pointing to its origins in ancient holidays of light, we underscore Christmas as an expression of the deepest yearnings of human existence. Our longing to rise into new consciousness. Our desire to give the best of ourselves one to another. Our reach for the ties that bind us through love to both the seen and unseen elements of our world. Our determination to bring light, to be light prevailing over darkness. Our refusal to ever give up hope. That does not and cannot diminish the message of Christmas, but rather lift it up as another journey out of darkness into light.

(Continued on page 2)

## Celebrate the Season

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#### MINISTER'S CORNER

(Continued from page 1)

So yes, there are many reasons for the season. And just one. Peace.

Whatever your chosen celebration, may peace be yours in the coming days of family, friends and feast for body and soul. As it has since the beginning, may Light ever conquer darkness, in the world and in our selves.

#### **REASONS FOR THE SEASON**

© 2011, Amy Carol Webb

Solstice, Saturnalia, Christmas, Channukah, Pancha Ganapati, Bodhi Day Yule and Mondranect, Shab-e Yalda, Kwanzaa, Sol Invictus, Dong Zhi, Soyal Out of darkness comes the sun every new December In the name of peace for all to come, Earth's people join together

Saints come hither, Gods and Goddesses, Basil, Nicholas, and Lucia Saturn, Ameratsu, Jai Gonesha, Odin, Spider Woman and old Ra New day born of long, cold night raised in celebration Bring the coming of the light to the soul of every nation

La Befana flies the night, Santa Claus his sleigh Emmanuel beneath star bright and Israel's lamps aflame Tapers lit for all to see, voices blend in "blessed be" Winter yields to coming Spring and faith is kept forever-green

#### **№** 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 worshipers.

All meetings are held at 11850 W State Road 84, Suite 1 in Davie unless otherwise noted.

#### **DECEMBER SERVICES**

- Dec. 2 A Unitarian Holiday, Marjorie J. Loring
- Dec. 9 Light Out of Darkness, Troy Gies
- Dec. 16 Reverend Amy Carol Webb Sunday – Holiday Pageant
- Dec. 23 *Holiday Song Fest* Susan Juncosa, Riley Cothran, & Zena Tucker
- Dec. 24 *Christmas Eve Service* Rev. Amy Carol Webb
- Dec. 30 *Old Stories and New Beginnings*, Kip Barkley

### River of Grass

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

Phone **954-723-7877** 

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#### Newsletter

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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT Marjorie Loring



ere we are, smack in the middle of another congregational year. We have passed through a time of Thanksgiving and are coming up on a time of holiday giving, personal reflection, and New Year's resolutions. What better way to spend our mid-year than with gratitude, generosity, and intention?



Join me in honoring those things in our lives that we take for granted. Here is something you can do with your spouse, life partner, or family. Sit together and make a gratitude list. Come up with 31 items that you take for granted and assign one for each day in December. Then, each day in December, share a moment together and be mindful of these blessings both large and small.

Join me in giving more than we hold onto. Like Ebenezer and the Grinch, let yourself discover what really happens when you give more than you think you can. Remember that by giving, I do not mean just things that you buy. The best gifts include your time, your attention, your creativity, compliments, praises, and smiles.

Join me in reflecting upon our strengths rather that focusing on our shortcomings. It has been said that our lives move in the direction of our thoughts. Find the strengths waiting to be discovered both in you and in others - therein lies a lasting gift that is priceless.

May blessings fall gently upon you, your loved ones, your friends, and your neighbors. Enjoy the joy, and the wonder of this holiday season.

#### MEMBERSHIP MATTERS Leana Bresnahan, Chair

any thanks to John and Liz Perez for opening their home on Sunday, November 4th for our Tropical Storm Isaac-delayed annual Welcome Back Picnic! We had about 80 members and friends in atten-DANCE on a beautiful, sunny and breezy South Florida fall day. (See the photographs on the following pages.) Thank you to all who brought food to share and food to donate to LifeNet4Families. Thank you to everyone who shared your Sunday with us. Thank you especially to our wonderful kids and youth, whose laughter and pure energy filled our spirits with joy.



