



River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Policies

April 2023

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Policies of the River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Part I: General Policies

1. Board of Trustees (“the Board”)

- A. When a meeting of the Board is impractical and the President deems that a matter be decided upon immediately, a telephone or e-mail poll of all available members of the Board may be made. An affirmative vote by more than half the voting members will pass that matter.
- B. It shall be the policy of the Board to provide childcare for Congregational meetings.
- C. Any items to be sold, the methods for sale of such items, and any potential remuneration to the Congregation from such sales are to be approved by the Board.
- D. The Board shall appoint General Assembly (GA) delegates.
 - 1. By April 30 of each year, members interested in becoming a delegate will be responsible for submitting their names to the Board for consideration.
 - 2. Funds budgeted for full-time GA registration fees will be divided proportionally among the appointed delegates and will not exceed the cost of registration.
 - 3. Delegates traveling to GA will be responsible for their own transportation, accommodations, and meals.
 - 4. On-site and Off-site delegates (Congregational delegates, Ministers, and Religious Educators) will participate and vote in General Sessions and mini-assemblies to the extent provided by the UUA resources; and will be responsible for complying with the UUA requirements for participation.
 - 5. All delegates will be required to submit to the UUA a certified GA credential form approved by the Congregation’s Minister or President.
 - 6. Delegate voting responsibility
- E. In UUA presidential elections, delegates will be instructed by the Board to vote for a specific candidate or to split their votes between multiple candidates. Congregational input will be gathered and incorporated into the decision.

- F. If the Congregation has not agreed on a stance for any of the other pending issues or amendments, the delegate may consult with the Service Social Justice and Green Team (SSJGT) and/or other committees/teams which may be affected. The Board may advise the delegates to vote according to their conscience.
1. Following their GA attendance, delegates will be responsible for submitting a timely report to the Board.

2. Facility and Property Usage

A. Scheduling:

1. All Congregation-related events and rentals on or off Congregation property shall be submitted for scheduling via an email to 'calendar@riverofgrassuu.org' in advance. The email must include the event name and description, timing (date, begin time, and end time), contact (name and email address), and location (online such as via Zoom or similar technology, address if not at the Congregation, or room(s) to be used if at the Congregation). The Office Administrator, or other designated person, will receive the emailed schedule request and add the event or rental to the online Congregational calendar if there are no scheduling conflicts, otherwise notify the requestor of the conflict(s). The requestor will work to resolve any conflicts and resubmit the request via the process outlined above. The master calendar shall be viewable online, accessed through the Congregation website.

B. Facility and Property Rental:

1. Non-members may rent the Congregation facility and/or property with proper approval and scheduling. The fees, application process, and approval criteria are contained in the Facility Usage and Rental Procedures document.
2. River of Grass members may rent the Congregation facility and/or property with proper approval and scheduling. The fees, application process, and approval criteria are contained in the Facility Usage and Rental Procedures document. Member fees will be lower than non-member fees.
3. Board has the right to reduce or waive any fees.

4. All non-Congregational groups renting the facility or property shall be required to carry Special Events insurance coverage.
5. The facility and/or property will not be rented for partisan political events or to partisan political groups. The facility may be rented for non-partisan discussions of political issues, with proper approval and scheduling as contained in the Facility Usage and Rental Procedures document.

C. Committee/Group Facility and Property Usage:

1. Congregational Committees, Teams and Groups established under coordination of the Board may use the facility and/or property for regular activities (such as meetings, programs, and events), at no charge, on a first come first served basis. Committees/Teams/Groups can invite outside groups to join their activities, or partner with outside groups to hold joint activities where the Committee/Team/Group is actively involved in the activity. These are Congregation activities (not facility rentals) so the outside group does not need Special Event insurance, nor does the activity require Board approval, as long as the activity meets the criteria below:
 - a. Activity is sponsored by a Committee/Team/Group, and the Committee/Team/Group is actively involved in the activity.
 - b. Activity purpose is compatible with the Congregation's purpose (bylaw 1.2 Congregation purpose) and mission and serves to further the Committee/Team/Group's charge or mission.
 - c. Activity is non-partisan.
 - d. Sponsoring Committee/Team/Group follows the proper scheduling policies and procedure described in policy 2 Building Usage and the Facility Usage and Rental Procedures document.
 - e. Any donations collected are at the discretion of the Sponsoring Committee/Team/Group. Any donations collected follow the procedure for handling Congregational funds described in policy 8 Finances.
 - f. Sponsoring Committee/Team/Group informs the Board whenever a new outside group will be joining an activity for the first time, in order to keep the Board informed.
2. Any exceptions require prior approval from the Board.

D. Clean Up:

1. After every rental or function, the facility and property shall be left clean and restored to its prior arrangement.

E. Smoking:

1. River of Grass is a non-smoking and non-vaping facility.

F. Polling Place:

1. The county may use the Congregational facilities as a polling place.

G. Proposed Permanent Installations:

1. The Facility Team prior to installation must approve all.

3. River of Grass Fund Raising

A. All fundraising events must first receive Board approval.

B. Capital Campaign Funding

1. Capital Campaign 2020-2023
 - a. Members and Friends may make contributions to the fund at any time.
 - b. Members and friends have the option to receive, upon request, a refund of their Capital Campaign donations should a home (or equivalent or via a partnership) not be purchased within 4 years of the end of the Capital Campaign (March 31, 2027).

