

Reflections

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

SEPTEMBER 2015

HOW SHALL WE ANSWER?

THE NEW RIVER OF GRASS CONGREGATIONAL YEAR 2015

Rev. Amy Carol Webb



There is a tenet that appears in spiritual teaching across virtually every culture that the opportunity to learn a lesson, change a behavior or address a challenge appears again and again along a spiral life path until the learning is gained, the change made, or the challenge met.

Such would be the optimist's perspective on the current state of our world, clamoring for help and healing. The cynic's might well be, "why bother." Even the Judeo-Christian bible on the one hand repeatedly commands us to care for the poor and oppressed (some 300 verses!), while on the other declaring the poor and oppressed will always be with us no matter what we do (*For ye have the poor always with you.* Matthew 26:11 ASV).

Fifty years after Selma's Bloody Sunday, #blacklivesmatter refuses to let us look away from the racism flowing through the very blood of this nation. Seventy-five years after the New Deal era aimed to eradicate poverty and prevent another economic collapse, more than 16 million children went to bed hungry last night while half our elders live in poverty, CEO's rake in more than 300-times the pay of the workers that make them rich, and how many bank blow-outs have we seen go unprosecuted? The voices get louder and longer and ever more insistent, in the street and in the news and out of every screen we see.



So what is a congregation of tenderhearted, strong-minded, fired-up, passionate and compassionate liberal religionists trying to "stay woke" to do? When our hearts hear the world around us crying out for justice, *how shall we answer?*

Our work together at River of Grass this 2015-2016 congregational year will center on answering this central question for our faith and our work inside and outside our walls:

- ◆ *How shall we answer* – the call for justice, for humanity, for those on society's margins, for the Earth?
- ◆ *How shall we answer* – the cry of the suffering?
- ◆ *How shall we answer* – the voice of the Holy in our lives?
- ◆ *How shall we answer* – history and those whose lives made our way out of no way?
- ◆ *How shall we answer* – the coming generations that ask what kind of world we make for them?



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SUNDAY SERVICES – 10:30 AM

Sunday, September 6: *Labor Day*, Rev. Amy Carol Webb

Sunday, September 13: *William Sinkford's sermon ...*, Riley Cothran

Sunday, September 20: *Multi-Generational Service In Gathering - Water Communion*,
Rev. Amy Carol Webb
Neshamah, Evening Meditative Service

Sunday, September 27: *By What Light? (Fall Equinox/Lunar Eclipse)*, Amy Carol Webb



SEPTEMBER



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

River of Grass

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& Janet Schwartz
Service & Social Justice Rick Tucker
Shared Ministry Janet Schwartz
Small Group Ministry Janet Schwartz
Stewardship Kip Barkley
& Kristine Barkley
Worship Carolyn Sant Angelo

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.

FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Zena Tucker



Have you ever wondered – what lessons may we learn from ants? Truthfully, this wasn't an item high on my list to ponder over during my walking times. I generally ponder things like: "What's for supper?" "Do I have on matching socks?" or "Say, isn't that a cute dog!" But recently, ants are much on my mind since you've elected me as your Board President.

Here is why. They cooperate, communicate, and change roles in the community continually to achieve a big goal. No kidding! In a recent study, scientists learned that the ants know the most efficient way to move a heavy load of food back to the home nest. First the ant is a scout, he is searching out for the best way for the group to go, scanning the terrain for obstacles and ensuring the right path. Finished with scouting, the ant moves in to communicate with laborers who are carrying the food—becoming the leader of the group. In doing so, the new leader takes on the burden of the load too and sets the group in the right direction. In time, however, the leader will not have the best path information and the group of may drift off course. Then the leader becomes a laborer as a new ant steps in as leader. Laborers go on until they tire, and then jump out to rest and – you guessed it – become the next scout. (For more on this fascinating behavior, see the web article in [The Independent](http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/nature/ants-have-unique-ability-to-switch-between-individual-and-collective-action-says-study-10425367.html), at www.independent.co.uk/environment/nature/ants-have-unique-ability-to-switch-between-individual-and-collective-action-says-study-10425367.html.)

Amazingly efficient, huh? They intuitively know when to change roles and honor each other by stepping into their roles seamlessly. And what is their reward? An impossibly difficult task for one or two ants is complete --with a bounty of food at their doorstep.

Perhaps some have been scouting for a time? You know things about where we are now, where we're headed and great ways to get there. You've got great ideas that may shift our way of doing things. It's vital to our mission and future that scouts jump in to lead, communicate and shake us up. I offer my open ears and heart to your thoughts. I am grateful to each member of this incredible and vibrant River of Grass. Please email me at president@riverofgrassuu.org if you are interested in any of our congregational leadership roles.



HOW SHALL WE ANSWER?

(Continued from page 1)

And for the heart of this Beloved Community: *How shall we answer the dream that began in this place?* What parts of that dream have been fulfilled? What parts remain? What is our mission, our purpose, our part of building a new way of justice, compassion and peace in our world?

It's an age-old question -- a lesson longing to be learned, a behavior yearning to change, a challenge demanding to be met. Let us give ourselves anew to answer again and again and again this new congregational year, that the world we dream of may come closer by the work of our heads and hearts and hands.