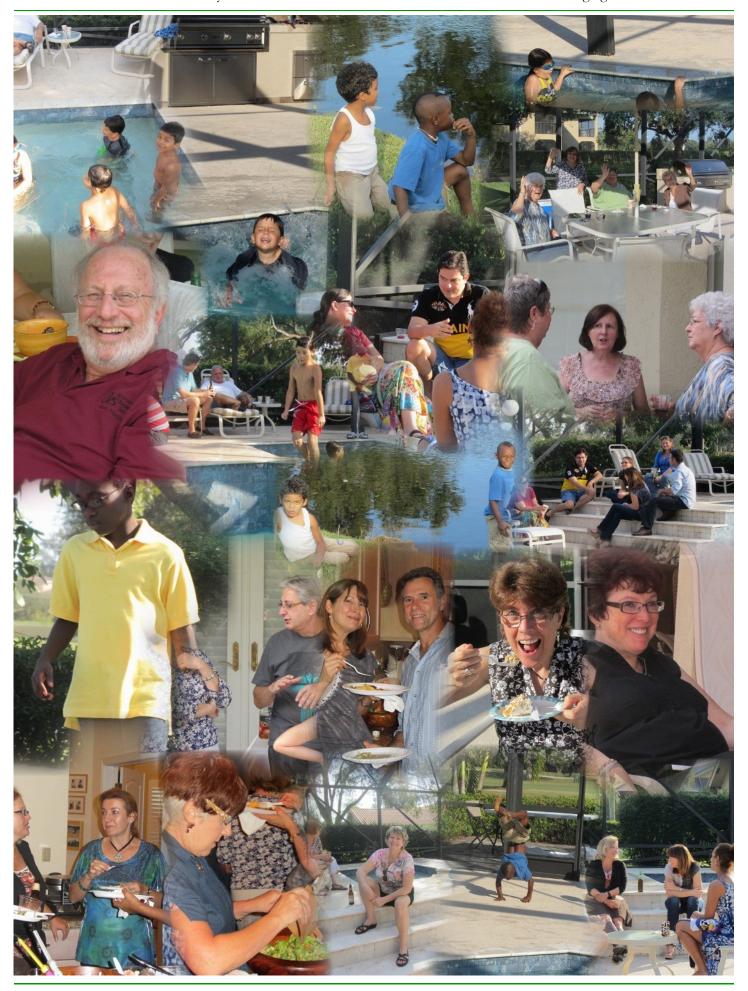
The Membership Committee held a Pathway to Membership class on Tuesday, November 13th. Thanks to all who attended, both presenters and participants! It is always enriching to share with friends and potential new members our perspectives on what River of Grass and Unitarian Universalism mean in our lives, and to hear their perspectives on matters of the heart and soul as well!

On Sunday, December 2nd, we will have a New Member ceremony during worship service, and then a Potluck New Member Luncheon immediately after the service. Please contact me at <a href="mailto:membership@riverofgrass.org">membership@riverofgrass.org</a> for more information!

In this month's issue of the UUWorld, the Rev. Fredric J. Muir, parish minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis, Maryland wrote a thought-provoking article entitled "The End of iChurch" on what UU congregations need to do to grow our faith and have a greater impact on our world. He asserts that if an overemphasis on individualism has limited our appeal, "covenant can open the way to the Beloved Community, where the promise of individuality and justice inspire, empower, broaden, and deepen all." I hope you'll take the time to read this article and then share your thoughts with me at membership@riverofgrass.org on how we at River of Grass can live our own Beloved Community more intensely and more inclusively in the coming year. (An excerpt can be found by clicking <a href="here">here</a>.)

Many blessings and much joy to all in this special season of the heart!





#### THE RETURN OF THE LIGHT

#### **Christy Schultz, Faith Development Coordinator**

ovember was the month of *Thanks and Giving*! We began our month of giving with a successful UNICEF collection - our children raised \$348.50! Thank you to all of you for your generosity and to the kids for their dedication!