4. Committees/Teams, General

- A. Committees/Teams not listed as standing committees in the Bylaws may be established by the Board as needed.
- B. Anyone may attend a committee/team meeting, but it is the responsibility of the chair/team lead to decide who is a member of the committee/team, unless membership is otherwise specified for the committee/team in the Bylaws.
- C. Committee chairpersons / Team leads shall be responsible for keeping expenditures within the approved committee/team budget unless otherwise managed by staff as stated in the applicable position description, contract, or letter of agreement.
- D. All committees/teams are encouraged to meet on a regular basis at a regular designated time and place. Committee chairpersons / Team leads are to check the Congregational calendar, even if meetings are scheduled off Congregational property.

- E. Committee Chairpersons, Team leads, and group leaders are responsible for cleanup and locking the building (s) after meetings.
- F. When Committees/Teams utilize volunteer professional services, they shall coordinate with the Personnel Team to insure quantification of the costs for potential future staffing purposes. Criteria for defining “volunteer professional services” are as follows:
 - 1. The services are considered essential to the Congregation’s ministry and mission and are provided by a volunteer as they are needed,
 - 2. The volunteer is a professional in providing such services and can provide an estimate of costs that would be incurred if the services were not volunteered, and
 - 3. If the volunteer were no longer available to provide the services, it’s probable that the Congregation would have to contract with or hire someone to provide them.

5. Confidentiality

- A. The Board affirms the official Guidelines of Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association regarding confidentiality between the Minister and members. A copy of these guidelines is on file in the Congregation office.
- B. The confidentiality of private communications between members of the Board acting in their official capacity and other members of the Congregational community shall be respected.
- C. The Congregation shall keep on file only personal information specifically provided by members and friends such as directory and pledge information, or information that pertains directly to a member’s relationship with the Congregation. Records of pledges and other donations will be shared only with the Stewardship Team, Capital Campaign Team, Office Administrator, President (or designee), Treasurer, and Minister, subject to a signed Confidentiality Agreement. Relational information may only be shared at the discretion of the Minister and requires notifying the member.

6. Conflict of Interest

- A. The appearance of a conflict of interest may be just as damaging to the Congregation as real conflict. Therefore, it is the policy of the Board that all persons serving on committees, ad hoc committees, boards, teams, etc. at the District, or

Congregational level avoid potential conflicts of interest in any and all circumstances. A potential conflict exists whenever a member of the aforesaid group(s) has an outside interest, direct or indirect from which the member might benefit as a result of a decision on a particular matter. This includes, but is not limited to, financial transactions and employment relationships. The decision as to whether there is a potential and/or actual conflict is left to the discretion of the Board.

7. Congregational Communications

A. Announcements

1. It is preferred that announcements be included in the printed, emailed, and/or online Order of Service. Such announcements should be e-mailed or telephoned to the Congregation by a deadline maintained and publicized by the staff.
2. Verbal announcements that *must* be made on Sunday mornings should be written clearly and concisely on an index card and placed in the basket labeled “announcements” or emailed to the Worship Committee representative, Minister or Service Leader. These index cards or emails should be turned over 15 minutes prior to the service. At the Minister’s or Service Leader’s discretion, there may be no verbal announcements or an announcement that has been submitted may not be made.
3. All announcements will pertain to Congregational life and affiliated groups. A total of 4 announcements (either written, oral, or a combination of the two) will be permitted per activity and/or event.
4. Discretion of the staff will be exerted in whether outside group announcements will be circulated or made.
5. Flyers are discouraged from being placed in the Order of Service or on the seats in the sanctuary. Approved flyers may be handed out after the worship service has ended. Committee chairs / Team leads may request approval for a flyer from the Minister, or in the absence of the Minister, an Executive Committee member.

B. E-mails

1. All messages/announcements to be made via the Weekly Email should be given to the Congregation’s office, either by e-mail or telephone message, by a

deadline maintained and publicized by the staff. All messages/announcements will pertain to Congregation life and affiliated groups.

2. No more than 2 emails will be allowed per activity/event, and it is encouraged that the e-mail not be duplicative. Any exception to the 2 email limit must be approved by the staff.
3. All outside groups and individuals wishing to use this vehicle of Congregation-wide communication must have the approval of the staff.

C. Directory and Mailing List

1. Active members will receive one copy of the directory free each year. The Membership Committee will determine additional distribution.
2. The directory is intended for personal use only. Any use of the directory for commercial purposes or by any organization other than River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation is prohibited.
3. This disclaimer is to be published in the front of every edition of the directory. As a general rule, the Congregational mailing list will not be provided to anyone outside the denomination. Only the Board can override this rule should such a request for use be made.

D. Membership Certification with UUA

1. Each January it is the responsibility of all Congregations to certify their memberships with the UUA. The responsibility for completing this online certification and updating the Congregation's information shall fall to the Office Administrator, with input from the Membership Chair and the Director of Faith Development.

8. Finances

- A. There shall be one checking account to handle money for the immediate needs of the General Fund. The Benevolences Fund is a second checking account. Additional accounts may be authorized as necessary for special funds by the Board.
- B. Reimbursements for out-of-pocket expenses and donations to or purchases at any fund-raisers will not be considered pledge payments.
- C. The Congregation's priorities for our ministries and programs are reflected in a budget established by a democratic vote of members.

