

Reflections

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

MAY 2016

HOW DOES OUR GARDEN GROW?

Rev. Amy Carol Webb

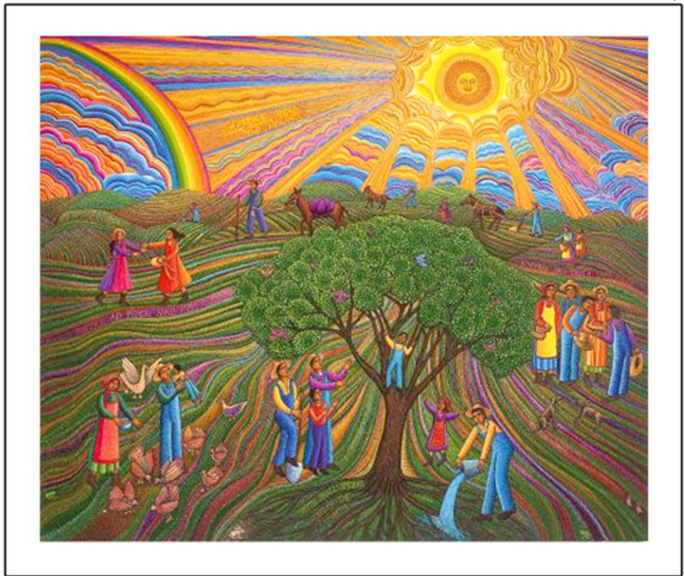


Make the soil ready. Plant seeds. Water. Sun. Water. Sun. Water. Sun. Clear the choking weeds. Water. Sun. Water. Sun. Clear the choking weeds. Water. Sun. Water. Sun. Bud. Blossom. Fruit and flower. Faithfully repeat.

After the Spring celebrations of rebirth and renewal – Vernal Equinox, the Feast of Ostara, Easter, and Passover – comes the merry month of May, the height of the fertile season for setting in the garden – Earth’s and our own.

May 1st, we mark the ancient Celtic holiday of Beltane that blesses all things reproductive – plant, animal and human – with all manner of festivals of the Maypole, around which the townfolk dance to weave together their brightly colored ribbons. Like so many celebration days, Beltane is known by other names in other cultures. In all, May Day is considered a turning point of the year.

In the late 19th century as the trade union and labor movements grew, May Day also became International Worker’s Day to commemorate the Haymarket Affair in Chicago in which a strike for the eight-hour day turned violent. To this day, May 1st is marked as Labour Day across Europe, South America, Africa, Central America, Canada, Mexico and Asia. Just as we in the United States observe September’s Labor Day to honor work and workers, across the world May Day does the same to mark a turning point in the labor movement worldwide.



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And this year, May brings us the River of Grass Congregation’s Annual Meeting – a time we consider how we are growing together in body and spirit, how fertile is our garden, what it needs from us to grow, and honor the work and the workers tending the fertile fields of our faith. It is a turning point in our year, when we ask ourselves:

- ◆ How well have we readied the soil of ourselves and of our community – with fellowship, contemplation, study, prayer and meditation, the bond of covenant?
- ◆ What seeds have we planted for justice, compassion, and kindness?
- ◆ Do we shower and shine on those seeds enough with every treasure we have – our time and our attention and the sharing of our earthy goods?
- ◆ Are we committed to keeping in right relationship, clearing the weeds of resentment, misunderstanding, miscommunication, wounds intended and unintended?

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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

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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.

STAY CONNECTED!

In between issues of *Reflections* you can stay connected to the River of Grass Congregation the following ways:

- ◆ Sign up for our **weekly email** with events and news that changes each week: send an email to office@riverofgrassuu.org
- ◆ Visit our **Facebook page**: www.facebook.com/riverofgrassuu
- ◆ Follow us on **Twitter**: @RiverOfGrassUU or www.twitter.com/riverofgrassuu
- ◆ Visit our **calendar**: www.riverofgrassuu.org/calendar.html (or go to: www.riverofgrassuu.org – click on Events – Calendar.)



FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

Zena Tucker



Unitarian Universalism is faith in people, hope for tomorrow's child, confidence in a continuity that spans all time. It looks not to a perfect heaven, but toward a good earth. It is respectful of the past, but not limited to it. It is trust in growing and conspiracy with change. It is spiritual responsibility for a moral tomorrow.

– Edward L. Schempp, a long-time activist for church-state separation who played a key role in a crucial 1963 case striking down coercive religious activity in public schools.



