

Reflections

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

MAY 2013

MINISTER'S CORNER

YES YOU MAY

by Rev. Amy Carol Webb



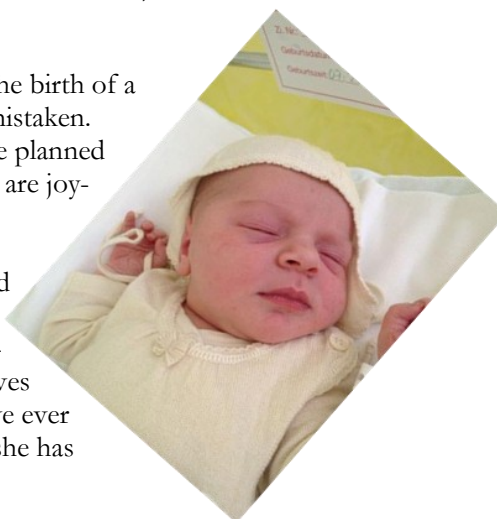
By the time this River of Grass newsletter reaches you, I will be holding my first grandbaby for the very first time. I am awestruck. Actually, I've been a bit awestruck for some time now: awed by the notion of my first baby bringing his first baby into the world, awed that it is my time to join the Grandmother Generation – or as my Swiss-born grandchild will call me – “Oma”, and awed by the cycle we all follow to come to our place on the web of all being.

Today, I'm particularly stunned by the ways this cycle works beyond our best efforts to understand it and laughs at our conceits of control. See, the medical establishment had assured us we'd be welcoming a little boy – whom I imagined with a mop of dark hair like his mom (my daughter-in-law) and blue eyes like his dad (my son). A little boy for whom my beloved and I already snagged a variety of goodies from the practical (blankets and booties) to the classically fun (a ride-on Radio Flyer fire engine!) to the necessary (a car seat for baby's first trip to the United States). And then there is the whimsical - the tie-dye undershirts befitting the grandbaby of a UU folkie!

Only ... as I write this, we are celebrating the birth of a girl! Yes, a girl! The modern technology was mistaken. Mother Nature's rolling on the forest floor! We planned on a boy. We planned on the joy. But now we are joyful, and frankly stunned!

Baby, mommy and daddy are all healthy and happy. The world seems brand new for our family today. As relief replaces prayerful anticipation and the startle of her gender surprise gives way to a more magnificent gratitude than I have ever known, I settle in to reflect on the new world she has brought, amazed.

Amazed, not just at this wondrous baby girl, but even more at the wonder that any of us gets here at all. Amazed by the journey we embark upon when we come to the human experience. Amazed how we keep up that journey through all manner of trouble and trial. Amazed we dare to take up the task of becoming who we are. Amazed when we find those who will deign to travel alongside us and love us enough to hold up the mirror of truth when we wander too far from it – as we inevitably and repeatedly will. Amazed that no matter how we might fail, the web of all being continues to offer us the eternal “Yes!” – the eternal “Yes!” that shines anew in the baby girl who surprised us all today. Amazed at the Source of Life that ever reaches, sustains and awaits the heart of our yearnings, ready to answer when we ask whom we might be – “Yes, you may.”



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SUUSI REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!

That's right – registration for SUUSI (Southeast Unitarian Universalist Summer Institute) is now open. Are you looking for a great, affordable value for your whole family, with lots of adventures and filled with friends? Then come to SUUSI: July 21-27, 2013 in Radford, Virginia.



July 21-27 Radford, Virginia
Southeast Unitarian Universalist Summer Institute

SUUSI is an intentional community of approximately 1,200 people who gather during the 3rd week of July near Roanoke, Virginia to explore our interconnectedness, learn new ways of seeing our world and each other, delight in the joys of meeting old friends and making new ones, share outdoor adventures, dance, and sing.

Together, we'll create a week of conversation, reflection, activity, nourishment, fun and family. "Let It Be A Dance" is this year's theme.

If you want to find out more, go to: www.suusi.org and download the catalog – and then REGISTER! Or – talk to anyone that has been to SUUSI. They'll tell you all the reasons that you don't want to miss it!

OUR PRINCIPLES

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;

Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;

A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;

The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;

Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

OUR SUNDAY LOCATION

11850 W. State Road 84, Suite 1, Davie, FL 33325

EVERY SUNDAY

Worship Service: 10:30 to 11:30am. **Hospitality Hour:** 11:30am to 12:30pm.

Faith Development Classes: 10:45 to 11:45am

FRIENDLY REMINDERS FOR OUR MEMBERS

There is plenty of parking outside the sanctuary, but please leave the closer parking spaces for our guests and physically challenged worshippers.