1. The Congregation will approve an operating budget annually at the Annual Meeting as required in Bylaws §6.1, paragraph 3.
 - a. In advance of the Annual Pledge Drive, the Finance Committee will solicit budget operating expense requests and fundraising expectations for the next fiscal year from the Board, Committees, Teams, and staff with budgetary responsibilities.
 - b. The Finance Committee will review the expense requests and fundraising expectations, resolve any questions or concerns with the requestors, and develop a preliminary operating budget for the next fiscal year.
 - c. Following completion of the Annual Pledge Drive, the Finance Committee will prepare a proposed operating budget, including both expense and income expectations for the next fiscal year, and present it to the Board.
 - d. The Board will review the proposed operating budget, resolve any questions or concerns with the Finance Committee, and ensure the proposed operating budget is finalized and distributed to members in advance of the Annual Meeting as required in Bylaws §6.1.
2. Responsible individuals (i.e., Congregational Officers, Committee Chairs, Team Leads, and designated staff) are required to keep expenditures within the approved operating budget.
 - a. If a responsible individual identifies the need for an unbudgeted expense, the individual will request approval for the additional expense from the Board.
 - b. The Board will review the request, resolve any questions, and vote to approve or deny the additional expense.
 - i. The Board may approve additional expenses up to the limit specified in Bylaws §9.6 – 5% of the most recently approved operating budget.
 - ii. Approved additional expenses will be tracked by the Treasurer against the specified limit and will be communicated to the Finance Committee for inclusion into their oversight of the Congregation's finances.
 - c. If the additional expenses will exceed the limit specified in Bylaws §9.6, the Board may vote to call a Special Congregational Meeting per Bylaws §6.3 for the Congregation to vote on a revised operational budget to include the additional expenses for the fiscal year.

NOTE: Although restricted donations (see section E below) or additional unbudgeted fundraising events (see Policy 3 above) may be approved by the Board, the responsible individuals still must ensure that corresponding unbudgeted expenses also are explicitly referred to the Board for approval per the above process.

- D. The procedure for members handling Congregational funds received from the weekly plate collections or in connection with an activity or event that is sponsored by a River of Grass committee or group shall be:
1. When monies are part of an activity or event, expenses should not be commingled with receipts. A payment request or reimbursement form shall be submitted for expenses instead of paying expenses from monies received.
 2. In a non-public place, one member shall count all monies received and a second member will verify the count. The funds will be placed in a sealed envelope with the following information recorded on the face in pen.
 - a. Committee, Team and/or event name, details of funds, i.e., Plate, Auction, T-shirt Fundraiser, etc.
 - b. Current date
 - c. Total cash amount, and number & amount of each cash denomination, i.e., total coins, 1's, 5's, 10's, 20's, 50's, etc.
 - d. Total check amount, and number of checks
 - e. Total credit card amount, and total for Amex, Visa, MasterCard, Discover
 - f. Grand total
 3. The signatures of the two members involved in counting the money shall be made over the seal of the envelope, whenever possible.
 4. The contents of the envelope shall be recorded in the cash ledger book.
 5. The sealed envelope shall be delivered to the Office Administrator by one of the following means:
 - a. The sealed envelope shall be placed in the secure receptacle designated for such purposes (such as a locked safe, cabinet, or drawer) for retrieval by the Office Administrator.

- b. The sealed envelope shall be given to the Congregation's Treasurer or designee to hand deliver to the Congregation's Office Administrator as soon as practical.

E. Donations

1. Unrestricted donations (outside of member's pledge) to be used for the mission or programs of the Congregation will be gratefully accepted.
2. Restricted donations will be accounted for to ensure they are used for the designated purpose. The Board reserves the right to accept or decline restricted donations or material gifts. Some donations or gifts may be returned or otherwise disposed of if they are considered unsuitable.
3. Special donations or gifts for specific causes (i.e., approved fund raising, building repairs or improvements, or needed items) may be solicited from the Congregation.

F. The River of Grass Benevolences Fund

1. Purpose of the fund: To provide emergency financial aid to individuals and families that cannot be met through other means.
2. Funding: Funds for the Benevolences Fund will come from:
 - a. Donations from individuals. These donations may not be designated for specific persons or uses.
 - b. Collections that are deemed appropriate by the Minister or River of Grass board.
3. Eligibility for assistance:
 - a. Priority shall go to River of Grass members and active participants, with exceptions made at the discretion of the Minister.
 - b. There is a one-time use of this fund by an individual or family unit per calendar year.
 - c. The Minister is not eligible for assistance from this fund unless the Congregation's President approves the expenditure to the Minister.
4. Distribution will be authorized by the Minister, in consultation with the Caring Team chairs(s), if the Minister chooses.
 - a. Distributions will be and shall remain confidential.

- b. Distributions shall be for goods and services, such as rent, mortgage, utilities, food, and transportation.
 - c. The Minister may use fund money to buy food and gas gift cards.
 - d. With rare exceptions, payments shall be from the fund's checking account directly to the vendor or agency for the debt owed, not to the individual requesting assistance.
 - e. Assistance may be up to \$500.00.
 - f. Distributions shall not exceed the balance of the checking account.
5. Accounting of fund money:
- a. Fund money will be held in a separate checking account with the Minister and the Congregation's Treasurer as signers on the account.
 - b. The account will be reconciled monthly by a Finance Committee member who will respect the confidentiality of the fund distributions.
 - c. The Minister will keep a confidential log indicating the name, date, address, amount and type of assistance provided for each distribution.
 - d. At least annually, the Treasurer will:
 - i. Review the log to ensure expenditures are appropriately made.
 - ii. Report fund activity and account balance to the Board without including recipients' names or addresses.
 - e. Contributions to the fund by individuals will be reflected on the donor's annual contribution statement.

G. Issuance and Use of Corporate Credit/Debit Cards

1. Issuance. The Congregation's Vice President or other Board designee is responsible for authorizing the issuance of a River of Grass corporate credit or debit card for an employee or congregant based on River of Grass's business needs. An employee or congregant may request consideration for a corporate credit or debit card by submitting a written request to the Vice President or other Board designee stating River of Grass's business need. If approved, the Vice President or other Board designee will coordinate with the Office Administrator to issue the corporate card. The authorized cardholder must accept in writing the requirements of the associated corporate card agreement prior to receiving the card.