In December we continue giving, but it is also a month of *festivities*. It is a time to share and to give, to be with our families and our communities – to celebrate life and the promise that the light will return after the dark days of winter. Here in south Florida we don't notice the dark wintery days as much as folks up north, but we still feel the excitement when the days start getting longer again. The Winter or December Solstice, on December 21<sup>st</sup>, will be the shortest day and the longest night of the year, and from there on each day will be a little bit longer, a little bit brighter!



How can we celebrate with our families, our community? Not only is this season a time to receive (gratefully and graciously), but also a time to give. Think of ways you can give – plant a tree in someone's name, do the dishes for mom and dad for a week, do something nice for a neighbor, or give to your local charity, like the ChildNet Angel Tree (see below). Join your community in spirit and song, light candles (and chalices), and take action to make a difference in someone's life. Spend evenings at home with your children and families and *celebrate*!



And...Come to River of Grass and share in the spirit of the season. Our month will be full of festivities and light...

- ♦ Calling all angels! Gifts, clothes, gift-cards, electronics and other requests from the foster children of Broward County's ChildNet organization will be collected in December. Please select an Angel Tag(s) off the tree and sign the list. Unwrapped gifts can be placed under the tree in our Hospitality Area. The tags have suggestions of three items, but any number of items are welcomed and needed. The last Sunday to bring your gifts and be an Angel will be December 16th. Your compassion and generosity are deeply needed by these infants and children who have had some turbulent times. Contact Carolyn Sant Angelo if you have any questions.
- Friday, December 7th is the Holiday Gathering; join us from 6pm to 9pm at River of Grass for an intergenerational holiday celebration! Share holiday cheer and join in a sing-a-long, crafts, and photos with Ole St. Nick! There will be festive food and fun for everyone!! If you would like to volunteer to lead a craft or activity or to help in any other way, please email FaithDevelopment@riverofgrass.org.
- Sunday, December 16th is the Christmas Holiday Pageant Raphaela the Herald Angel, by Rev. Amy. Join your children and congregation in dramatic song and performance for this entertaining adaptation of Raphael, The Herald Angel, by David Appel and Merle Hudson, 1957. Email me: <a href="mailto:fdcoordinator@riverofgrass.org">fdcoordinator@riverofgrass.org</a> if you are interested in being a part of the pageant!
- Sunday, December 23<sup>rd</sup> is the Holiday Songfest. Bring the whole family and join us in song!
- ♦ Monday, December 24<sup>th</sup> is the Christmas Eve Celebration with Rev. Amy. Join us for this wonderful and warm River of Grass family tradition.

There will be regular Sunday school classes for all children and youth on **December 2**<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>. No classes on **December 16**<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 30<sup>th</sup>. Classes will resume on **January 6**<sup>th</sup> after the holiday break.

#### **BOARD MATTERS**

#### **Zena Tucker, Board Secretary**

"There is no happiness in having or in getting, but only in giving." (Henry Drummond, Poet)

If these words are true, this installation of "Board Matters" is merely documenting the giving work of the happy people of River of Grass. Let's go!

Financially speaking, due to non-recurring expenses and building maintenance, we reported a loss last month. However, year-to-date, the congregation finances are ahead of budgeted loss. Special thanks to the River of Grass Cafe team whose last event netted over \$400 for our congregation. Thanks for all your hard work!



In the wake of the effects of Hurricane Sandy in the northeast, the board quickly collaborated and decided to do a second offering on Sunday, November 4th that would go to the Red Cross Relief Effort. The amount collected and donated was \$900. Thanks for your generosity!

Speaking of generosity, the Board is now in dialogue about who will be the recipient of the last Sunday of the month one-half of the plate offering as mentioned in the last newsletter. The youth of Faith Development are updating their proposal since the Board is seeking more information about the proposed charities. A decision is expected within the coming month. The Board is also in discussion on the recipient of our Christmas Eve offering. The Board has received many suggestions. However, as our sages

noted, this collection is traditionally used to re-fill our discretionary account. You will know the outcome of this decision soon.

Special thanks from the board go to John and Liz Perez for hosting our Welcome Back Picnic and to the Membership Committee team: Leana Bresnahan, Elly Keane, Vickie Koutoulas, Bridget Morris, and Janet Schwartz.

