

River of Grass

Unitarian Universalist Congregation

WELCOME TO OUR RIVER OF GRASS FAMILY. WELCOME TO OUR WARMTH. WELCOME HOME!

River of Grass Weekly Update – April 30, 2020

Beloveds – as River of Grass enters its 8th week of sequestering to keep ourselves, our families, and our communities safe and well, we also begin the our monthly May theme of “Thresholds.” And here we are -- on some kind of threshold of a new world, a new normal we can’t predict and could not have foreseen just ... well ... 8 weeks ago.

To celebrate the River’s commitment to deepen spiritual connection with our now--virtual world, your River of Grass musicians will bring fabulous music to our Zoom worship for our Annual Spring Music Sunday, entitled “In This Great Turning.” We are indeed in the midst of a great turning, and where we will come round we don’t, and can’t, quite yet know – but we can decide what we will be known for then and now and on the pathways between. We can decide how we will lead across this threshold before us. We can decide what to keep and what to release, what we need to learn and must unlearn, what matters most and how we live into whatever comes next – as a people of courage, of faith, of justice, of love at our core.

Come as you are, pajamas and coffee to gather with us for this Sunday’s love-streamed service, remembering only the medium is virtual; the connections, the love, the spirit are real. Following the service, we will share virtual Hospitality time with a live chat and small groups where we can relish each other’s beautiful faces and voices together once again!

Follow the link below to join us in Zoom – or if you’d like, we’ll be simulcasting on our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/riverofgrassuu/>. Tune in there for the service, then log onto our Zoom link for hospitality time afterward. And now that we have a larger Zoom space ready to welcome all who will join us from over this world – who will we meet this week?

Sunday morning, gather with us at the River – on your computer, your tablet, your phone (with video or only audio if you like, we’ll miss your face!) -- just click or dial into our RoG Meeting Room at the link or numbers below. We’ll be watching for you!

Topic: Worship May 3, 2020

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/961564350?pwd=cFpKY2RtRk4wVE5NbDczdTU5THViQT09>

Meeting ID: 961 564 350

Password: 873805

Find your local number: <https://zoom.us/u/ab3E9JRtb9>

Upcoming Virtual Events -This Sunday:

Sunday, May 3, 2020

Virtual Sunday Service at 10:30 am - In This Great Turning

<https://zoom.us/j/961564350?pwd=cFpKY2RtRk4wVE5NbDczdTU5THViQT09>

Faith Development – Karen Gonzalez, ReligiousEducator@RiverofGrassUU.org

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

1:15 pm: Fireflies (Ages 3-5) and Dragonflies (Grades K-2)

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

Kids are invited to a Faith Development Meetup on Zoom on Sunday. Look for an email from Karen or reach out to her at religioeducator@riverofgrassuu.org. These meetups require passwords.

Young Adults are meeting every Sunday, at 6:30 pm virtually on Zoom – Millennials, Gen Xers, and Gen Zs, are welcome to tune in to the YUUnG Adult Virtual Coffee Hour on **Sunday, May 3rd at 6:30 pm**. We are an intentional community of young adults that uplift and inspire each other. We seek to grow together while enjoying life to the fullest. Please email youngadults@riverofgrassuu.org if you have any questions and to obtain the zoom details.

Faith Development – Parents Having Coffee Online:

Parents will join together for conversation and camaraderie in a Zoom Room on **Saturday morning, May 2nd at 10:00 am**. Look for an email from Karen Gonzalez or reach out to her at religiouseducator@riverofgrassuu.org.

Children's Bedtime Story: Wednesdays at 6:00 pm

Come meet Dakota and listen to a sweet story about a boy and his elephant and learn a message about inclusion via Zoom on **Wednesday evenings, May 6th at 6:00 pm**. Look for an email from Karen or reach out to her at religiouseducator@riverofgrassuu.org for more information.

Annual Prosperity Drive Update!

