

Reflections

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

DECEMBER 2013

MINISTER'S CORNER

YOU CAN TAKE IT

by Rev. Amy Carol Webb, Consulting Minister



'Tis the Season to dust off the dog-eared, "Tis more blessed ...," sermon. Always a bit ironic, the interplay of giving and receiving in our culture of relentless acquisition. And too often we'd easier bear the queasy dread of deeper debt than the anxiety our offerings might not come up to par in the guilt-driven giving this season can oblige.

There are inventive remedies. One family I know declared every gift must come from a garage sale, flea market or bazaar. Even though they can well afford retail, the idea is to value a gift not by price or popularity, but by how well it reflects both the recipient's predilections and the giver's resourcefulness.



Still, giving is only half the balance in our yearly quest for comfort-and-joy. For many folks, the more difficult half of the giving-receiving equation is actually the receiving. While our culture often fosters giving for all the wrong reasons, we are even less well conditioned to genuinely receive.

We know how to sigh, "It's the thought that counts," over oddments shipped from afar. We know how to smile at the truly bizarre color combination in the open box before us and declare, "Wherever did you find this!" We are so practiced in polite ruse, that when a real gift comes our way, a beautifully presented, thoroughly thought-out, deeply heartfelt symbol of love and respect, we are flummoxed how to let it in with grace and gratitude. We gasp, "You shouldn't have." And too often actually awkwardly mean it.

Sunday, December 15 at 7:00pm

Neshamah: Gather in Spirit, a reflective and meditative evening service with Rev. Amy Carol Webb



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Why do we do that? More than a social flaw, this behavior may be a manifestation of some deeper unattended conflict. Does it reveal a basic sense of unworthiness? Fear of the pointed intimacy a sincere gift may represent? Shame that we may be unable to reciprocate meaningfully? These are worthwhile questions we do well to explore, but, kids, it's rather late this year for such navel lint, so here's a shortcut.

Think of your graceful embrace of the gift as your gift to the giver.

Open your heart to the fact that in offering you a gift, the giver risks possible rejection, criticism, and worse -- your disregard -- in the gesture. (Is it possible we wrap gifts in bright paper not to promote surprise, but protect our own gift-giving nakedness one moment longer?) Think how you felt some moment in your life,



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DECEMBER SUNDAY SERVICES



December 1	10:30am	<i>Light One Candle: A UU Chanukah Service</i>	Rev. Amy Carol Webb
December 8	10:30am	<i>Human Rights Day</i>	Kathy Jens-Rochow
December 15	10:30am	<i>The Legend of the Poinsettia: A Holiday Pageant</i>	Rev. Amy Carol Webb
	7:00pm	<i>Neshamah: Gather in Spirit, a reflective and meditative evening service</i>	Rev. Amy Carol Webb
December 22	10:30am	Winter Solstice Service	
December 24	6:00pm	<i>Christmas Eve Service</i>	Rev. Amy Carol Webb
December 29	10:30am	TBA	

DECEMBER CALENDAR (Click [here](http://www.riverofgrassuu.org/calendar.html) or go to www.riverofgrassuu.org/calendar.html)



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.

River of Grass

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

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PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN

Marjorie Loring, President
Board of Trustees



PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN TRAINING PROGRAM



As we continue to adapt to the ever-growing population of members and guests at River of Grass, I am grounded in one of the things that the Board of Trustees has set its sights on initiating this year – continuing to provide an environment that will keep our children safe and their parents at ease.

In an effort to be pro-active, since I am a trained facilitator for this program, I will be facilitating the “*Virtus: Protecting God’s Children*” program, a training that focuses on educating religious communities about sexual predators who seek out places where children gather. The program highlights situational awareness and outlines the best practices to help prevent wrongdoing and promote “rightdoing” within religious organizations, empowering both organizations and people to better control risk. The Virtus Training is a 3 hour workshop and, due to the content, is for adults only.

Attendance by adults who work with both children and youth/teens at River of Grass is strongly encouraged. The way the training is structured, you must attend the entire session from start to finish. (Those arriving late will not be allowed to participate.) If you are involved with our children or youth, or are in a leadership role in our congregation – or just want to know more about how to keep our children safe, please make this training a priority in your schedule and plan to attend. (To RSVP, email: president@riverofgrassuu.org)

When: Wednesday, January 22, 2014, from 7:00 pm – 10:00 pm
Where: River of Grass (Multi-Purpose Room)

With gratitude for all you do to provide our children with an engaging, enjoyable, and safe place where they can explore their world and develop their faith.