Many thanks go out also to the Faith Development team, especially Diane Lade, Scott May and Carolyn Sant Angelo, for the fun Spook-tacular Halloween Extravaganza and the programs for our youth.

A big shout out goes to the Service and Social Justice Committee (SSJC) for conducting three (count 'em!) – three events – and a special service in the last 30 days. Particularly noteworthy is the work of Steve Jens-Rochow, Judi Oltmans, Pixie Wright, Bev Kaufman, Elyse Brunt, and Bennett and Daniel Lorman. We are so grateful for your work!

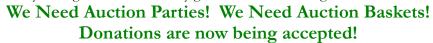
Inevitably, when one lists names of those who have contributed to make this congregation great, others who were crucial to an event or an activity are inadvertently missed. Please know we appreciate each act of kindness and generosity. I am reminded of R.E.M.'s song, "Shiny, Happy People". The song, just like the line from poet Henry Drummond (above) is just silly enough to be true. Thank you all!

#### **ANNUAL AUCTION NEWS**

**Esther Sampol, Auction Chair** 

#### River of Grass Annual Auction: Saturday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013

Our Annual Auction is just around the corner! Remember to think **ROG AUCTION** during this holiday season. Request gift certificates from favorite restaurants and businesses and keep the regift theme alive by setting aside those holiday gifts that would make great auction items.



To make a donation, please see Esther Sampol or contact: auction@riverofgrass.org



#### Unitarian Universalist Service Committee

Steve Jens-Rochow, Local Representative

"Advancing human rights is the work of many joining hands."

Every Sunday we say "Love is the spirit of this congregation and Service is its law." These words are familiar to us; they certainly are etched in my mind for they are our Congregational Covenant. What is this love? And, what is the connection between love and service?

Dictionary.com gives us a definition for the love that is the spirit of River of Grass: "a tender, passionate affection for another person or group." Love, "a tender, passionate affection," is what I feel is the Spirit of this Congregation. In the be-

ginning line of our Covenant, Service is linked to Love with an and. Now I would guess that Service is what our Congregation's love looks like. How does love become service? To answer that I would like to go back to my experience rebuilding burned Black churches at a Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) JustWorks work camp. I was given a Tshirt. It said, "Work is Love Made Visible". My first reaction was to question the phrase. What is this work that is love made visible? I had to ponder it; it took awhile before I got it. Work is Love Made Visible. We, the volunteers rebuilding the destroyed church, had an incredible feeling of closeness and warmth for each other and for the church we were building. The work we were doing was our love made visible.



The UUSC donated money and technical help to the work camp. With this financial help and expertise the work camp grew and finished the rebuilding on time. This work camp is an example of the multiplier effect of our UU service committee's work around the world. By donating a relatively modest amount of seed money and giving technical help to grassroots groups, the UUSC achieves some impressive results as they advance human rights and social justice in the United States and around the world. This is their partnership model.

You can help by joining the UUSC through our Holiday Guest at Your Table program. By celebrating Guest at Your Table you are learning about people and programs that the UUSC is working with, helping to nurture gratitude and service to others through "justice, equity, and compassion in human relations." Membership envelopes and Guest at Your Table boxes are available on the UUSC table at the back of the sanctuary in the hospitality area.

direct experience creativity science poetry agnosticism questions world religions all are welcome unitarian universalism open minded deeds not creeds conscience equality justice will tradition open minded deeds not creeds conscience free faith intergenerational intergenerational popular art search for truth mystery and wonder peace earth-centered

#### **FULL MOON DAUGHTERS**

#### Diane Lade, Coordinator

appy Holidays! The Full Moon Daughters, our River of Grass outdoor spirituality group for women and girls, is joining forces with our growing Women's Group for a super spectacular Solstice Party on the evening of Sunday, Dec. 16. There will be a potluck supper, songs around the fire, and our fabulous gift exchange of handmade and recycled treasures. The party is at a member's home. Watch the weekly electronic announcements for more details about sign-ups, or e-mail: <a href="mailto:full-moondaughters@riverofgrass.org">full-moondaughters@riverofgrass.org</a>.