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



MAY SERVICES

- May 5 *Why Be A UU?* - Mindy Simmons, UU Singer/Songwriter
- May 12 *Mothers' Day* - Pam Schrimsher
- May 19 *Rev. Amy Carol Webb*
- May 26 Jeffrey Nall, Ph.D.

River of Grass

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

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Shared Ministry Diane Lade & Janet Schwartz
Stewardship Pam Schrimsher & Ken Bresnahan
Worship Kathy Jens-Rochow

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

(OR REFLECTING ON WHAT WE HAVE DONE WELL, AND DOING MORE OF IT)!

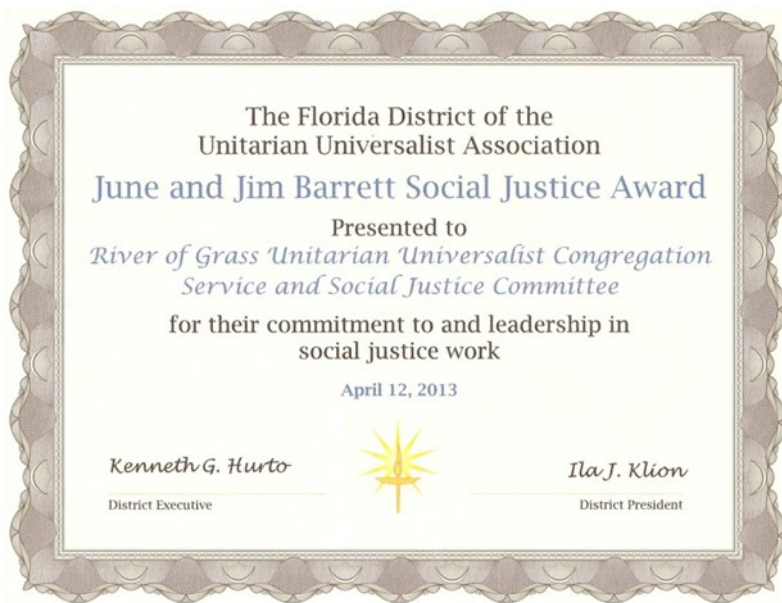
by Marjorie J. Loring, Board President



As we begin winding down our congregational year, the Board of Trustees will take these last few months to reflect upon and celebrate our accomplishments, plan our future stewardship, and draft our end-of-year checklist. Looking at River of Grass through the lens of Appreciative Inquiry (or, simply, appreciating the positive), it is clear to me that there is a lot that we do well. Because of this, our energy is positive, our outreach is strong, our services are inspiring, our programs are solid, and our membership is growing.

With our Annual Meeting coming up on June 9th, it is important that each one of us take the time to reflect upon the vision statement that we created together, and recognize that it is only through our attendance, our voices, and our votes that we will continue to move our faith community closer to that vision.

Let's begin with a celebration and appreciation of one of our accomplishments:



Congrats go to our Service and Social Justice Committee who, this year, received the Florida District of the UUA's Jim and June Barrett Social Justice Award.

This award is given each year to an individual or group in the Florida District for commitment to and leadership in social justice work. Way to go, SSJC!

The members of the Service and Social Justice Committee at River of Grass are a very active and dedicated group of volunteers who have been solid in their commitment to "live out loud" our UU Principles and values under the leadership of co-chairs [Judi Oltmans](#) and [Steve Jens-Rochow](#). The SSJC Committee members have been consistent in their support of LifeNet4Families who have depended on their commitment to show up every month to stock shelves, prepare food boxes, and work the soup kitchen.

During this important election year, they applied for, and were awarded a grant of \$1,000 from the Fund for Unitarian Universalist Social Responsibility for a "Get out the Vote" effort. Using these funds, the committee sponsored events that focused on clarifying the amendments and registering students to vote.

Other projects they spearheaded included the "Backpacks for Teens" drive, the Angel Tree holiday gifts project, the UUSC Guest at Your Table program, Davie's Spring Easter Egg Hunt, workshops on the UUA Study Action Issue of Reproductive Justice, the South Florida Climate Action Conference, and the Citizen's United movement.

Heartfelt thanks to the members of the Service and Social Justice Committee and all the volunteers who stepped up to support their efforts. Your dedication and accomplishments are a great example of what River of Grass has done well this past year.

This is just one example of what we have done well this past year – an attest to the amazing community that we are.

What has River of Grass done well in your eyes that you would like to see us do more of? It is clear to me that we should all be very proud of our beloved community and that we all have examples of positive experiences. Let's make sure we share them with each other!