2. Use. The cardholder is responsible for adhering to the requirements of the corporate card agreement. Violation of the agreement is grounds for cancellation of the card and, depending on the particular action causing the violation, may be grounds for additional punitive action as elsewhere described in River of Grass Policies or Bylaws. The Vice President or other Board designee, in coordination with the Office Administrator and the Finance Committee, is responsible for updating the River of Grass corporate card agreement to reflect updated processes and needs, and for ensuring cardholders accept the updated agreement in writing.
3. Cancellation. The Vice President or other Board designee will coordinate with the Office Administrator to cancel the card and will inform the cardholder when River of Grass's business needs no longer require the cardholder to use a corporate card. Upon notification, the cardholder is responsible for promptly returning the card.

9. Membership

- A. The Minister is the only person authorized to sign up new members in the membership book except for person(s) specifically authorized by the Minister, or in the absence of the Minister, the Congregation's President.
- B. In the absence of the Minister for a prolonged period, the Congregation's President or Vice President will have the responsibility of signing up new members.
- C. A signed new member document, approved by the minister, is a suitable substitute for signing the membership book. Name(s) and date of membership will be annotated in the Membership Book as the date the form was received by the Office Administrator.
- D. Resignations: members may withdraw from membership by submitting a written resignation to the Minister or President or Membership Chair.
- E. Membership Roll: The Congregational administrative database, such as PowerChurch, is the official membership roll for the Congregation. The Office Administrator maintains the Congregational administrative database, as directed by the Membership Committee. In addition, the Office Administrator updates the UUA Membership List to reflect the Congregational administrative database for

denomination purposes. At least annually, and before the annual UUA Congregational certification (see Policy 7.D Membership Certification with UUA), the Membership Committee will review the membership roll to ensure its accuracy. A report of results, including any findings and corrections made, shall be submitted to the Board on or before January 10.

F. Membership Standing.

1. By maintaining “good standing” status, a member recommit to membership for a Congregational year in accordance with Bylaws 2.4 Membership Standing. A member maintains “good standing” by actively participating in a Congregational function, submitting a pledge card, making an identifiable monetary or in-kind donation, or informing the Minister or Membership Chair of the member’s wish to remain in “good standing.”
2. The Congregational administrative database is the repository for identifying a member’s “good standing” status. The Office Administrator maintains the Congregational administrative database. The process for determining “good standing” is as follows:
 - a. As the Office Administrator receives any of the following for a Congregational year, the Office Administrator will ensure the member’s status is in “good standing” for that year and will log the item that triggered the status to be set as “good standing,” should a need to validate member standing arise:
 - i. a financial pledge card from a member,
 - ii. notification by a Board Member that a member has volunteered to chair or lead a Congregational committee, team or group,
 - iii. notification by Membership Chair, Board Member, and/or other person designated by the Board that a member has been appointed to a volunteer Congregational position,
 - iv. identifiable monetary or in-kind donation by a member, or
 - v. notification by the Minister or Membership Chair of member’s wish to remain in good standing.
 - b. At least annually, and as otherwise required to fulfill its charge, the Membership Committee will query the Office Administrator about members not in “good standing.” Before providing any list to Membership Committee,

- the Office Administrator will identify members not in “good standing” and provide the list to the Minister (or in the absence of the Minister to the Congregation’s President), who will review the list and may direct the Office Administrator to update a member’s status to “good standing” per step 2.a. above. After Minister review, the Office Administrator will give the remaining list of members not in “good standing” to the Membership Committee.
- c. Upon notification of a member not in “good standing,” Membership Committee will consult with Congregational leaders and the Minister regarding the member. Based on other facets of Congregational life, Membership Committee may direct the Office Administrator to update a member’s status to “good standing” per step 2.a. above.
 - d. The Membership Committee will periodically attempt to contact members not in “good standing.” If a member wishes to remain in “good standing,” the Membership Committee will notify the Office Administrator per step 2.a. above. If a member wishes to resign from membership, the Membership Committee will provide documentation of the resignation to the Board, the Minister, and the Office Administrator, and direct the Office Administrator to remove the member from the membership roll per section E., Membership Roll, above.
3. Upon determining that a member has not been in “good standing” for 12 consecutive months, the Membership Chair will consult the Minister and together verify that at least 2 good faith attempts have been made to contact the member.
- a. If so, they will direct the Office Administrator to remove the member from the membership roll per section E., Membership Roll, above.
 - b. If not:
 - i. The Membership Chair and Minister will select the right leader to make at least 2 good faith attempts to contact the member.
 - ii. The contacting leader will attempt to contact the member. If the member indicates the wish to remain a member in “good standing,” then the contacting leader will notify the Membership Chair, who will notify the Office Administrator per step 2.a.v. above.

- iii. If the contacting leader is unable to connect with the member or if the member no longer wishes to remain a member, the contacting leader will notify the Membership Chair, who will provide documentation of the removal to the Board, the Minister, and the Office Administrator and direct the Office Administrator to remove the member from the membership roll per section E., Membership Roll, above.
4. The Membership Chair will ensure a final email is sent to any member who has been removed from the Membership role informing the former member of this action and options to be reinstated (as described below). Should no valid email address be available for a former member, the Membership Chair will ensure a letter is mailed to the former member's last known address.
5. A former member may be reinstated as a member in "good standing" at any time as described in step 1 above, unless reinstatement has been precluded by action of the Board in accordance with the Bylaws or Policies.