Rita Cherubini and Kathy Jens-Rochow, Co-Chairs

Annual Prosperity Drive 2020-2021

This Sunday, May 3rd, the one month Annual Prosperity Drive comes to a close. And it has been an amazing reach for all Members and Friends who, during this pandemic, have shown just what River of Grass means to them by pledging during uncertain times.

Remember, you are cherished for all the gifts you bring to The River!

There is still time to go to the [Stewardship web page](#) and scroll down to the pledge card. Fill it out and it's on its way directly to the Office! No standing in line at the post office. The 2020-2021 digital pledge card is always available to you [online](#).

We thank each and every one for your generosity!

Thanks to our Stewards for their amazing ministry!

Next week, we will have the final numbers to share with you!

Be well, be safe, and see you on Sunday at virtual worship!

Other Events:

Thursday Mindfulness Drop-in 6:00 pm – How are you doing, and are you tending to any felt anxiety or stress? Are you taking time to pause and check-in with your heart, body and mind? Consider joining tonight's community mindfulness Zoom session every Thursday at 6:00 pm. <https://zoom.us/j/551319571>. Note: This is not a class, just a time to pause and notice, and share with others. Drop in any week. Contact: Carolyn@insightinstitutellc.com or Scott@Insightinstitutellc.com.

Auction Event - open space: An Evening with "James Taylor" and Friends

Need some fun music to get you through another week of isolation? This Saturday, May 2nd, Gary - aka "James Taylor" will perform live from our living room to yours via Zoom. If you missed signing up for this at the auction, you can still "attend". Visit the River of Grass website to make a donation or text-to-give with the amount (space) auction.

- Text to donate: 844-948-1153 code "auction". Text value plus code to 844-948-1153.
- Online: [River of Grass payment page](#) select Auction payment.
- Alternatively, you can RSVP to Karen and Gary at uugonzo1@gmail.com.

All are welcome, regardless of ability to make a donation at this time. Link will be sent on Saturday.

Flowing River Sangha – We will meet online on **Tuesday, May 5th at 7:00 pm**. Every Tuesday night we will meet via Zoom. <https://zoom.us/j/201911385>. We will meet from 7:00 - 8:30 pm. This is an open-ended, drop-in group for all levels of meditation experience. For further information, please contact Gary Gonzalez at meditation@riverofgrassuu.org.

Did you know that nearly 500,000 LGBTQ+ students are graduating this year?

That's right! Almost half a million high school and college graduates from our community will be recognized for their educational accomplishments. Given the health crisis, schools have had to cancel or postpone ceremonies — so we're throwing our own! LGBTQ+ students have worked incredibly hard for this moment and they deserve to celebrate and reflect on their achievements.



The Human Rights Campaign and GLSEN, an organization devoted to advancing LGBTQ+ inclusion in K-12 education, are partnering to host a virtual graduation ceremony that will honor the hard work and dedication of these students. Our good friends at PFLAG will be there rallying parents and other family members to cheer on grads, too. [Register to attend today! Whether a grad yourself, a proud loved one or someone who wants to cheer on our students — all are welcome! Sign up today.](#)

Our event will include many traditional elements of a graduation ceremony, including:

- ✓ A welcome from HRC and GLSEN senior leadership.
- ✓ A commencement address from a soon-to-be-announced special guest!
- ✓ Valedictorians for exceptional, dynamic students.
- ✓ Music and a performance from HRC Youth Ambassador Nhandi, also known as dj young 1.

Now more than ever, we all need to feel a sense of connection. What better way to do that than to come together as a community and uplift our LGBTQ+ youth when they need it most?

[RSVPs are now open — will you join us?](#)

As colleges and schools shut down their in-person operations, far too many students are at increased risk of returning to homes that may not welcome them as they are — forcing them back into the closet, out of their homes or into situations where they are made to be uncomfortable living as their authentic selves. **That's not okay.**

With this ceremony, we hope to send our students a message: **we are proud of you as you are and we have your backs through this pandemic and beyond it.**

This will also highlight our Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Program, the only national project that partners with HBCUs on establishing an LGBTQ+ inclusive campus climate and leadership convening. A student from our program will be speaking, as well.