LIFENET4FAMILIES VOLUNTEERS

by Judi Oltmans, Service and Social Justice Co-Chair



Thank you to Tracy, Ginger, Amy, Laura and Sarah, Bennett and Daniel, Gayle, and Julian, Zurie and Miles for volunteering at LifeNet4Families on Saturday, April 13th! We stacked lots of canned yams, taped boxes, marked out the bar codes on loaves of bread and put together many, many food boxes for needy families. A special thank you to all the River of Grass teens and kids who volunteered! You all did an awesome job.

Our next LifeNet4Families Volunteer Day is Saturday, May 11th from 9am to 11am. You can sign up in the SSJC corner of the hospitality area, or email ssjc@riverofgrassuu.org. If you can't make it in May, check out these upcoming LifeNet4Families dates: 6/8, 7/13, 8/10, 9/14, 10/12, 11/9 and 12/14. We hope to see you there!

SPIRITUAL ART GROUP

by Steve Jens-Rochow, Coordinator



Ai Weiwei is China's most famous artist, and its most outspoken domestic critic. "Against a backdrop of strict censorship and an unresponsive legal system, Ai expresses himself and organizes people through art and social media. In response, Chinese authorities have shut down his blog, beat him up, bulldozed his newly built studio, and held him in secret detention. AI WEIWEI: NEVER SORRY is the inside story of a dissident for the digital age that inspires global audiences and blurs the boundaries of art and politics." Read more [here](#).

"This film is about freedom of expression," he said. "It's about very essential human rights, and it's about the very essential quality of life to express yourself, to use all the possibilities and all the kinds of forms, voice and actions, to struggle. And the struggle itself has meaning: the meaning is about life."

The Spiritual Art Group will show this galvanizing documentary, an intimate portrait of the artist, on Friday, May 26th at 7 pm at River of Grass. For more information, please contact: spiritualart@riverofgrassuu.org.

POSTAL FOOD DRIVE

by Judi Oltmans, Service and Social Justice Co-Chair

We need YOU! The National Letter Carriers' "Stamp Out Hunger" Food Drive is on Saturday, May 11th.

River of Grass has volunteered at this event for several years now and we'll be at the Inverrary Post Office once again this year, ready to box up all the canned food as it rolls in with the postal carriers all day.

There are two shifts to sign up for and we need lots of help for each one. The tasks are very similar to what we do at LifeNet4Families: taping up new boxes, filling them with canned food, and stacking the boxes on pallettes.

Join our River of Grass team and help make a difference for hundreds of families in Broward County. High school teens can earn service hours for this event. Look for the sign up sheet at the SSJC corner of the hospitality area, or email ssjc@riverofgrassuu.org.



BOARD MATTERS

by Zena Tucker, Board Secretary



Your River of Grass Board of Trustees is almost finished putting together all the pieces of the elaborate Rubiks Cube! Steadfastly and intently, the team is bringing all the pieces together for presentation to you at our big Annual Meeting coming up on Sunday, June 9th. What Rubiks Cube, you ask? Why our beloved community's colorful and multi-dimensional budget, community activities, ministries, and committees.

The Stewardship Committee reported their plans for the Annual Budget drive. The board suggested maintaining a close link with the Finance Committee to help us fit our grand plans for the future into reasonable and feasible expectations for the coming year. (Click, click, and a row matches...)

Next, the Full Moon Daughters asked for permission for a small fundraising event (garage sale in a box) to support the new Otter Habitat at Flamingo Gardens. (A plaque of recognition will be placed within the habitat.) The board requested the event be coordinated with Stewardship, Worship, and our ROG calendar to avoid scheduling conflicts. With these caveats, the board approved the request. (...and it looks like the blues are coming together nicely now.)



Finally, we discussed at length our dreams for the coming year. It will require careful financial planning to meet all our goals. Additionally, with our children's Faith Development enrollment rising, our board acknowledged that we need to seek rental space outside of our facility. This, too, will require additional resources. (Whoa, my head is spinning along with the Rubiks!)

I am confident with your help we can pull this puzzle together. Please remember that your participation in the Annual Budget Drive and the upcoming Annual Meeting is critical. Let's share a cup of tea, roll up our sleeves and finish our Rubiks Cube for the 2013-2014 congregational year. Soon, this cube will make a solid and satisfying paving stone in the River of Grass pathway toward the future. Well, metaphorically, that is.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

by Leana Bresnahan, Chair

On behalf of the congregation and with great joy, the Membership Committee would like to welcome our new members, who signed the membership book on April 7th, 2013:



Sheryl and Toni Cattell

Renato and Marpessa DeMoraes, with their daughters Marina, Gabriela, and Lara

Lynne Joshi

Amy Taylor-Henry, with her daughters, Sarah and Laura

Our next Pathway to Membership Class will take place on Sunday, May 19th, from 12:15 – 4 pm. All who are interested in becoming members of River of Grass are welcome to attend!