MY WISH FOR YOU THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

As we move through the holiday season and the end of our calendar year, may each of you stand in awe of your life’s many blessings.

Each one of us stands at the center of many circles. Circles of friends and of family, of neighborhoods and schools, of work and of play, and of past, present and future.

May you reflect with gratitude upon this beloved River of Grass community that nurtures both mind and spirit and calls us to live our best lives fully with love and kindness within each of these circles. May you enter the new year with renewed hope in all that is possible when we work together to make this world a better place for all its inhabitants.

HAPPY KWANZAA!
Merry Christmas
Happy Hanukkah
Happy Holidays



BOARD MATTERS

Zena Tucker, Secretary
Board of Trustees



Are you short on time and long on holiday tasks? Then this brief report will suit you to a tee. Here is the condensed version of our recent board activities. (Message me at secretary@riverofgrassuu.org if you want more details!)

Our financial chart is thankfully trending on the positive side due to on-schedule pledge payments and Café concert returns. Many thanks to all our dedicated members for making our River of Grass congregation a reality!

In old business, we continue to progress toward many of our objectives for the year. **Troy Gies** outlined our congregational policy review tasks. We will focus our efforts and work with our policy team to ensure our new facility rental policy is consistent with the congregations' policies and recommend changes as necessary. Then, **Marjie** updated us on the planned Child Safety training for staff and members. (Look for workshop announcement in this newsletter.) Finally, our other board members reported small progress for their goals, and work is still underway.

Next, the board approved a special collection for the Typhoon Haiyan Relief Fund during the November 17th Sunday Service. The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and the UUA (Unitarian Universalist Association) have set up a joint relief fund. "The loss of life and devastation in the Philippines from Typhoon Haiyan are truly staggering. UUSC and the UUA have close ties to the Philippines and have activated emergency response efforts. We need your immediate support to help our friends in the Philippines and address this humanitarian disaster."

(Note: Thanks to all who contributed toward the relief fund. If you missed the special collection and would still like to donate, you can do so online through the UUSC's website by clicking [here](#).)

MINISTER'S CORNER

(Continued from page 1)

when you extended a carefully prepared present and it seemed the other person just didn't "get it."

Deflecting a gift robs the giver of the joy of giving. In this light, "You shouldn't have," is not merely a toss-off -- it's an injury. You shouldn't have what? Tried to show you care for me? Put yourself on the line to offer me a token of your love and respect? "You shouldn't have," doesn't so much say, "I am not worthy of your gift," but worse, "you are silly for thinking I am." And worse still, implies, "I wish you hadn't."

This year, try hearing "Tis more blessed to give than to receive," as "Tis more blessed to give the giver the full joy of giving by receiving the gift with warmth and grace." That's the Spirit of the Season.

Go ahead -- you can take it!



Last but not least, I conclude by sending you my heartfelt gratitude for your kindness and generosity during this year of 2013. Season's greetings for the holidays and best wishes to you and your loved ones today and in the coming year!

AUCTION COMMITTEE

Sheryl Cattell and Esther Sampol

★ LIGHTS, ★
CAMERA,
AUCTION!

Please join the Auction Planning Meetings in December and January on the following dates: Wednesday, December 4th, Wednesday, December 11th, January 15th, and January 29th at 7pm at River of Grass. Many hands make light work, so, please join us to help make this single most important night in River of Grass fund raising as successful as possible.

You can buy tickets for the event and find donation request letters for local businesses, a donation form for your personal donation (items or services), and a tax deductible form for tax purposes all online by clicking [here](#).

SERVICE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Judi Oltmans and Steve Jens-Rochow, Co-Chairs

This is an opportunity for us not only to help others, but to also teach our children to value what they have and learn empathy for others. When I see the faces of the folks waiting for a meal I am grateful of the existence of LifeNet and wish we could do more.