G. Friend of the Congregation

1. A Friend of the Congregation is a person who is involved in the Congregation but might not prefer to join. This includes:
 - a. non-members who financially contribute
 - b. parents of children enrolled in religious education
 - c. former members who have moved away, but still retain a connection such as continuing to receive our Weekly Email
 - d. participants in outreach programs such as college campus group or military ministry group that the Congregation sponsors.
2. Friends will be identified as such in the Congregational administrative database by the Office Administrator.
3. Friends will be solicited for financial pledging by the Stewardship Team as part of the Annual Pledge Drive.
4. Friends may be listed in an area of the Member Directory (but will have the same ability as members to opt out of being listed).
5. Friends will have access to the Member section of the website, but access to the Membership Directory information is limited to only the names, phone numbers, and email addresses of adult members and friends.

10. Memorial and Other Donations

- A. The Board encourages the contribution of unrestricted memorial donations and bequests. Financial donations and material gifts with specified restriction will be accepted only after the Board's review. When the gift is a material object, the Board or an appointed committee/team will consider the compatibility of such a gift with long-range plans, its preferred location and general suitability. All donations and gifts will be acknowledged and careful records shall be kept of all.

11. Personnel

- A. The Minister's contract, or letter of agreement, and all employee contracts, or letters of agreement, shall be on file in the Congregation office and available to members. Members may view the contracts or letters of agreement by appointment with the Minister or the Congregation's President. Members of the Personnel Team will be permitted to have a photocopy of each employee contract. No photocopies of these sensitive documents will be made available to anyone else.
- B. On January 11, 2018, the Board authorized the Congregation's Treasurer (or, in absence of the Treasurer, the President) to designate the Minister's housing allowance as required by IRS Publication 517. The designation, based on information provided by the Minister, will be in writing and signed by the designating official. A designation should be made at least annually, and one must be made prior to the effective date of any change to the housing allowance provided to the Minister. A copy of the designation will be retained in the Congregational files, and a copy provided to the Minister.
- C. Staff positions are open to members, with the exception of the Office Administrator position, which cannot be held by a member. Other members of an employee's family may be considered for employment; however, relatives may not supervise one another. "Relative" means a spouse, domestic partner, parent, sibling, child, grandparent, or grandchild.
- D. The Personnel Team shall be responsible for creating and maintaining descriptions for staff positions. Position descriptions shall describe responsibilities, tasks, and expectations of the position, along with necessary pre-conditions for hiring, such as

education, training, certifications, and results of background investigations, medical vaccinations, and other considerations of safety and security.

- E. The Congregation will provide funds for expenses incurred by the Office Administrator for professional expenses.
1. These funds will be designated as a line item in the Congregational annual budget. Any reimbursement must be approved by the Personnel Team prior to disbursement and will be within the approved Congregational budget.
 2. These expenses will include dues to the Association of UU Administrators (AUUA), training and workshops required for job related computer skills, i.e. Quick Books, Power Church, etc. with advanced approval by the Personnel Team, travel (mileage at the current UUA guidelines, tolls & meals with receipts) and lodging, if appropriate, for approved workshops, mileage & tolls needed for special tasks not accomplished at the Congregational office (such as bank deposit or post office) and other expenses as approved by the Personnel Team.
 3. Continuing education related to job improvement will be reimbursed per the following procedure:
 - a. Office Administrator will provide the Personnel Team a written request including dates of class, description, explanation of class and relation to job improvement prior to commencement of class.
 - b. Expenses such as tuition or books will be reimbursed for approved classes after completion with proof of grades or a certificate of completion for non-graded classes.
 - c. Reimbursement will be at the following levels for graded classes:
 - i. A or B = 100%
 - ii. C or other passing grade = 70%
 - d. Non-graded classes will be reimbursed 100% with proof of satisfactory completion.

12. Newsletter

- A. The content, editing and format of each issue of the newsletter are the responsibilities of the appointed Newsletter Editor.

- B. Committee Chairs / Team Leads are responsible for the publicity of matters within their jurisdictions and for submission of news items relative to their committees/teams to the Newsletter Editor. The Board may give a summary of their actions for inclusion in the newsletter.
- C. Priority for inclusion of items in the newsletter shall be:
 - 1. Announcements of future Congregational events
 - 2. News of Congregational programs, events, members and summary of Board actions
 - 3. A column by the Minister
 - 4. Brief notices of community events of probable interest to the Congregation.

13. Offerings

- A. An offering shall be taken at every worship service unless the Minister indicates it is inappropriate for an offering to be made. The Minister is empowered to approve emergency appeals, and to consult with the Finance Committee and/or the Board about additional appeals as necessary to support the ministry and mission of the Congregation.

14. Policy on Policies

- A. These Policies are established by the Board of Trustees of River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation and are subject to change by the majority vote of this Board or the majority vote of members at a Congregational meeting. These policies in no way alter the Bylaws of the Congregation.
- B. The Board may amend one or more of these policies at their discretion, subject to the process set forth in 14C, but will review the entire set of Congregational Policies no later than once every two years.
- C. There are three methods to amend, add, or remove policies:
 - 1. Method One – Newsletter or Weekly Email feedback:
 - a. Reviewed at one Board meeting and approved for gaining member feedback via the official Newsletter or Weekly Email.
 - b. Announced in the next copy of the Congregational Newsletter or Weekly Email requesting member feedback with a contact person listed.