Please mark your calendars and plan to attend our annual congregational meeting on **Sunday May 15**, immediately after service. Together, we will look back, look around and look ahead at our beloved community. We will also vote on our budget and Board of Trustee positions. We require 40% of our members be in attendance for a quorum. Lunch and child care will be provided.

Bring your thoughts, your authentic voice, and your hopes for River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation. I look forward to seeing you.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Deb Kitner, Membership Committee Co-Chair

The membership committee has been busy conducting another round of Explorers and Pathways Meet-Ups, and we also celebrated another New Member Sunday.



We will need new Navigators (mentors) in the future. Navigators help new members become integrated

into River of Grass life by introducing new members to all that The River has to offer, including affinity groups, covenant groups, concerts, Circle Dinners, committees, service projects and more.

We always need more members to host Circle Dinners. These dinners are held at least once a month at a member's home, and are usually groups of six to ten people. The groups are kept small to provide a great way to get to know each other on a deeper level. Attendees always have fun, eat great food, and engage in interesting conversations. Please see Debbie Kitner if you are interested in hosting and/or attending a Circle Dinner.

We recently had our first New Member Dinner. The dinner was great fun and was hosted by the committee and attended by new members and their navigators. We hope you will become a member of our team or participate in the Navigator Program.

HELP WITH HOSPITALITY

By Andrea Kelley

We can always use folks to help out with hospitality on any Sunday. Here are some ways you can contribute:

- ◆ Share your warm smile to help make others feel welcome
- ◆ Bring fruit, snacks, or a tasty treat to share
- ◆ Volunteer to help with Sunday hospitality set-up or clean-up
- ◆ Check with the Sunday host to see if basic supplies like half-and-half are needed (current month hosts are listed on the whiteboard in the kitchen)
- ◆ Sign up to be a host

Please contact Drea via text at [954-465-3219](tel:954-465-3219) and let her know you'd like to volunteer, or send an email to hospitality@riverofgrassuu.org.

Thank you!

Many hands
make light
work.

John Heywood

GAYLE GIESE RECEIVES UU MUSIC LEADERSHIP CERTIFICATION



My involvement in music for the River of Grass UU Congregation began in a most spontaneous and joyful way. The congregation was just getting started at the Weston (FL) Community Center. I arrived there on a beautiful fall morning, and sat in a small but lovely room with large windows and lots of trees to see. I remember being very moved by the sermon. There were two musicians, one on keyboard and one on guitar, and they were fun and talented, and the one on guitar had a beautiful voice. The keyboard guy struggled with playing the hymns. After the service, I went to thank him for the music and offered to play the hymns, and a huge smile broke out on his face! He grabbed a hymnal and had me sight-read a hymn on his undersized electric keyboard (stored in the tiny bathroom on top of the toilet!). I guess I did okay, because he grabbed our new minister and introduced me as the new keyboard player! This is such a fond memory, as it began many years of wonderful music-making at River of Grass.

Over our 17 years, I've been some combination of volunteer music director, pianist, flutist, singer, choir director, choir accompanist, music coordinator, and (paid) director of music ministry. I've come to realize that this is just what I do, what I love. I've tried to step back many times, but am always called from within and without to make music, specifically for worship. So, when I finally attended a UUMN (Unitarian Universalist Musician's Network) convention in 2014, and met other UU musicians with the same calling, I felt that I'd found my place in the circle of life! UUMN has so much to offer music leaders to enhance their music ministry, increase spirituality, understand the denomination, and grow their congregations.

UUMN offers a 3-year Music Leadership Credentialing Program, for which any UU music leader can apply. They also offered a fast-track Portfolio Path for this program for more experienced music leaders that can be completed within a year, and this option was offered for the *last* time in 2015-16. So, I jumped into the fray, writing papers about my ongoing professional formation as a music leader, how my leadership has ministered to the spiritual development of congregants; UU history and values, UU governance, a community service project, UUMN professional code of ethics, pastoral care, congregations as emotional systems, collaborative leadership and church staff skills, planning and conducting worship services, using music to foster UU values; understanding of best practices in anti-racism, anti-oppression, and multiculturalism; reflections on General Assembly, Tri-Choir, SUUSI, and the UUMN convention. In addition, videos showing various rehearsal techniques and song leading skills with different age groups were required.

The work was daunting, but I ended up enjoying the process and learning a lot, aided by references and ideas from Rev. Amy, and the feedback from my excellent mentor, Catherine Massey (Dir. of Music, Las Cruces, NM). A UUA/UUMN committee then reviews all materials and provides further feedback, and finally certification, which I received this month. I am now a UU Bona Fide Music Leader, thanks to the support of Zena Tucker and the Board of Trustees, Rev. Amy, and the opportunity to make music at River of Grass all these years.