SERVICE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

FIRST MEETING OF THE YEAR

The first SSJC meeting will be held on Monday, September 14th at 7 pm.



RIVER OF GRASS SMALL GROUP MINISTRIES

By Diane Lade & Janet Schwartz

Small Group Ministries at River of Grass fall into two categories. One type is referred to as “affinity groups,” and attracts people of common interests. The Men’s Group, Women’s Group, Spiritual Art Group and bUUkies Reading Group are examples of these. Then there are covenant groups. These gatherings were created so members of the congregation could more deeply explore spiritual topics that typically would not be part of a hospitality hour conversation. Unitarian Universalists acknowledge this format for small group ministries originated with the mega-churches several years ago. The larger congregations understood that they needed a way for congregations of a thousand-plus to bond with each other if they wanted to keep members, and realized one way to do this was to create many small groups within the larger whole. Small groups encourage sharing, and give people a chance to know each other more deeply. The fact that the topics being discussed are very personal seems to accelerate this process. As a general rule, covenant groups are no larger than about a dozen people. Once a group grows to that size, the agreement is to “birth” a new one.



Covenant groups are so called because we literally “covenant” – or make a spiritual promise – to be and grow together. Most groups meet once month; either on a weeknight, during the weekday, on a Saturday morning or on a Sunday afternoon. We are led by a member of the congregation who has attended facilitator training, and follow a session outline that may have been prepared by a former minister at River of Grass or one available online through the UUA Small Group Ministry Network. Many sessions revolve around the classic spiritual themes: What is the purpose of suffering? Why do we pray? What is the purpose of religious community? Others have a more contemporary feel: How do we strike a balance in our lives? What can we do to preserve the earth?

When the group forms, each member pledges, or covenants, to grow together, and keep all discussions confidential. This group format is not a support group – people who need guidance with personal issues are better off seeking professional help - but we do have a personal check-in at the beginning of each session. Through that, and the highly personal nature of the conversation these topics engender; we come to know each other very deeply.

COVENANT GROUPS

By Janet Schwartz

If you ask anyone who’s been a member of a covenant group at River of Grass, they will probably agree that covenant groups exist for two simple yet profound purposes – to help you grow in community, friendship and belonging with other members of our congregation, *and* to help you grow in your spiritual beliefs through focused and centered conversations about things that matter.

In September, the Committee on Shared Ministry will be sharing information about opportunities for you to join a Covenant Group at River of Grass, so please follow the postings in the weekly email to learn more.

Covenant groups (and all other small group ministries) are open to all adults; you do not have to be a member of the congregation to join one. Questions about becoming a group member may be directed to [Janet Schwartz](mailto:Janet.Schwartz@riverofgrassuuu.org) at SharedMinistry@riverofgrassuuu.org.



NOTES FROM FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Mary Warner, Faith Development Coordinator



We are so excited to kick-start our year of Spiritual Art! We have split up our year into monthly sections. Each section will feature one of our seven principles, with children creating art under the leadership of talented adults.

In September, we focus on our 5th principle: All people have a voice. Our classes will take the time to listen and share their voices to create the covenant they will use for the year. Each class will also work with their teachers to create their special project for this month. We look forward to sharing their creations with you at our Water Communion later this month!

Our cups (and closets) runneth over. We are so fortunate to have more than we need for supplies. Do you have supplies to share? We ask that you please bless others in need. We thank you and will keep you informed of any changes.

If you have any questions, suggestions, or concerns regarding Faith Development at River of Grass, please feel free to contact me at fdcoordinator@riverofgrassuu.org.



What is SuuFi...? = So. UU Fall Institute @ The Mountain

October 4-9, 2015

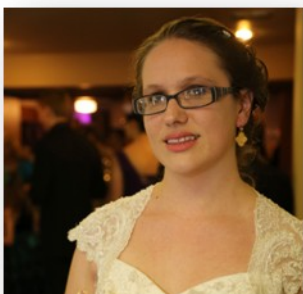
An award-winning storyteller and a UU minister together inspire us to a destination of "A Renewed Sense of Self & Potential", a state of fresh thinking, new approaches, new understanding, aligned purpose and meaningful action. Balancing cerebral with sensual, SuuFi offers plenty of hands-on and heart-engaging activities.

In the fall coolness of western NC mountains, in Highlands, at 4200 feet elevation and with a 40 mile vista, join this "boomer week" to explore new concepts, hike new trails, meet old and new friends, find serenity and avoid traffic, and relax at our UU Retreat and Learning Center, The Mountain.

Register at <http://mountaincenters.org/pages/calendar.php> by August 25 to get \$25 discount.
Program Details, Flyer, Schedule & "Remembrances", 2014 photo essay on website.
4, 5 and 6 day packages priced at \$370, \$465, & \$560, respectively.

NEW FAITH DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR

By Diane Lade



Our new Faith Development coordinator is returning to her roots.

Mary Basham Warner is a lifelong Unitarian Universalist and a native South Floridian, who grew up singing “Spirit of Life” and learning about the Seven Principles in Sunday school. Now Mary, 28, will be leading our religious education program, as we start an exciting new congregational year.