All women and girls, and their friends and family, are invited. This is a great way to learn more about both groups and meet new people.



As for past events: The Full Moon Daughters were scarf dancing once again at Bahia Honda State Park, celebrating a picture perfect sunset and the breeze at the top of Henry Flagler's abandoned railroad bridge. There were 16 women and four girls camped over Veterans' Day weekend right next to the Atlantic Ocean, so close we could hear the waves in our dreams. Christy Schultz, our Faith Development coordinator and a certified nature educator, took us tide-pooling, helping us identify birds and sea creatures. We also hiked, biked, watched for shooting stars – and paid a visit to the No Name Pub, officially the hardest-to-find watering hole in the Keys.



Besides two camping trips yearly, the Full Moon Daughters visit gardens, go to the beach – and even sometimes squeeze in some shopping! We are dedicated to living out the seventh Unitarian Universalist principle through connecting to nature. We do something fun every month, taking July and August off. Diane Lade is the coordinator. For more information and to get on our e-mail string: <a href="mailto:fullmoondaughter@riverofgrass.org">fullmoondaughter@riverofgrass.org</a> to get on our e-mail string.

The Women's Group meets at 7:30 pm on the fourth Monday of every month to explore and discuss issues important to women. Ingrid Furlong is the coordinator. For more information: <a href="www.womensgroup@riverofgrass.org">womensgroup@riverofgrass.org</a>.

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

#### RIVER OF GRASS CAFÉ AND COFFEEHOUSE

#### Gayle Giese, Café Team

The River of Grass Café Season is off to a spectacular start! We hope you have enjoyed the great music as well as the ambience of our beautiful venue. Thanks to all the Café volunteers, led by Aaron Stang, who continue to make the season a success. Also, thanks to all of you who support the concerts with your attendance, thus supporting our congregation while enjoying some really great music.

The Café takes a break for the December holidays but be sure to join us Friday, January 25<sup>th</sup> to hear the genius of **Richard (guitar) and Julie Smith (cello)**. (More details on these artists in the January newsletter.)

**Janis Ian** tickets for Friday, May 3rd and Saturday, May 4th are selling fast. Get yours now!

To purchase tickets, please click <u>here</u> or go to www.riverofgrass.org and click on the "Calendar and Events" tab in the upper right corner. Select "Coffeehouse Concerts."



To see a video preview of all our great upcoming shows, click here! Join the celebration!

- Richard and Julie Smith, Friday, January 25
- Bob Sima, Friday, February 15
- Karen Mal and Laurie McClain, Friday, March 15
- ♦ Amy Carol Webb, Friday, April 12
- Janis Ian, Special Two-Night Engagement: Friday and Saturday, May 3 and 4 (limited seating, buy now)

Doors open at 7:30pm. Music starts at 8:00pm. Drinks and delicious food from our River of Grass chefs are for sale! Come hungry and bring your friends!

#### CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

Kathy Jens-Rochow, Worship Chair



This year Rev. Amy Carol Webb will lead our special candlelight Christmas Eve service on Monday, December 24th. Our Christmas Eve services have always been meaningful and beautiful. This year, it will be even more so with Rev Amy in the pulpit.

We begin our evening with a hospitality hour from 5:00 to 6:00 pm. All are encouraged to bring Christmas cookies (finger food only). We will provide the beverages.

The service will be from 6:00 to 7:00 pm, ending with the moving and magical sharing of the candle light.

#### **WORSHIP COMMITTEE**

#### Kathy Jens-Rochow, Chair

anuary is "Music Month" at River of Grass!

January's Sunday services are filled with music. In addition to our own Rev. Amy Carol Webb, we will have two guest musician service leaders.

On January 6, our very special guest will be Tret Fure. Tret was at SUUSI this past year so many of us are familiar with her music. Tret's career spans four decades. She began her professional work at the age of 16, singing in coffeehouses and campuses in the Midwest, moving to Berkeley where, after performing weekly on the campus of UC Berkeley where she attended college, she discovered that music really was her life. At 19, she moved to LA to pursue a songwriting and musical career. Within a year she was performing as guitarist and vocalist for Spencer Davis, touring with him and penning the single for his album "Mousetrap". She went on to record her own album in 1973 on MCA/UNI Records, with the late Lowell George of Little Feat as her producer. With the success of that release, she opened for such bands as Yes, Poco, and the J Geils Band.

