

Reflections

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE RIVER OF GRASS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION

DAVIE, FLORIDA

FEBRUARY 2015

LET ME COUNT THE WAYS

by Rev. Amy Carol Webb

Love is the spirit of this congregation.

Each Sunday morning we gather at River of Grass, we renew our covenant to walk and work together, beginning with this declaration – *love is the spirit of this congregation*. Just what does that mean? Borrowing from the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning, let us count the ways.

Answering the call for those in need of help – for a ride to the doctor or Sunday service, to care for a loved one, with a visit in the hospital, a phone call in the night, a shoulder to cry on, an ear to just be still and listen • Marching, singing, chanting together at the Martin Luther King, Jr. parade with a fire for justice in our own time • Taking care to bring vegan treats and listing ingredients of potluck dishes for those to whom it may be a life-or-death matter, so that all may feel welcome and safe at the table • Feeding the hungry in Broward county with hearts and hands and money and time • Gathering to celebrate folks finally able to marry in Florida on Marriage Equality Sunday • Coming early to set up for fun and staying late to clean up when the fun is done • Double- and triple-checking that the sanctuary is ready for Sunday services, and faithfully tucking it all in as we depart • Keeping the word seen and heard running the audio/visual tech • Balancing the books to keep lights turned on today and for tomorrows to come • Taking the time to select just exactly the right images for service power-points and meetings • Learning new music and rehearsing to get it right – the choir, the band, soloists and accompanists – and rehearsing again • Editing the newsletter and alerting the press • Keeping a special room and warm arms for the newest on earth • Chaperoning youth field trips and activities, planning those field trips and activities, and developing and teaching curricula • Adult Faith Development workshops, remembering that grown-ups are on a learning path, too • Keeping our physical space humming • Working to turn River of Grass certifiably green • Greeting visitors, nurturing new members, and learning old friends more deeply • Sweeping floors and cleaning windows and carrying out the trash • Bringing vibrant color to the sanctuary and graceful language to our liturgy • Love that shows up in flowers, food, lessons, music, poetry, tears, laughter and hugs • Love that fairly flows from the walls – quite literally in custom-built sound panels • Love that works behind the scenes but shows up everywhere • Love that waits quietly, patiently, watching intently for its next way to serve and sustain, inspire and embolden, cherish and charge this Beloved Community.



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Love is the spirit of this congregation, we promise. *Let me count the ways*, Browning challenges. Let us keep with her words here, that frame life in River of Grass' Beloved Community remarkably well, as we strive ever more faithfully to love one another ...

... to the depth and breadth and height
our souls can reach, when feeling out of sight
for the ends of being and ideal grace.
... to the level of every day's
most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
... freely as men strive for right.
... purely as they turn from praise.
... with passion put to use.

SUNDAY SERVICES – 10:30 AM

Sunday, February 1: *Getting a Faith Lift*, Rev. Amy Carol Webb

Sunday, February 8: *Love Will Guide Us*, Marjorie Loring

Sunday, February 15: *Share the Love*, Rev. Amy Carol Webb

Plus: Neshamah: An evening meditative service with Rev. Amy Carol Webb @ 6:00 pm

Sunday, February 22: *International Women's Day*, Kathy Jens-Rochow

Sunday, March 1: *Sing Justice*, Rev. Amy Carol Webb



Calendar

(Click [here](#) for our Congregational Calendar or go to:
www.riverofgrassuu.org - click on Events – Calendar.)

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 11:30 am. **Hospitality Hour:** 11:30 am to 12:30 pm.

Faith Development Classes: 11:00 am to 12:00 noon

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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Personnel Audrey Stang, Janet Schwartz, & Open
Service & Social Justice Rick Tucker
Shared Ministry Diane Lade & Janet Schwartz
Stewardship Ken Bresnahan
Worship Carolyn Sant Angelo

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Marjorie Loring, Board President



RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

When February rolls around each year, most people think about love and Valentine's Day. It's the time for candy hearts, flowers, chocolates, and "*Be Mine*" cards for the ones you love. I'm all for love. In fact, we as a community show over and over through our actions that we stand on the side of love. We did this last month by marching in the MLK Day Parade and by hosting a Marriage Equality Celebration. We do this every month when we donate or volunteer at LifeNet for Families.

Did you also know that **February 17th is Random Acts of Kindness Day**? A wonderful way to show our unconditional love to all humanity is by engaging in random acts of kindness – both giving and receiving!

So here is my challenge for you this February: every day, do one thing as a random act of kindness. Be intentional. Make it meaningful. Expect nothing in return. You will discover that there are opportunities to do this every day, everywhere. Random acts of kindness are your love in motion, so put those work boots on and make footprints that others will be inspired to follow!