So, to all those students looking for a community and a celebration ... grab your caps and gowns and we'll see you **virtually on May 8** for this wonderful celebration of your hard work.

[Register for this virtual graduation ceremony today and congratulations to all our incredible graduates. We are so proud of you!](#)

bUUKies - Blowout by Rachel Maddow (non-fiction). Next meeting Wednesday May 13th at 7:15 pm. The bUUKies have tackled some serious reading this year but May's selection is in a class of its own. Rachel Maddow's "Blowout" tackles the fossil fuel industry and the role it has in the world's politics. I particularly look forward to this in light of the historical low price of oil (as of this writing) of NEGATIVE \$37 per barrel. The world has truly turned upside down.

With her trademark black humor, Maddow takes us on a switchback journey around the globe, revealing the greed and incompetence of Big Oil and Gas along the way, and drawing a surprising conclusion about why the Russian government hacked the 2016 U.S. election. She deftly shows how Russia's rich reserves of crude have, paradoxically, stunted its growth, forcing Putin to maintain his

power by spreading Russia's rot into its rivals, its neighbors, the West's most important alliances, and the United States. Chevron, BP, and a host of other industry players get their star turn, most notably ExxonMobil and the deceptively well-behaved Rex Tillerson. The oil and gas industry has weakened democracies in developed and developing countries, fouled oceans and rivers, and propped up authoritarian thieves and killers. But being outraged at it is, according to Maddow, "like being indignant when a lion takes down and eats a gazelle. You can't really blame the lion. It's in her nature." *Blowout* is a call to contain the lion: to stop subsidizing the wealthiest businesses on earth, to fight for transparency, and to check the influence of the world's most destructive industry and its enablers. The stakes have never been higher. As Maddow writes, "Democracy either wins this one or disappears."

bUUkies meet on the second Wednesday evenings of each month. Our May meeting is May 13th at 7:00 pm, and at this time it appears that it will be an on-line Zoom meeting. If you are not on the regular mailing list, please contact us at bUUkies@riverofgrassuu.org in order to get an invitation.

June: *Red, White and Royal Blue* by Casey McQuiston

LifeNet4Families Donations needed - As you may know LifeNet4Families has suspended their volunteer program until further notice. The staff continues to hand out about 300 hot to-go meals a day, Monday-Friday, as well as providing showers, food boxes and bags.

If you would like to help, LifeNet has provided a list of items they are in need of. The items can be dropped off outside the gate at LifeNet from 8:00am to noon, Monday-Friday. There are security guards at the gate. Let the security guards know that you have a donation and then leave it outside the gate (or security can get a staff member to come out).

Here's the list of items needed at LifeNet4Families:

- Drop off hygiene products (deodorant, toothpaste, soap/shower gel, razors, shaving cream, lotion, hand sanitizer, etc.)
- Drop off specific menswear (t-shirts, shorts, belts, underwear, socks, sneakers)
- Drop off masks for clients (homemade or store bought)

Another option! If you would like to support them with a financial donation there is a fundraiser to provide housing assistance for LifeNet clients. Please contact Scott May at scottmayrog@gmail.com for more information.

Location and Directions:

Lifenet4Families, 1 NW 33rd Terrace, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33311

On Broward Blvd. just east of 441 on the north side of the road.

Landmark: there is a Mobil gas station at the corner of 33rd Terrace and Broward Blvd.

Stay safe! Any questions about LifeNet4Families please contact Judi Oltmans, SSJGT@RiverofGrassUU.org.

Welcoming Congregation Opportunity - The Welcoming Congregation Renewal Team announces an opportunity to take your knowledge to the next level in terms of trans identity and learn to be more fully inclusive and affirming of the full breadth of gender diversity.