HOW DOES OUR GARDEN GROW?

(Continued from page 1)

- ♦ And when the heart of our Beloved Community is transformed to flower and fruit, do we keep it for ourselves or fling open our doors to feed our neighbors hungry for hope, for faith, for love – for one place they, too, can be transformed?

Make the soil ready. Plant seeds. Water. Sun. Clear the weeds. Faithfully repeat.



WORSHIP SERVICES

SUNDAY AT 10:30 AM
(AND AS OTHERWISE NOTED)

May 1: *Catching Some Rays (Summer Solstice)*, Rev. Amy Carol Webb

May 8: *Mindfulness*, Gary Gonzalez

May 15: *Catching Fire!*, Rev. Amy Carol Webb

May 22: *Faith Development Sunday*, Rev. Amy Carol Webb

May 29: *Memorial Day*, Zena Tucker

LIFENET4FAMILIES

Judi Oltmans, SSJC Co-Chair



Our volunteers are awesome! We had an enthusiastic group at LifeNet4Families on Saturday, April 9th stocking, packing and helping to make a difference. Thank you to all of our River of Grass volunteers: Marilisa and Shani, Pat, Susan, Christina and Alaina, Steve, Riley, Bev, Meli, Tanya and Alex, Bennett, and Judi. Everyone worked together in the pantry stocking the shelves with food and then packing up boxes for needy families. Steve worked making the boxes, and we were able to pack up almost 100 with everyone's help. When asked why she loves volunteering at LifeNet, Marilisa said this: "I love being able to stand for those who can't or are not able to yet. They can use our shoulders until they can stand in their own." Thank you all for your hard work and dedication! Making a difference and healing injustice in our community is part of our River of Grass Mission, and volunteering at LifeNet4Families is one way to put that mission in action.

Join us at our next LifeNet4Families Saturday Volunteer day. We volunteer there once a month from 9:00-11:00am. What a great way to spend a Saturday morning! Upcoming dates are May 14th and June 11th. May 14th is our **Extreme Volunteer Day** with LifeNet4Families in the morning and the Postal Food Drive from 3:00-8:00pm at the Post Office. You can sign up at the SSJC corner at the back of the sanctuary or email us at ssjc@riverofgrassuu.org.

Can't make it to LifeNet? Every Sunday you can bring canned foods for LifeNet4Families to River of Grass and place them in the basket at the SSJC corner. They are always in need of peanut butter and canned meats such as tuna, chicken or beef.



ANNUAL BUDGET DRIVE

Kip and Kristine Barkley, Annual Budget Drive and Stewardship Committee Co-Chairs

Now that our Annual Budget Drive is completed, we want to thank everyone who got involved. We had more than enough experienced volunteers to be Visiting Stewards. We had an accurate list of members and friends of the River. For the first time we had a stewardship webpage at www.riverofgrassuu.org/stewardship.html. We had some challenges with calendaring, and we struggled with competing events.

Let me share with you how this process works. 80% of the money we use here comes from member donations. A Jewish Synagogue has dues. Christian Fundamentalists look for a 10% tithe from all members. We UUs are gentler, but this is how we pay for what we need. We UUs all live somewhere, and there is a mortgage or rent that somehow gets paid. If we work in an office, someone pays rent for that too. Money is a part of our society, and that should not be a big surprise.

In our Budget Drive, we look to get our members thinking about the River and thinking about their relationship to us. Then we ask you to make a Pledge, a financial commitment. Typically, Giving follows Involvement. This money usually comes out of income and is paid throughout the year. Just as you set a goal for retirement and pay yourself first. In the same way, if you set a goal first for the River, there is a better chance that you will actually succeed, and a better chance you will give more.

There are many wonderful activities that compete for my attendance on Sunday morning. There are many wonderful causes that compete for my money. Me, I choose to be at the River, with my time, talent, and treasure. Did we miss you during the Budget Drive? It's not too late! Pledge forms are in the office and online at the site mentioned above.

May 15, we will hold our Annual Meeting of the Congregation. We will vote on those who have volunteered to run for office, and we will vote on the budget presented to us. We may vote to amend this budget to move money from one cause to another. We look forward to another exciting year in our community at the River.

BOARD MATTERS

Toni Cattell, Board Secretary

At the April 14th, 2016 River of Grass Congregation Board of Trustees monthly meeting, the Board reviewed and discussed the draft of the 2016-2017 River of Grass UU Budget, with a Finance Committee representative. The Board made recommendations for changes to consider to the Budget.