FULL MOON DAUGHTERS' FEBRUARY TRIP

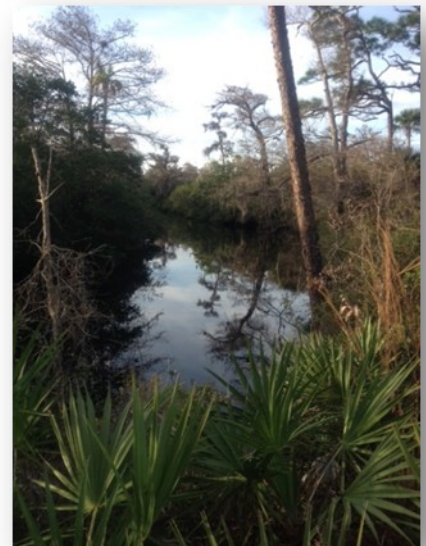
by Diane Lade, Coordinator

Come enjoy balmy days on the river and starry skies around the camp fire at night. The Full Moon Daughters winter camping trip is coming up soon. We will be at Jonathan Dickinson State Park, just north of Jupiter and only about 90 minutes away, from Friday, Feb. 20 through Sunday, Feb. 22.

We have plenty of space available both on our tent sites and in cozy cabins (complete with indoor bathrooms, kitchens and real beds). There is plenty to do at this park: bicycling, nature hikes, boat tours or paddling on your own on the Loxahatchee River, a designated National Wild and Scenic Waterway.

Price for tent sites and cabins will be determined by the number of people attending.

Full Moon Daughters is the outdoor spirituality group for women and girls. Friends and family are welcome; you don't need to be a River of Grass member to join us. Come reconnect with old friends and meet new ones. Reservations are a must for this trip. Please email fullmoondaughters@riverofgrassuu.org if you want to come, and indicate if you prefer a tent or cabin spot. There also will be a sign-up sheet in the hospitality area. Just look for our poster. (Reservations will close on Monday, Feb. 16.)



FAITH DEVELOPMENT NEWS

by Ginger Parrish, Director

There are no other Everglades in the world. They are, they have always been, one of the unique regions of the earth: remote, never wholly known. Nothing anywhere else is like them.

~Marjorie Stoneman Douglas



It's hard to believe that half of the Sunday school year has already flown by! We've had a lot of fun so far, with a social justice project, a pageant, park days and field trips! As we head into the second half of the year, we will be focusing on 7th Principle studies. In other words, we'll be learning about our blue boat home and our place in it. In particular, we'll be learning about our own unique little corner of this amazing world, the Florida Everglades!

The fun's not just for the kids, though! In March, we hope that everyone will join us for two very special congregational events.

After service on **Sunday, March 1**, Rev. Amy will present Sing Me the River, a song-filled, dynamic multimedia presentation on the past, present, and future of our Florida waterways.

The following weekend, **March 6-8**, we will gather at Highlands Hammock State Park for a 3-day, 2-night adventure that will include nature walks, crafts, and group activities. Adults and kids can learn more about our amazing environment as well as build bonds with one another.

Be sure to mark your calendar now so that you don't miss out on any of the fun!

Faith Development Special Events

Saturday, February 7, 2-4 p.m. - Girls Rock Jam!
Sunday, February 15, during service - Field Trip
Saturday, February 28, 2-4 p.m. - Girls Rock Jam!
Sunday, March 1, 12:30 p.m. - Sing Me the River
Friday, March 6 - Sunday, March 8 - Congregational camping trip to Highlands Hammock
Saturday, April 4, 2-4 p.m. - Girls Rock Jam!
Sunday, April 5, during and after service - Easter/Spring celebration
Sunday, April 19, during service - Field Trip
Saturday, May 2, 2-4 p.m. - Girls Rock Jam!
Sunday, May 31 - Faith Development Sunday



BOARD MATTERS

by Zena Tucker, Board Secretary

In a whirlwind of email activity during the holidays, the board approved our recent Marriage Equality Celebration event, held on January 11 from 1-5 pm. Such generosity! Field of Flowers in Davie donated a large arrangement of flowers. Michael Richardson also made a beautiful bouquet, Janet Schwartz donated champagne and flutes, and Carolyn Sant Angelo donated RoG candles as a wedding memento – and what an assortment of delicious food and drink! And let's not forget the wonderful ceremony put together by Rev. Amy – and the music, gift bags, bows, ushers, and hospitality service; the list goes on and on of the heartfelt contributions of our welcoming community. Thank you all for your quick response and generosity!

Our board meets next on February 12th at 7 pm in the Multi-Purpose Room. Guests are always welcome. Thank you all and I hope to see you soon around the River!



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

by Diane Diaz, Chair

PATHWAY TO MEMBERSHIP CLASS –

SUNDAY, FEB. 8TH FROM 12-4 PM (MULTIPURPOSE ROOM)

All visitors and friends are welcome to explore the history and plans for our River of Grass congregation as well as Unitarian Universalism.