- c. Approved or rejected at a Board meeting following publication in the Newsletter or Weekly Email, reviewing all member feedback provided.
 - d. If approved, made available in the Board meeting minutes, and in an updated policy manual on the website within two weeks following passage.
2. Method Two – Congregational vote:
- a. Reviewed at one Board meeting and approved for inclusion at an upcoming Congregational meeting for discussion and vote.
 - b. Policies approved by the Congregation to be made available in the Congregational meeting minutes, and in an updated policy manual on the website within two weeks following passage.
3. Method Three – During exigent circumstances, as determined by the majority vote of the Board, which prevent the timely execution of a congregationally approved policy via Methods One or Two, above, the Board may approve amendments to policies. Any approved amendment will be shared with the Congregation via the weekly email and the Office Administrator and inserted in the appropriate location in the policy manual with the board approval date and reviewed as soon as the mitigating situation changes but no later than the normal biennial review period.
- D. A copy of the policy manual shall be available online and in the Congregation office at all times.

15. Programs

- A. Interest Groups – Congregational members who wish to organize a River of Grass group should submit a proposal to the Board for approval. All such groups must reflect the values of the Unitarian Universalist principles.

16. Speakers, Candidates for Public Office

- A. Candidates for public office shall not be invited to speak in services to promote their candidacies except as part of a public forum to which all candidates for the same post have been invited.

17. Use of Congregation Name

- A. An individual or group who wishes the Congregation as a whole to act as a sponsor or as a supporter of a particular secular view or matter of public policy must present the proposed action to the Board. The Board may decide to refer the matter to the membership for action or it may act for the membership.
- B. Any proposal to use the name of the Congregation as sponsor or supporter, which is referred to the public media regarding the proposal, will be disseminated through the Communications Team or a Board-appointed spokesperson.
- C. Any use of the name of the Congregation on any electronic media available to the public, in whole or in part, including but not limited to websites, web logs or e-mail advertising shall require prior written approval of the Communications Team or a Board appointed spokesperson.

18. Incidents

- A. Incident Report Policies
 - 1. When an incident occurs, which requires intervention or response of medical or police personnel, an incident report shall be filed and kept on file at the Congregational offices. If the incident involves a minor, the parent(s) or guardian(s) shall be given a copy of the report.
 - 2. Reports containing confidential information shall be marked as such, and not released without permission of the parties involved, or court order.
 - 3. If a police report is filed, a copy of the report will be kept on file at the Congregational offices, with a copy of the Congregational incident report.
- B. Incident Policies
 - 1. If a person at a River of Grass official event or location requires medical treatment, a River of Grass staff person will accompany that person to the hospital, unless there is a responsible relative or other adult who can accompany the person requiring medical treatment. In the event of a person requiring staff accompaniment, responsible relatives will be contacted as soon as possible.
 - 2. Youth and children need to have consent for emergency medical treatment forms signed by their parent(s) or guardian(s) to participate in Congregational events where parent(s) or guardian(s) will not be with the youth or child(ren).

3. As soon as possible after the person requiring medical treatment is under qualified care and when the presence of the accompanying person is no longer needed a staff member or Board member should be notified and fully informed so an incident report can be completed and filed.

19. Worship Services

A. Memorial Services

1. The River of Grass Minister will preside at the memorial service for a member, member's spouse/partner, or child(ren) at no cost to the member's family. In the absence of a Minister, a member of the River of Grass Pastoral Care Team will be available to preside over a lay led memorial service, or River of Grass will recommend a local, ordained Unitarian Universalist Minister, if requested by the family. Family members would be asked to offer an honorarium to the Minister if the service is for a family member not listed in this section.
2. The Congregational facility will be available at no charge for the memorial service of a member, or a member's immediate family. Immediate family includes, for example, spouse/partner, child(ren), parent, and siblings. Scheduling, usage, clean-up, etc. will be in accordance with the facility usage policy.
3. The Congregational calendar must be considered when scheduling the service to avoid conflicts. Delivery of floral arrangements or food items shall be scheduled during the posted office hours or coordinated with a member of the facilities team.
4. The Minister, or a member of the Pastoral Care Team, will work with the member or member's family to coordinate the service. When requested, members of the River of Grass Worship Committee, Caring Team and Facilities Team will be available to assist with the service, audio/visual support and hospitality before and after the service.
5. The family shall be responsible for expenses such as musician(s), special audio/visual effects, flower arrangements, order of service copies, guest book, refreshments, and other items not specifically mentioned as provided by River of Grass.

20. Library

- A. A library has been established utilizing books donated by members and friends. Included in the collection are fiction and non-fiction. Books and audio books will be accepted. Other materials may be accepted at the Librarian's discretion.
- B. The books are available for borrowing or keeping. An honor system will be used. People may borrow books and return after use, or the books may be kept by the individual. If the person wants to keep the book, there will be a recommended donation as determined by the Librarian. A small donation box will be available for people to leave their donations.
- C. The volunteer position of Librarian shall be appointed by the Board chair and approved by the Board. The Librarian shall be in charge of the organization of the books. It will be the librarian's sole discretion as to which books to keep. Rejected books will either be thrown away, sold online or donated to the library, jails, nursing homes, Goodwill or other organizations.
- D. The Librarian will be responsible for the collection and recording of monetary donations, as addressed in Policy 8, Paragraph D.