~Andrea Kelley

LifeNet4Families NOVEMBER VOLUNTEER DAY



Our volunteers spent a fun Saturday morning together preparing boxes of food for the needy and stocking the shelves in the pantry. Thanks go to Drea, Stan, Cassidy, Nicholas, James, Ann, Scott, Anne, Jacquie, Marichu, Mindy, Scott, Jayden and Kat for giving their time to help out at the LifeNet4Families pantry on November 9th! Thank you for your service to the community!



If you'd like to join us at our next LifeNet4Families Saturday Volunteer day, we volunteer there once a month. The upcoming dates are December 14, January 11, February 8, and March 8. You can sign up at the SSJC corner at the back of the sanctuary or email us at ssjc@riverofgrassuu.org.

GUEST AT YOUR TABLE



Rev. Amy Carol Webb kicked off our UUSC (Unitarian Universalist Service Committee) Annual Drive, [Guest at Your Table](#), on Sunday, November 17th. (The drive will continue through the holidays until Sunday, January 5th.)

By celebrating Guest at Your Table, we are helping nurture a spirit of gratitude and “justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.” UUSC advances human rights and social justice in the United States and around the world. The Guest at Your Table program helps us have a better understanding and awareness of the UUSC's human rights work.

Take home a Guest at Your Table box to help you donate throughout the holidays – or an envelope – and become a member of UUSC.

FLORIDA'S WATER AND LAND LEGACY AMENDMENT

Thank you to all the River of Grass members who have signed the Florida Water and Land Legacy Amendment petition – 34 petitions in all! We are thrilled at the commitment we have seen for environmental issues here at River of Grass. A special thank you goes to Diane Diaz, Kat Holland, Mac McNicol, Phaedora Jones, and Steve Jens-Rochow for volunteering to collect signed petitions at the Ft. Lauderdale Home Show on November 15th and 16th.



This Constitutional Amendment would permanently dedicate the revenue from 1/3 of the document stamp tax to protect what is best about Florida: “miles of beaches, beautiful parks, crystal clear springs, and endless opportunities to swim, bike and fish, and an amazing diversity of plants and animals.” For more information, click [here](#).

NEW MEMBER CORNER

Wendell Abern

When I write, I rarely use words like, “wow.” But WOW! What a dynamic, eclectic and talented bunch of newcomers in our midst! Be sure and greet them with a good ol’ River of Grass hug next time you see them!

Andrea and Stan Kelley – and their children Cassidy and Nicolas

Andrea met her husband-to-be, Stan, at a concert in Atlanta. “It was love at first sight,” she says, “and eleven years later, we have two children together: a ten-year old daughter, Cassidy, and a four-year old son, Nicolas.

“We continued to be nomads for a time,” Andrea states, “until we bought our very first house in 2011 in Old Plantation, where we plan to grow very old (and never move again).

Even though they are new members, they have already developed a very strong attachment to our congregation. “Stan and I took the kids to a couple of UU gatherings in Athens, GA, but it was here at River of Grass that we felt instantly at home. I love the warmth and the community and am so happy to have found a village so well matched with my own world view to help raise ourselves and our children.”



Anne Smith

While many of us have heard Anne’s superb voice, few know of her considerable accomplishments in the world of music. Originally from upstate New York, Anne is one of nine children, and has an identical twin who is a talented writer and massage therapist living in Orlando.

She states, “I taught music for many years in public and private schools both in Massachusetts and New York City, at all grade levels, from infant to senior citizen classes. In addition, Anne has released two CDs: “Until Next Time,” a collection of international and jazz standards, and “Separated by Words,” all original songs. She is presently seeking a publisher for her children’s book, “The Dancing Tree’s Secret.”

“I have lived in South Florida for almost two years,” Anne continues, “and was guided to River of Grass by Frank Rabinowitz, whom I met at Doris’s Market. I attended services for several months before deciding to join.” She too is looking forward to getting to know all of us.

Lynda Gabriele

Lynda comes to us, like so many of our congregants, from New York City ... in her case, the borough of Queens. And, also like many of us, Lynda was born and grew up Jewish. “My husband Jerry and I have been married for 36 years,” she says. “We are a blended Jewish/Catholic family, have a son, David, and a lovable rescued Westie named Muffin.” They have lived in Plantation for 26 years.