Now after 5 acoustic releases on her own label, *Tomboy Girl Records*, she has re-established herself in the folk world winning the 2004 South Florida Folk Festival Singer/Songwriter Competition in 2 out of 3 categories.



Tret also markets her own line of clothing named after her popular song, "Tomboy Girl". In addition, while not on the road, Tret teaches guitar and songwriting individually and in workshop settings. She also co-chairs The New Harvest Foundation, a foundation that channels charitable contributions exclusively to organizations working to promote LGBT rights, services, culture and community development. You can read more about Tret at <a href="www.tretfure.com">www.tretfure.com</a>.



Then, on January 27, David Roth returns to River of Grass. Many here at River of Grass remember David's service last year. We are so very pleased he is able to come back again.

"David and his music will touch you to the very depths of your soul. He'll make you laugh and cry, inspire you to rise and fly..." ~ Jack Canfield, co-author, Chicken Soup for the Soul

"David has reached our hearts. With voices like his still singing, there's a certainty that the candle will remain lit, the hope reasserted and the dream still sung..." ~ Peter Yarrow (Peter, Paul, & Mary)

David Roth strikes many chords, hearts, and minds with his unique songs, offbeat observations, moving stories, sense of the hilarious, and powerful singing and subject matter. As

singer, songwriter, recording artist, keynote speaker, workshop leader, and instructor, David has earned top honors at premier songwriter competitions - Kerrville (TX) and Falcon Ridge (NY) - and taken his music, experience, and expertise to a wide variety of venues in this and other countries full-time for more than two decades.

You can read more about David at www.davidrothmusic.com.

## DECEMBER 2012



Sun 2nd

New Member Sunday Sunday Service 10:30-11:30am 10:45-11:45am Sunday Classes Mon 3rd 7:30-9:00pm Service and Social Justice Committee River of GREENS Tue 4th 4:00-7:00pm 7:00-8:30pm Healthy Inspirations: Adult Faith Development Class Thu 6th 7:00-9:00pm Writer's Group 6:00-9:00pm River of Grass Holiday Gath-Fri 7th ering Mon 8th Finance Committee 7:15-9:00pm Sun 9th Sunday Service 10:30-11:30am 10:45-11:45am Sunday Classes Finance Committee Mon 10th 7:00-9:00pm Wed 12th 7:00-10:00pm **Board Meeting** Thu 13th 7:00-9:00pm Men's Group Sun 16th Rev. Amy Carol Webb Sun-10:30-11:30am Sunday Service Sunday Classes 10:45-11:45am 11:45am-12:15pm Board Report Back

Swamp Rose Covenant

Full Moon Daughters &

River of GREENS

Women's Group Solstice

Group

Party

12:30-2:00 pm

6:00-10:00 pm

Tue 18th 4:00-7:00 pm

Wed 19th 7:00-9:00pm bUUkies Book Group Thu 20th 7:00-9:00 pm Writer's Group Sun 23rd 10:30-11:30am Sunday Service 10:45-11:45 am Sunday Classes Mon 24th 6:00-9:00 pm Christmas Eve Service Thu 27th 7:00-9:00pm Men's Group Sun 30th 10:30-11:30am Sunday Service

Sunday Classes

#### **COMING UP IN JANUARY!**

10:45-11:45 am



Happy New Year! Jan. 1: River of Grass Blood Drive Jan. 6: Jan. 12: *LifeNet4Families Volunteer Day* FMD: Morikami Museum Committed Couples Enrichment Group Jan. 13: Informational Session Jan. 19-20: Rev. Amy Carol Webb Weekend River of Grass Café: Richard and Julie Jan. 25: Smith FMD Shark Valley Moonlight Bike Jan. 26:

Jan. 28-Feb. 1: Auction 2013 Setup Week (Auction: Saturday, February 2, 2013)