Part II: Policies Specific to Faith Development Programs

1. Adult Volunteers

- A. Volunteers in the Faith Development or youth programs at the River of Grass UUC must meet the following criteria:
1. Leaders in the Faith Development program must be active participants at River of Grass for at least six months before volunteering (may serve as co-leader after 3 months). Exceptions will be considered in specific cases with the approval of the Director of Faith Development (DFD) or Religious Educator, or in their absence, the Faith Development Committee Chair and Minister.
 2. Adults supervising sleepovers must be active participants at the River of Grass for at least six months before volunteering, excluding parents who are staying over with their child.
 3. Youth Group Leaders must be active participants at the River of Grass for at least six months before volunteering. Exceptions will be considered in specific cases with the DFD or Religious Educator, or in their absence, the Faith Development Committee Chair and Minister. Youth Group Leaders will also be approved by the youth.
 4. All volunteers must read and sign the River of Grass Code of Ethics included in this policy prior to participating in Faith Development or youth activities.
- B. Parents are welcome to visit classes at any time.
- C. The Director of Faith Development and the Faith Development Committee shall be responsible for creating and maintaining descriptions for volunteer positions. Volunteer position descriptions shall describe responsibilities, tasks, and expectations of the position, along with necessary pre-conditions for hiring, such as education, training, certifications, and results of background investigations, medical vaccinations, and other considerations of safety and security.
- D. Background checks will be performed prior to staff and/or volunteers working with our children and/or youth. River of Grass will perform 2 different background checks:
1. The first is an annual criminal background check with the National Criminal File Search that checks for any record of charges or convictions at a local, state, and national level, and including but not limited to accusations and convictions

for crimes committed against minors, to the fullest extent permitted by state and federal law.

2. The second is a fingerprint background check through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), which is verified to be in compliance with both FDLE and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) regulations and standards.

2. General Supervision Guidelines

- A. During Faith Development sessions, when there is only one adult with a group, the door to the meeting area will remain open and windows uncovered. One time per Sunday the DFD or FD Chair will do a walk through the FD meeting spaces, to check in with leaders. During online Faith Development sessions, two adults will be present. If there is only one adult leader available, a parent may serve as the second adult.
- B. The DFD or FD Chair may schedule Children's Fellowship on Sunday mornings during service. In that case, children in the 6th grade and under are dismissed during service to attend Children's Fellowship, if given permission by their parent(s). Youth in 7th grade and up are to remain in the service unless they are scheduled to help in the nursery or on the playground during Children's Fellowship. Parents must pick their child(ren) up from Children's Fellowship after the service ends. Leaders will bring children up to their parents if they are not picked up by 5 minutes after the service ends. Children will not be dismissed without adult supervision, as they are the responsibility of the FD program until the parent picks them up. However, if the parent approves of their child(ren) leaving the Children's Fellowship area after the service without a parent picking them up, that must be in writing and on file with the DFD or FD Chair. If worship runs late, the leader will remain with the children until the parents arrive
- C. During worship services, children under the age of 12 must have a parent or another responsible adult on the premises unless prior arrangements have been made with the DFD or FD Chair. If the parent must leave the premises for any reason, the parent must leave another parent on premises responsible and must leave an emergency contact number with the DFD or FD Chair.
- D. Parents are responsible for their children before FD classes begin, before the worship service begins, and after Children's Fellowship and worship have ended.

- E. During other Congregation-sponsored events there will always be a minimum of two adults present.
- F. At Congregation-sponsored events, no adult volunteer, other than the parent or guardian, is to be alone off-site with a child or youth without prior parent arrangement and notification of the DFD or FD Chair.
- G. It is the responsibility of parents to provide safe transportation to and from the River of Grass UUC for Congregational and District events. Volunteers may provide transportation if prior parental arrangement has been made and the DFD or FD Chair notified. All drivers must be at least 21 years of age and provide proof of insurance, to be kept on file by the DFD or FD Chair.
- H. Exceptions to the rule of drivers being at least 21 must be with the consent of both sets of parents involved and the DFD or FD Chair must be informed.
- I. Parents must complete a Permission Slip in advance for all sleepovers at the River of Grass UUC, and all off-site activities unless the parent is serving as a volunteer for that activity.
- J. An adult or the DFD or FD Chair must remain until all children have been picked up from an activity.
- K. An adult must supervise all kitchen use by children and youth. Direct supervision is required for all children under the age of 12.

3. Sleep-Over Guidelines

- A. During Congregation-sponsored sleepovers there will always be a minimum of 3 adults for up to 12 children, with one additional adult required for each additional 4 children.
- B. There will be two adults in each sleeping area. A list of all children sleeping in each area will be maintained by one of the adults in that area.
- C. A parent or other familiar adult (aunt, close friend) must stay over with any child under the age of 5.
- D. All outside doors will be locked once the last child has arrived, and will remain locked until parents arrive for pick-up in the morning.
- E. Children will sleep only in areas equipped with functioning smoke detector.

- F. UUA Southern Region Policies apply in addition to our own for youth participation in UUA/Region/Cluster sponsored activities

4. Building Safety for River of Grass Controlled Classrooms

- A. Smoke detectors will be tested monthly, and batteries replaced twice yearly.
- B. Emergency evacuation routes will be posted in all FD classrooms. Fire drills will be conducted at the discretion of the DFD or FD Chair.
- C. In case of emergency need to evacuate the building, the designated meeting place for all children and adults will be established by the DFD or FD Chair, in consultation with the minister.
- D. Cleaning supplies will be stored out of reach of children.
- E. Knives and other sharp implements will be stored out of reach of children or secured with safety latches.
- F. The placement of inspected fire extinguishers will be determined by local fire code.

5. First Aid, Health and Hygiene

- A. Proper hand washing technique will be followed before food-handling activities, after assisting children with hygiene activities, and before/after applying minor first aid.
- B. A First Aid kit is to be maintained in a clearly marked location near the Religious Education area. All volunteers will be oriented to its location. Gloves will be included in the kit.
- C. If a child is injured during an activity, proper first aid will be applied, and the parent notified. In case of serious injury leader will call for emergency assistance (911). An accident report must be completed and turned in to the DFD or FD Chair.
- D. Faith Development Registration form will include questions regarding food and other allergies. A list of known allergies will be shared with hospitality hosts, parents, and teachers. Leaders will check the list and check with parents of visiting children prior to serving food.
- E. Children will be reminded to walk when inside the building.