Lynda writes, “After working many years in different positions, I decided to pursue – in midlife – my interest in healthcare. I found fulfillment in the field of Occupational Therapy, a very holistic profession, working primarily with the geriatric population. This has deepened and inspired my interest in the mind/body connection and the need for a balanced life.” Lynda has retired from Occupational Therapy, and currently volunteers as a literacy tutor for adults. However, she and Muffin will begin training shortly for hospice visits.



As far as her path to River of Grass, she shares, “I have, in recent times, been seeking a more spiritual and communal path. I visited River of Grass several times, beginning with the Plantation location, before joining in October. I look forward to getting to know my fellow members.”

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NEW MEMBER CORNER

(Continued from page 6)

Kip Barkley

Originally from Charlottesville, Virginia, he paired up with [Kristine](#) in 1979, and has been happily married since 1989. Tim and Jeff, their sons from Kristine's first marriage, have both produced beloved grandchildren.

After working as a defense contractor for many years, Kip became a self-employed computer consultant in 1990. He lays claim to some unusual hobbies in addition to movies: wines, ancient history, online courses from Great Courses, and Goddess religions.

Kip shares, "I moved to Ft. Lauderdale in 1973 only to find the UU Church of Fort Lauderdale closed for the summer. Once it reopened, I joined. I still keep ties to my Episcopalian birth religion and am happy to join the River of Grass congregation."



Jacqueline Velazquez

Jacque was born in Waterbury, Connecticut, although both her parents come from Puerto Rico, a mixed heritage that includes Taino, the indigenous people of the island.

Jacqueline attended Miami Dade Community College for two years on a full tennis scholarship, and is just as avid about the sport today, competing in women's doubles in the adult USTA Women's Broward League.

An insurance broker, Jacqueline lives in West Plantation with her mother and two rescued canine children. She also works as a paranormal investigator for free. She writes, "I have a full understanding of approaching an investigation from a scientific perspective, and have made it my mission to search for the truth whatever that truth might be; I desire to assist those who are experiencing unexplained activity free of charge." She has co-authored, "Wake Up and Make it Happen," a self-published book containing positive, inspirational, motivational quotes and daily numerology readings.

She becomes quite eloquent when talking about our congregation: "I believe in a spiritual community. My decision to become a member of Unitarian Universalist River of Grass was the ever presence of members and non-members openly sharing their gifts, helping with clarity, compassion, love, and knowing and unknowingly bringing more light to each other and the Universe ... making a Universoul and individual difference ... a respectful, peaceful place, a community/home to share, heal and grow for everyone ... River of Grass!!!"

A SNOWPERSON TREE!

Zena Tucker, Service and Social Justice

ChildNet, the non-profit organization that manages child welfare services for Broward county, distributes holiday gifts each year directly to children in need in our community. Last year, they provided gifts to approximately 300 children in our area.

If you want to be a part of this, please stop by our Holiday Gift Tree in the hospitality area, take a tag (a snowperson), and sign our roster. Then return your unwrapped gift(s) with the tag attached no later than Wednesday, December 4th. We will deliver the gifts to ChildNet and they will distribute our gifts directly to children in need.

Special thanks to Ginger, the Faith Development team, and the River of Grass children for making the fun gift tags for our tree. Additionally, thanks to [Diane Diaz](#), [Pixie Wright](#), and [Karen McKinnon](#) for setting up and trimming the tree.

Finally, many thanks to you, River of Grass for purchasing and returning the gifts for our Broward county children in need! Because of you, there will be many smiling faces on Christmas morning.



FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Ginger Parrish, Faith Development Coordinator

I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year.

- Charles Dickens

Ahhh . . . winter in Florida: truly the most wonderful time of the year! We may be wearing shorts and t-shirts instead of winter boots and heavy coats, but at River of Grass, we're looking forward to a joyous season of holiday celebrations!

Please join us this month for the following special intergenerational services:



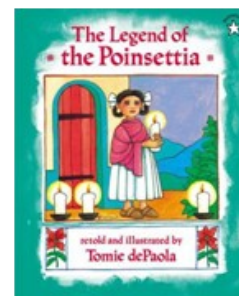
December 1 – Chanukah Service

December 15 – Holiday Pageant

December 22 – Winter Solstice Service



Our Holiday Pageant this year will be based on an adaptation of *The Legend of the Poinsettia*, by Tomie dePaola. All children, youth, and families are invited to share their talents and help to make this the best pageant ever!