In the class, you will learn more about River of Grass and how to get involved in its many activities. You'll have the chance to meet congregational leaders and others who are new to the congregation. You'll also learn about Unitarian Universalism and about the Unitarian Universalist faith today.

If you are interested, please sign up after worship service or send an e-mail to membership@riverofgrassuu.org. Plan to bring a brown bag lunch. Soft drinks and desserts will be provided. We will also provide child care, if you let us know by May 5th.

Our next New Member Sunday is currently being planned and will likely take place in June. More information will follow in next month's newsletter and in the weekly e-mails.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN OUR CHOIR?

by Gayle Giese

"I love to hear a choir. I love the humanity to see the faces of real people devoting themselves to a piece of music. I like the teamwork. It makes me feel optimistic about the human race when I see them cooperating like that."

—Paul McCartney



Would you like to join our choir?

"To be in harmony, to sing awake the light, and softly serenade the stars, ever dancing circles in the night."

— Jim Scott

There is something magical about singing together, even if you're not a great singer on your own. You create something bigger and better than the individual parts. You breathe together; you connect. The quality of your music gets better and better with practice. Your choir's creation adds to the artistic beauty of our congregation. On any given Sunday, someone might walk into our community who is confused, whose heart is overwhelmed, whose soul is weary: if you do your craft well, your music will help them.

Our music ministry means performing good music, performing it well, and involving any who would like to be involved. Choir can do all that! However, in order to sustain a choir, singers need to meet for an hour most every week, either before or after (by vote) Sunday service. It has been recommended that our congregation consider voting for a quarter-time choir director in the next year's budget, but, we need to know if we have enough interested singers to justify the position. If you would like to be part of the choir, e-mail Gayle Giese at: choir@riverofgrassuu.org. Please do so right away! Thank you!

Seven More Reasons to Join the Choir!

- 1. Build and strengthen friendships** - Music breaks down barriers and there's no better example of that than in a choir.
- 2. It's one of the best feelings ever** - You do have to spend hours going over notes and rhythms, and you do have to listen to the instructions from the choral director, but during the performance, you'll expel all your energy and outpour your emotion. Nothing beats the feeling after that. There's a great sense of achievement. You will touch hearts, perhaps mend a few.
- 3. Singing is a great way to relax** - No matter how much you love your job, work can be stressful and exhausting. Choir means no reports to write, no committees to run. You just show up and sing! Choir is a great, and healthy, escape!
- 4. The choir is a covenant group** - Since choristers meet and sing together every week, they get to know each other's joys and concerns. We care for one another.
- 5. Singing is good for your health** - Studies have shown how choir can improve your health. It's also great brain food. What a fun way to keep your mind healthy! You will improve your multi-tasking, memory, focus, math, posture.
- 6. Your friends and family will love watching you sing** - It's great to invite your friends and family to your hear you sing – and you know what? They will be proud, no matter how well the performance went.
- 7. Making music is privilege** - The main reason I sing is the music. I love it, and choir is one way I cope with my unrelenting passion for tapping emotions through music. Not everyone in the world is able to make music as a group; music-making is a privilege. If it's inside you, you have an obligation to the world to let it resound!



APRIL SHOWERS BRING ...MAY SHOWERS!

by Christy Shultz, Faith Development Coordinator

As I am writing this it is still April and it is thundering and pouring rain. The rains have begun early this year, cooling off the dusty ground and turning the brown grass green again. Soon there will be a deluge every afternoon causing our wetlands and waterways to fill and flow once again. I find it refreshing and nourishing. I'm not looking forward to the heat of summer, but I do love a good storm!!



Let's look at the next month or two as a time to nourish our souls, to build our waters up, so that the heat of summer won't drag us down. May is the last full month for Children and Youth Programs at River of Grass (until September)!! Wow, that went fast!! So, fill the month of May with Sundays full of community and spirit! Fill up your soul!

April was a great month!



We are so proud of our wonderful Chalice Lighters – graduates of the Kindlers of the Flame Rites of Passage Program. Congratulations to you all! The Faith Development Service on April 14th was a delight. The Late Elementary group shared with the congregation the Chalice Lightings that they wrote as they lit candles in the chalices they made themselves. It was beautiful.