The Board also approved The River of Grass Benevolence Fund Policy. The Benevolence Fund provides emergency financial aid to individuals and families that cannot be met through other means.

The Board held a Special meeting on April 19th, to finalize changes and approve the 2016-2017 Budget to be presented to the Congregation at the May 15th River of Grass Annual Meeting. The Board also approved the Finance Committee's recommendation for a one-time "Dent the Deficit" Campaign for the 2016-2017 Congregational year.

At the Special meeting, The Board also approved the display of our new "Black Lives Matter" banner outside the River of Grass facility for the UU Florida SE Cluster "Justice Saturday" to be held on April 30th.

The Board of Trustees held a special email vote on April 22, 2016 and approved a Sunday April 24th special collection at service for Ecuador earthquake relief. The funds will be sent to the UUSC ([Unitarian Universalist Service Committee](#)) for distribution to Ecuador.



FAITH DEVELOPMENT NEWS

Mary Warner, Faith Development Coordinator

Our Faith Development year is drawing to a close, and that means our year together is coming to an end.

The pre-K class met twice last month under the guidance of Ms. Debbie Ely. She has brought her amazing creativity to our youngest UUs as they learn to be kind in all they do and shared in a special lesson on Passover. Our Primary youth were invited on a special field trip, accompanied by Ms. Tanya Gustafson to Ms. Karen Gonzalez's backyard to get a firsthand look at a butterfly garden in action and shared all they knew about the life of butterflies. Our secondary class and their wonderful leaders Ms. Diane Lade and Ms. Marilisa Lawless are looking forward to sharing their Random Art of Kindness creations with the congregation and watching kindness spread to the community.



Bringing our intergenerational service a special touch; several of our youth stepped into the spot light to read for our wonderful Earth Day service and while others helped as seed ushers. April has turned to May. For the month of May, we will have Faith Development classes, our Kindler of the Flame class will meet and we'll have some special fellowship time. Please mark your calendar for our May 22nd intergenerational service. It will be our Faith Development Sunday and my last Sunday serving as your Faith Development Coordinator.

Though I am sad to leave; I am excited to see my husband, Ryan, graduate from medical school and start his general surgery internship at the San Diego Naval Medical Center, Balboa. It has been a wonderful journey and I am so glad it brought me home to spend this time with all of you. I look forward to the adventure ahead and will miss you while we are apart. I will treasure these last few weeks together and all the memories you have become a part of. Thank you for inviting me back to the River of Grass family.

Love always,
Mary Warner

Check your calendar and contact Mary at FDCoordinator@riverofgrassuu.org to volunteer for our Summer Fellowship Sundays. We have fun activities planned or we encourage you to bring your own inspiration to our youth. I look forward to hearing from you about what you want to do!



MORE NEWS FROM FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Karen Gonzalez, Co-chair of Faith Development

Last month a small group of parents and teachers met to discuss Faith Development plans for next school year. First of all, we are pleased that Tanya Gustafson will be the new chair of the committee. Tanya comes to us with experience teaching Sunday school at her former congregation in Texas, and we're excited to have her energy join the team! Next year's curriculum will be centered on our 5th principle of democracy to tie into the fall's elections. From there we will continue the year with social justice work for all ages. We are already looking for a few good men and women to join our ranks of teachers. Please see Tanya or Mary if you would like to be part of a teaching team. Teaching commitments can range from a few weeks to a whole year (of occasional Sundays).

Wondering just what it is we teach in UU Sunday School or how you can develop your skills as a Sunday school teacher? Join us in Venice on May 14th for "Teaching as Relationship," a Faith Development workshop for professionals and volunteers led by UUA Southern Region Congregational Life staff member, Connie Goodbread. The day begins at 10:00am, giving us plenty of time to drive the 154 miles, and ends at 4:30pm. Contact Karen Gonzalez for more information or <http://www.formdesk.com/UUASR/TeachingAsRelationship> to register. Let's build our faith development community together.

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE...

By Wendell Abern

(Wendell's article originally appeared in the online publication AroundWellington.com. Reprinted here with permission.)



Dear Readers,

My Unitarian Universalist congregation, River of Grass, gives half of all our donations to Lifenet4Families (formerly The Broward Pantry). Among its many charitable efforts, Lifenet is currently feeding more than 1,000 hungry souls per week. Recently, our men's group also donated manpower. I was one of

a small task force who volunteered to clean up their dining room area on four successive Saturdays.