Another can't-miss event this month is our **Holiday Gathering on Friday, December 13 at 6:00 pm**. This is a great chance to get together to deck the halls, eat, craft, and generally make merry! Since many hands make light work, we're looking for volunteers to help with setup, cleanup, decorating, crafts, games, music, and food!



As we wrap up 2013, please remember that there will be some changes in Faith Development classes taking effect in January. In an effort to allow children and youth to be more involved in services, **classes will take place from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.** (instead of from 10:45 to 11:45 a.m.). Because of this time shift, there will be no separate children's fellowship time after class. Rather, parents will be asked to sign their children directly out of class at 12:00, at which time children may socialize and enjoy refreshments, with parental supervision, in the hospitality area.

In closing, I would like to wish you all a joyous holiday season, and I look forward to ringing in 2014 together!





POLAR EXPRESS PAJAMA MOVIE NIGHT

Calling all families and movie fans! Please join us on Friday, December 6 at 7:00 p.m. for **Polar Express Pajama Movie Night!** As you might guess, we will be showing the movie *The Polar Express*, and you are welcome to wear your pajamas and bring a blanket and pillow for relaxing. The admission price is one plate of cookies for sharing. Doors will open at 6:30, and the movie will begin at 7:00, so don't be late! The more the merrier, so pass on the word and bring friends!

RIVER OF GRASS CAFÉ

Aaron Stang and Esther Sampol

EMMA'S REVOLUTION

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7th, 2013 (Note Date Change!)

Show starts at 8:00 pm – Doors open at 7:30 pm



Smart, funny and informative. Like Rachel Maddow and Jon Stewart with guitars.

Boasting gorgeous close harmonies and unsinkable tunefulness, Emma's Revolution (the Emma is Goldman) is a classic, globetrotting folk duo comprised of activist singer/songwriters Sandy O. and Pat Humphries. Their music is progressive, socially-conscious, confrontational and shot-through with intelligence and cutting humor; their songs have been sung for the Dalai Lama, covered by Holly Near and they count the great Pete Seeger among their admirers. Newest disc 'Revolutions Per Minute' is a front-to-back gem.

~Iowa City Press-Citizen

emma's revolution is the duo of award-winning activist musicians, Pat Humphries & Sandy O. Called "Inspiring, gutsy and rockin'," the duo is celebrating the release of their third cd, *Revolutions Per Minute*, an electrifying soundscape of "rousing and soulful" songs of social conscience, in settings from intimate acoustic to full-on funk. Grand Prize winners in the John Lennon Songwriting Contest, the duo's songs create new standards in the art of social justice. Their songs "Peace, Salaam, Shalom" & "Keep on Moving Forward" are sung around the world, and their music has been featured on NPR's *All Things Considered* and Pacifica's *Democracy Now!* Hear one of **emma's revolution**'s latest songs "[Feel the Wind](#)" a jazzy, a cappella call for offshore wind energy.

Pat and Sandy are partners in life, love & justice. In the spirit of Emma Goldman's famous attribution, "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution," **emma's revolution** brings their uprising of truth, hope and a dash of healthy irreverence to concerts and peace & justice, environmental, LGBT & women's rights, immigration & human rights, and labor events around the world. Based in the Washington DC area, **emma's revolution** has performed at more than a thousand events throughout the US and abroad. Join the revolution!

Tickets: \$15 Advance Purchase / \$20 at the door. For tickets, please click [here](#).

UPCOMING CONCERTS

- ◆ February 1, 2014, **Richard Smith**, "The most amazing guy I know on Guitar. He can play anything I know, only better." ~Chet Atkins
- ◆ March 22, 2014, **Still on the Hill**, "The creativity and originality of these two blows through the stale air of singer-songwriters like a gale of genius." ~Rich Warren, *Sing Out!* Magazine
- ◆ April 19, 2014, **Josh Rowand**, "The Pitbull of Blues" – 2012 *Blues Alliance of the Treasure Coast* SOLO Blues Challenge Winner



Check out our River of Grass Café [Facebook](#) fan page for all the latest news!