We are also very proud of our Principle Pals, our younger kids in the Early Elementary Program. They did a fantastic job singing light into the chalice for the service and singing their hearts into the Principles Song!! Thank you to the congregation for singing along and for being there and special thanks to all the teachers and [Diane Lade](#) and [Karen Gonzalez](#), Faith Development Co-Chairs!

April also was the month for our Annual Flower Communion of which the children were a part. What a beautiful way to celebrate community sharing and giving.

Our Youth Group continues to meet on Sunday Evenings at 6pm. April will include a BBQ hosted by [GL Franklin](#), the Race for Life Relay at Weston Cypress High School, and getting ready to go to Jacksonville for the next Youth CON, which will be held the second weekend of May.

The Faith Development team has been very blessed to have Christy Schultz at the helm for this school year as our Coordinator. Without her, many balls would have been dropped, as it is quite the juggling act to plan, prepare, and support the many programs that River of Grass offers to our children, teens, and their families.

We are grateful to Christy for her time and dedication yet sad to announce that she will be shifting toward being simply a member of the congregation and no longer a staff member, come the end of this school year.

Many of you know that Christy is also a self-employed Naturalist and Environmental Educator. Luckily for her and the planet, that aspect of her life is requiring more and more of her time. She is sad to hang up her staff hat with us, but we are glad that she will still be in our midst on Sunday mornings as her son, Cedar continues to be an active member of our Beacon Youth group.

Blessings to you, Christy as you move forward caring for our Mother Earth and her children!

With Gratitude,
Karen Gonzalez and Diane Lade,
Co-Chairs, on behalf of the Faith Development Team



RIVER OF GRASS CAFÉ

by Gayle Giese, Concert Committee

On Friday, May 3rd, and Saturday, May 4th, the River of Grass Café and Concert Series will present the LEGENDARY *Janis Ian* with Special Guest *Diana Jones*!

BOTH SHOWS ARE SOLD OUT! But if you were lucky enough to get tickets, remember that doors open at 7:30 pm – and you should arrive early since we have open seating. Ticket sales were limited to 80 seats for each show, for an intimate, coffeehouse setting! Music starts at 8pm.



Janis Ian began her professional life at age 12 when her first song was published by *Broadside Magazine*. That led to her first “real” show, at New York’s venerable Village Gate, where she shared a stage with Tom Paxton, Lou Gossett Jr., Judy Collins, Phil Ochs, and a host of other singer-songwriters. At 14, she wrote “Society’s Child,” which is also the name of her autobiographical audio book that traces her Grammy Award-winning career. From her first headlining show at Greenwich Village’s Gaslight Café at age 15, her life was fraught with challenges. Most adults could not have survived the controversy that surrounded her first hit song, “Society’s Child,” which focused on an interracial couple in an era when tempers flared at even a mention. The intimidating boos she received on-stage from racists shied in comparison to the hate mail and death threats that

came her way. Both “Society’s Child” and Janis’ classic “At Seventeen” have been inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame. *Janis Ian, Society’s Child: My Autobiography* won the 2013 Grammy for Best Spoken Word Recording and was Janis’ second Grammy win and her ninth nomination!

We are thrilled to hear that Janis will be joined by singer-songwriter *Diana Jones*, who will open the concert with her soulful voice and then perform some songs with Janis. Her most-recent album *My Remembrance of You*, dedicated to her Appalachian guitar-playin’ grandpa who helped her discover her roots, earned Jones a nomination as Best Emerging Artist at the Folk Alliance Awards, leading to tours with Richard Thompson and Mary Gauthier, appearances at folk festivals on both sides of the Atlantic, and covers of her songs by Gretchen Peters and Joan Baez. Check out Janis and Diana singing Janis’ song “I’m Still Standing Here”: [JANIS and DIANA](#).



Special thanks to [Aaron Stang](#) for booking this amazing show!



MAY CALENDAR

Rev. Amy Weekend: *May 18th & 19th*

For a complete listing of our activities for May 2013 (and beyond), please check out our online calendar. Either click [here](#) for the calendar or go to: <http://www.riverofgrassuu.org/calendar.html> for all the latest events in our congregation! Be sure to check out our [Facebook](#) page, too.

COMING UP IN JUNE

Auction Event: Greek OPA Party: Saturday, June 1st, 6:30 pm

(Contact: auction@riverofgrassuu.org)

Congregational Annual Meeting: Sunday, June 9th, 12:00 pm

(Contact: president@riverofgrassuu.org)