6. Training and Education of Congregation Members and Volunteers working with Youth

- A. The policy will be distributed to all members and friends who volunteer to work with children.
- B. Parents new to the River of Grass UUC will receive a copy of all FD policies as an email attachment upon registration.

7. Conduct for Adults Working with Children and Youth

- A. Adults who work with children and youth at the River of Grass UUC are expected always to have the best interests of children and youth at heart. They are expected to nurture their physical, emotional and spiritual growth by fostering an environment of kindness, trust, respectfulness, and hopefully, fun. Their charge is to encourage kindness and genuineness among the children and youth, and to discourage unkindness and falseness. In this manner, we hope to create an environment in which children and youth will be able to explore the spiritual and religious nature of their lives, both as individuals and as members of communities. Expectations for faith development volunteers will be addressed at the teacher training session.

8. Youth-Adult Relationships

- A. Sometimes a genuine mentoring relationship will develop between a youth and an adult. These relationships can be healthy and transformative for both. The adult in such a relationship assumes primary responsibility for maintaining appropriate boundaries and cultivating a healthy, trusting atmosphere. It is possible that an adult may try to disguise an unhealthy relationship with a youth as a mentoring relationship. Therefore, if an adult wishes to be in contact with a youth outside of the normal channels of Congregation events, it is imperative that their behavior both be and appear to be above reproach. Any such relationship must be with the knowledge and consent of the youth's parents. This is for the protection of the youth and the adult. Adults will best protect themselves from false accusations of misconduct by keeping the parents informed of their actions.

9. Sexualized Behavior

- A. It is never appropriate to engage in any manner of sexualized behavior with a child or youth. This refers not only to explicitly sexual behavior, but also to sexually provocative behavior or language. It is inappropriate to tell jokes with sexual content, for instance, or to make “double entendres.” Physical expressions of affection such as hugs have their place, but it is best to allow the child or youth to initiate it and the adult must be sensitive not to allow them to be prolonged.

10. Report and Response Procedures

- A. If an adult suspects abuse of a minor during a River of Grass UUC program or event, the adult must immediately report it to the DFD or FD Chair or the Minister.
- B. If the DFD or FD Chair or Minister ascertains that a child or youth is in a situation of risk, the responsible person should immediately remove the allegedly abusive person (or the child) from the situation and take any other necessary steps to protect the minor child.
- C. The Minister or DFD or FD Chair will alert the President of the Congregation that an abuse situation has been reported. Otherwise, the matter is to remain confidential. Release of information could interfere with successful prosecution, could result in unwarranted damage to the reputation of the accused, or may endanger the child.
- D. If the reported abuse involves a worker or volunteer at the River of Grass UUC, the supervisor of that person will immediately relieve that person of any duties involving supervision, care or teaching of children and youth at the River of Grass UUC until the matter is resolved. The supervisor will keep a written record of who reported the suspected abuse and any related circumstances.
- E. If a River of Grass worker or volunteer is under legal investigation for any alleged abusive situation that person will be immediately relieved of any duties involving suspension, care or teaching of children and youth at the River of Grass UUC until the matter is resolved.

11. Responding to the Media

- A. If anyone, including the media, contacts the River of Grass UUC about an alleged abusive situation involving the River of Grass UUC, only the President of the

Congregation or his/her designee will speak for the River of Grass UUC. In general, the following guidelines apply for these situations.

- B. Because of confidentiality issues, no one affiliated with the River of Grass UUC can discuss specific cases in a public context. It is important that we protect the interests of the child and the River of Grass UUC, particularly if litigation seems possible. The designated spokesperson is free to discuss what steps we have taken to guard against abusive situations.
- C. Children's names or photographs will not be used in promotional materials without written consent of the parent or guardian.

12. Acceptance of this Policy and Code of Conduct

- A. Any Congregational employee or volunteer working with children or youth who disagrees with any provision of the Policy or code of Conduct is free to discuss their opinions with the leadership of the River of Grass UUC but must abide by the Code as written and approved by the River of Grass Board. Signing the Code indicates that the signatory has read the Policy and the Code and agrees to abide by them. The Signatory further acknowledges that failure to abide by the Code or the provisions of the Policy will result in dismissal from paid positions, or denial of participation in volunteer positions involving children and youth at the River of Grass UUC.

13. Code of Conduct for Adults and Older Youth who are in Leadership Roles with Children and Youth

- A. Adults and older youth leaders play a key role in fostering the spiritual and character development of individuals. It is, therefore, especially important that those in leadership positions provide the special nurture, care and support that will enable children and youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility. The relationship between young people and their leaders must be one of mutual respect if the positive potential of their relationship is to be realized.
- B. Therefore, those who lead children and youth will:
 - provide nurturing care and support to all children and youth

- work to help children develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence.
- respect the selfhood of each child or youth, including the absolute right to privacy of his or her own minds and body.
- not engage in any behavior with children or youth, which constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse.
- not engage in behavior or language, which is personally threatening or demeaning.
- not engage in any sexually harassing behavior or any other sexual, seductive or erotic behavior with children or youth.
- not encourage or condone any sort of illegal or unethical activity on the part of children or youth.

C. The following statement must be signed annually by all adults working with children:

FD Volunteer’s Statement:

I have read the above Code of Ethics and understand that these guidelines govern expected behavior of adults working with children at the River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation. In case of violation of these codes, I understand that appropriate action will be taken.

Signature _____ Date _____

The River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation Policies
were reviewed and updated by the Board of Trustees in May 2022