“I have very fond memories of River of Grass. Being a UU has been a huge part of my life,” said Warner, 28, who was home-schooled. She said some of her earliest memories are of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fort Lauderdale, where her parents Grant Basham and Pam Schrimsher, were members.

The family came to River of Grass when Mary was a teenager. She attended youth group here and was Affirmed before the congregation, reading her own personal belief statement along with the other Affirmation students. Her UU religious education “has helped guide me and taught me how to make my own choices,” Mary said. “I had so many mentors and adults I could go to for anything.”

She hopes to pass on that tradition of caring, questioning, and personal growth to River of Grass’ children and youth, who this year will be focusing on spiritual exploration through the arts. Mary also wants to play with different ways to celebrate traditional holidays in the classroom.

“Asking questions throughout our lives is how UUs build community,” Mary said. “I hope we can get our kids into that sense of community.”

After high school, Mary attended the University of Miami, graduating with a bachelor’s degree in elementary education in 2010. She has taught various grade levels and a range of subjects at elementary schools in Bonita Springs, Bradenton, and Belle Glade. Why so many city shifts? She married a Navy man, Ensign Ryan Warner, who is in his fourth year of medical school and will be graduating next year.

Mary’s sister and brothers – Stephanie, Patten and Spaulding – also attended the Fort Lauderdale UU church and/or River of Grass. Mary is the aunt of Stephanie’s adorable daughter Clara, a River nursery regular until her parents moved to Orlando.

Something you may not know about Mary? She was born – literally – in the Fort Lauderdale house where her parents still live.

Please join us in welcoming Mary Basham Warner to River of Grass. To contact her, email: fdcoordinator@riverofgrassuu.org.



FULL MOON DAUGHTERS

Fall in with a great group of gals!

Full Moon Daughters, the River of Grass outdoors spirituality group for women and girls, is hosting its annual Brand New Year Brunch at 9:30 am, Saturday, Sept. 19 at River of Grass. The brunch is a potluck. Look for a sign-up sheet during hospitality hour or watch for an email.

Come catch up with your friends and hear about their summer adventures. Come make new friends: we have no dues, no committee meetings, and no secret handshakes. We would love to meet you!

The Daughters have been going strong since the group, based on building bonds through a shared love of nature, was founded almost 10 years ago. We honor our Seventh Principle, respect for the interconnected web of life, through activities and stewardship that connect us with the earth and with each other.

All women and girls, and their female friends and family are welcome. You do not need to be a River of Grass member, a “mother-daughter” pair, or even a camper – although we do have two fabulous camping trips each year. Our monthly outings have included garden strolls, bike rides, kayak trips, and just watching the sun rise.

Come help us welcome in a brand new congregational year! For more information or to get your name on the Full Moon list, email: fullmoondaughters@riverofgrassuu.org.



RIVER OF GRASS CAFÉ

AMY CAROL WEBB

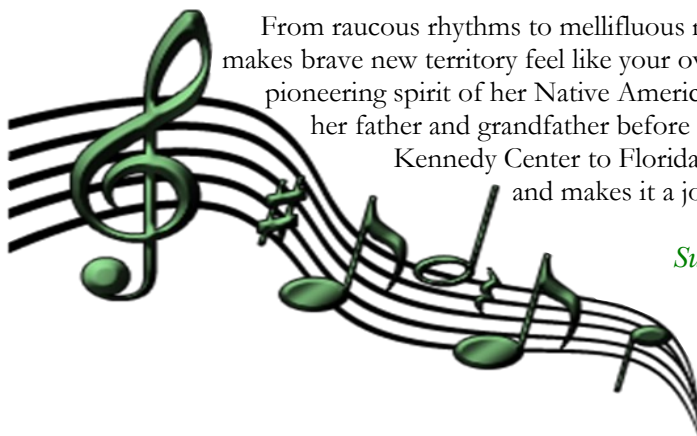
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 19TH, 8:00 PM

Amy Carol Webb, our beloved minister at River of Grass, is a singer-songwriter with “voice, vision, grace and grit.” Named one of South Florida’s “Ten Best Folk Singers of All Time” in 2013, an “Act to Watch” by Billboard magazine and “One to watch in the next millennium” by the Miami Herald – the sole songwriter among noted philanthropists, activists, and cultural visionaries – Amy Carol Webb is passionate and poignant, the girl next door and no ordinary woman. Born into an eclectic musical family in Oklahoma, Amy made her way down the winding highways of the traveling troubadour through 48 states, Canada, Mexico and Japan, took time out to birth two sons, then returned to performing full-force in 1995.



From raucous rhythms to mellifluous melodies, her music makes brave new territory feel like your own back yard, a transforming celebration of the never-quit pioneering spirit of her Native American great-grandmothers and the soul searching ministrations of her father and grandfather before her. Headlining stages from Boston to Bayfront, the venerated Kennedy Center to Florida’s festival stages, Amy’s “liquid vocals sing of a better world – and makes it a joyful proposition” (Performing Songwriter).

Suggested Ticket Donation : \$18 in advance, \$23 at the door



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