I called my kids and told them, "I'm gonna show the guys I'm not just some octogenarian pencil-pusher."

My daughter said, "Dad, you're not going to operate any machines, are you?"

"No."

"Dad," my son said, "if anything needs to be taken apart, put together, nailed down, pulled up, or even just turned on and off, let the other guys do it."

My kids have no faith in my handyman/clean-up skills.

The dining room itself was about the size of a small movie lobby. I arrived on the fourth Saturday, and marveled at the superb job the guys had already done. The paneling and air conditioning vents had all been painted, the ceilings cleaned, the walls washed, and all the tables and chairs thoroughly scrubbed down.

"Hey, this is great!" I said. "What's there left to do?"

"Just the floor," Ken said.

"Walk in the park," I said.

There were four of us. Ken functioned as our organizer; Rick had brought his wife Zena to help out.

Zena is a wonderful woman," I said to Rick. "Why subject her to this?"

"She wanted to help out," Rick said.

Really a wonderful woman!

The cleaning logistics seemed simple: two old-fashioned stringy mops, two industrial-sized pails on wheels with squeegees attached. One pail was filled with a soapy solution, the other with clear water.

Ken hauled in a large buffer from his van and doled out the assignments.

"Soak the floor with as much soapy water as you can," he told Rick. "And you," he said to me, "follow him with the clear water. Then I'll come by with the buffer and Zena will follow me with the Wet-Vac and vacuum."

We set to work. I thought I was doing fine until the mop head, with all its tendrils, went sailing across the room, splattering against a wall. Sheepishly, I turned to Ken and said, "I broke the mop."

"What! How do you break a mop?"

Rick laughed. "You didn't break it," he said. "The head just flew out of its slot." He picked up the mop head and re-attached it.

I thanked him and decided to not tell my kids.

Meanwhile, Ken finished the area Rick and I had just mopped and announced, "It's no good; we gotta clean this area again."

I wasn't at Lifenet4Families! I was back in the Navy! Rick and I schlepped the two pails of water to a large sink in the back of the building; he lifted the first full pail, emptied it, cleaned it and re-filled it.

"I'll empty this pail," I said.

"You sure?"

"Hey, you don't have to do all the heavy lifting." I picked up my pail and discovered it is difficult to fake a cavalier attitude while experiencing a hernia. The bucket didn't make it over the lip of the sink. It tipped over and the water poured all over the back room, seeping into the cardboard boxes containing pasta.

"It's okay! It's okay!" Rick said, clearly more concerned about me than he was about sloshing around in waterlogged

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THE MORE THINGS CHANGE...

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gym shoes. "Could happen to anyone." After comforting me, he said, "Why don't you go see if you can help Ken and Zena?"

I wasn't at LifeNet4Families! I was back on the softball diamond and being demoted from shortstop to right field after bobbling an easy ground ball! I went back into the dining room.

Ken, pointing to the buffer, said, "You ever operate one of these?"

"Of course," I lied. "In the Navy. Piece of cake." I'd watched Ken swing the machine back and forth. What could be the big deal?

"Fine. Give it a whirl," he said.

I turned on the machine and it shot forward like a race horse out of the starting gate, yanking me with it.

"No! Stop!" Ken yelled. "Zena, pull the plug! Unplug it, quick!" Zena unplugged, the machine stopped and I breathed a sigh of relief. Ken walked over to me and put a hand on my shoulder. "See, you're supposed to just weave it back and forth, not ram it into the wall."

"Did I make a dent?"

"No. Tell you what. I'll take the machine. And you give me a hand; hold onto the cord while I mop. Pull it toward you when I'm moving your way, pay it out when I'm heading away from you."

I wasn't at LifeNet for Families! I was back in Shop class at high school, being told to not touch anything because I had just sawed off the end of the instructor's new work table!

Ken went back to work, and I paid out the cord as he moved away from me. Then, as he backed up toward me, I started hauling it in. However, I hadn't noticed he was now straddling the cord. I thought he was still moving toward me, but then he zigged when I zagged. I yanked the cord, it went taut and Ken levitated. His scream reached eardrum-shattering decibels.

It took us ten minutes to convince pedestrian passers-by that no one was being murdered. Finally, recovered, Ken said to me, "You know, you look a little tired. We've done enough for today. Why don't you just go home and we'll clean up." Zena and Rick agreed.

Notwithstanding my few incidental missteps, I called my kids and told them the men's group couldn't have finished the job without me. The guys have since told me that at our next volunteer effort, I can make the lunch.

Cantankerously yours,
Wendell Abern