Some of our leaders will be there to talk about specific committees and programs and there will be time to get to know each other.

Just bring a bag lunch and we will supply drinks and dessert. (Childcare is available if needed.)

Those who wish to join our congregation after taking the class will then meet with our minister and can sign the book at our next New Member Sunday. Sign up in the hospitality area or respond via email to membership@riverofgrassuu.org.



RIVER OF GRASS AUCTION BINGO NIGHT 2015

SAVE THE DATE – SATURDAY, MARCH 28TH, 2015, 6:00 PM

BUY YOUR TICKETS NOW - ONLY \$50 PP



Please be sure to save the date **March 28th** for the upcoming auction - our largest fundraising event of the year! It is Bingo/Auction night and it should be double the fun all night long!

If you, or your committee or small group, have not yet communicated your fabulous Auction

Donation or Party, please let us know as soon as possible by emailing auction@riverofgrassuu.org. (Remember to check our RoG online calendar to make sure that your preferred date is free. We don't want to book more than one auction event per date.)

If you haven't bought your tickets, you can buy them from members of the auction team after Sunday services or from the link online on our website (www.riverofgrassuu.org) – click on Events, then Annual Auction).



**YOU are the key to the amazing success of this event, year after year!
Let's keep it going!**

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. HOLIDAY PARADE

Our Congregation, led by Rev Amy Carol Webb, participated in the Fort Lauderdale Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday Parade on Jan 19, 2015.



Over 30 congregation participants marched or rode in a specially decorated vehicle, sang songs and chanted. The song “This Little Light of Mine” was a crowd favorite!



MARRIAGE EQUALITY CELEBRATION AT THE RIVER SUNDAY, JANUARY 11TH



STANDING ON THE SIDE OF

LOVE



Reprinted from:

New Times Magazine (Broward/Palm Beach edition)

by Jonathan Kendall

BROWARD CONGREGATION TO PERFORM MASS GAY WEDDINGS FOR FREE ON SUNDAY

In light of marriage equality coming to Florida, the River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation (RoG) in Davie will be celebrating by performing free weddings for same-sex couples this Sunday.

RoG's Marriage Equality Celebration will be held from 1 to 5 p.m. and allow same-sex couples with a marriage license the opportunity to be married in either private or group ceremonies. Also at no cost, the RoG will provide flowers and wedding cupcakes to couples and allow them the chance to have their pictures taken by a photographer in the hospitality area.

(Continued on page 9)

Reprinted from:

New Times Magazine

(Continued from page 8)

According to the Rev. Amy Carol Webb, the minister at RoG, the reason the congregation is celebrating marriage equality is because the congregation is overjoyed that the love and commitment of same-sex couples can “finally” be recognized in Florida.

“At River of Grass, we have welcomed and affirmed same-love couples since we opened our doors as a beacon of liberal religion in West Broward 15 years ago,” said Webb. “We are honored to celebrate with those who can now be married and those whose out-of-state marriages will now be honored. My own spouse and I, married in Massachusetts, will renew our vows during Sunday’s celebration.”

Broward resident Vanessa Alenier, who with her partner Melanie are among the plaintiffs in the *Pareto v. Ruvin* lawsuit, is excited that local religious groups are celebrating marriage equality coming to Florida.

“That is just beautiful!” said Alenier. “I’m so happy to see so much support. So many places in Florida have been waiting for this day to come and can’t wait to celebrate love.”

Row Iliescu, who works with Equality Florida, one of the state’s leading LGBT rights’ advocacy groups, believes that RoG’s celebration may assist in informing the local community of the love same-sex couples share and of the social dignity they should be afforded.

“I think it is awesome that so many faith organizations are sharing in the celebration,” said Iliescu. “Hopefully this [event] will do a lot to help with the healing and educating that needs to take place following a breakthrough of marriage equality coming to Florida.”

Webb has stated that in her years as a chaplain, she has spent many hours mediating the painful difficulties same-sex couples have endured because they had little legal recourse in health-care facilities and with their families.

“Until this moment, more than 1,000 civil rights and protections afforded by marriage have been denied to same-sex couples, whose unions are otherwise equal in every way. Legal recognition protects same-sex couples and their families financially, as parents and in health care,” said Webb. “No longer can a spouse be denied access to her own home in the event of her beloved’s death or suffer inheritance taxes on their home. No longer must a same-sex couple incur extensive legal fees to establish paperwork ensuring the same rights enjoyed by other couples for only a marriage license fee. And the list goes on and on.”

Webb and her congregation are proud that they can now perform the weddings for the many same-sex couples who are expected to show up to their event over the weekend.

“We are ready and waiting to marry you,” said Webb. “Just bring your marriage license and we’ve got the rest to honor your commitment and lift up your love -- ceremony, music, flowers, cake, photos and most of all, joy. Likewise, if you want to celebrate recognition of your out-of-state marriage. We’re throwing a party for love -- for you!”