"Transgender Inclusion in Congregations" by Transforming Hearts is a UUA approved 6-session online course which is now available to our members and friends at River of Grass. Over the six sessions you will deeply explore the intersection of trans identity, spirituality and faith community, and gain the grounding context and skills to transform yourself and our beloved community. The course is available immediately and can be taken at your own speed.

We will provide an opportunity to share our experiences at the end of May.

We will be voting to approve our application to renew our Welcoming Congregation status with the UUA at the Annual Meeting May 31.

For more info and to be provided the necessary link please contact Kathy at Welcoming@RiverofGrassUU.org.

SSJGT, Service and Social Justice Green Team, Green Tip of the Week: Use reusable water bottles, rather than disposable plastic bottles or cups. Simply refill a reusable water bottle from your faucet or a water fountain. It's easy, it helps keep you hydrated, and it's green.

COVID-19 Response Update

Our River of Grass faithful is actively responding to COVID-19. All face-to-face gatherings of any kind are suspended or moved on-line, and our building is closed. Numerous meetings and gatherings have transitioned online via Zoom. Welcome to our new norm!

We are grateful that many 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 has communication and is 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!

Basic Protective Measures Against the New Coronavirus

Your leadership at River of Grass are taking every precaution against the new coronavirus here at River of Grass and in the wider community we share. River of Grass is adhering to the following recommendations from the World Health Organizations.

Stay aware of the latest information on the COVID-19 outbreak. Most people who become infected experience mild illness and recover, but it can be more severe for others. Be aware of those in our midst with compromised immune systems.

Take care of your health and protect others by doing the following:

1. Regularly and thoroughly CLEAN YOUR HANDS with an alcohol-based hand-rub or washing with soap and water, especially – after coughing/sneezing; when caring for the sick; before, during, and after you prepare food; before eating; after toilet use; when hands are visibly dirty – and when they are not; after handling animals or animal waste.
2. Maintain social distancing – 5-6 feet between yourself and anyone coughing or sneezing.
3. Even if well, try to maintain a distance of 5-6 feet from others and when greeting, instead of elbow and fist bumps (no handshakes or hugs), consider placing your hand over your heart as a gesture of welcome and hello.
4. Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth to avoid transfer of viruses from contaminated surfaces.
5. Practice respiratory hygiene: 1) Cough/sneeze into your elbow, 2) If you use tissues, dispose of them immediately, then clean your hands.
6. If you have fever, cough, and difficulty breathing, seek medical care promptly.
7. If you feel unwell, stay home, even with mild symptoms like headache and runny nose.
8. Stay informed, and follow any guidelines from your healthcare advisor.

How to cope with stress during this coronavirus outbreak:

1. It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared, or angry during any crisis.
2. Talk to people you trust, and contact your friends and family.
3. If you must stay home, maintain healthy lifestyle with proper diet, sleep, exercise, and social contact with loved ones via email, phone, etc.
4. Avoid use smoking, alcohol, and other drugs to deal with your emotions.
5. Get the facts from credible sources such as the World Health Organization or local/state health agencies.
6. Limit worry and agitation through lessening time you spend watching media and internet.
7. Draw on coping skills that have helped you in the past.
8. If you feel overwhelmed, talk to a health worker or counsellor, and have a plan to seek help for physical and mental health needs if required.

To see all of the upcoming events at River of Grass, please visit the calendar on our website at riverofgrassuu.org/calendar.html.

Unsubscribe - If you do not wish to receive this weekly email, please send an e-mail and we will remove you from the mailing list, office@riverofgrassuu.org.

Announcements to be sent out in the weekly congregation-wide update should be e-mailed or called into the congregation's office by 12 pm Wednesday. All announcements will pertain to congregational life and affiliated groups and will be for activities or events occurring within two weeks of the e-mail. Outside groups and individuals, wishing to use this vehicle of congregation-wide communication, must have the approval of the Board of Trustees.