

Reflections



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

MARCH 2010

Our Fifth Principle

By Rev. Naomi King

Growing up in New England, the town meeting was the center of how the community functioned. Town meetings that worked were ones where people shared information, then individuals each spoke once on their opinions, votes were cast, and we lived – no matter how we voted – by the community’s decisions.



This is democracy in action. The town meeting and our congregational meetings arise from the same religious history and share a basic theology: that individuals can make mistakes in governance and we’re most likely to avoid that by sharing information, talking through the issues, and coming to a group consensus. In practice, there is voting, with majorities and minorities, but the wise majority pays attention to its relationship with the minority and vice versa, because we are all in this together. How one person acts affects all. There is disagreement with love and respect. There is a common commitment for a common purpose.

We covenant to affirm and promote the right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large. That’s our fifth promise. It means much more than “one person, one vote.” Common commitment for common purpose, sharing information, discussing and disagreeing with love and respect, listening open-heartedly, constructive suggestions, and communal follow-through are all required for democratic practice to function well, whether we are practicing it in our congregations or in our larger society.

Our Unitarian Universalist Association’s “Standing on the Side Of Love” campaign exemplifies the best of our democratic tradition, providing resources for education within our congregations, organizational materials for our larger communities, ways to build community partnerships, ideas for witness and advocacy to influence legislation, and models of practicing democracy around the world, from community education for all, to the work of Ugandan UUs opposing the Anti-Homosexual Bill of 2009, to efforts in reforming U.S. immigration laws. “Standing on the Side of Love” is practicing our fifth principle to support both immigrant families and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people.

But sometimes, we feel so strongly about a moral issue, as religious people, that individually and in small groups, we practice the other half of our fifth promise: the right of conscience. This is when we depart from the majority rule, and it calls us to a spiritual process of reflection and recommitting ourselves to our highest values. Through actions made for the right of conscience, we might sacrifice our safety, our connections to our community, our friends and family, our jobs, even, at time, our lives.

When the Civil Rights Movement – working for democratic change – engaged in public witness, members of the movement did so as a matter of conscience. The deaths of people like James Reeb, Viola Liuzzo, Cpl. Roman Ducksworth Jr., Michael Schwener, and Harry E. Smith were each calls to America about injustice, and arose from these individuals acting on their consciences, coming into conflict with others who disagreed.

Our “Standing on the Side of Love” campaign also reflects individuals and communities acting in fidelity with their moral integrity: clergy and congregations who will not act for the state in signing any marriage licenses until all have the ability to be legally married, protests in support of immigrant families divided by our U.S. government, congregations working to prevent people from being deported.

We diminish both democracy and the right of conscience when we disagree without respect and resort to violence, name-calling, bullying, and a myriad of other ways to achieve the way we personally might wish. As Unitarian Universalists, we have promised, to ourselves and to this world, to cultivate a different way.

IN THIS ISSUE

<i>Why Grow?</i>	3
<i>See You In Service</i>	4
<i>Mission Statement</i>	5
<i>Calendar</i>	6
<i>Right Relations</i>	7
<i>Congregation Campout....</i>	8



WOMEN TO TALK ABOUT SPRING CLEANING

By Kathy Jens-Rochow, Chair

Up north, we used to say March came in like a lion and went out like a lamb, or vice versa. Here in Florida we certainly don't see much change as far as seasons go. But, spring is a time for rebirth and renewal. This month we will look at the things that need to be "cleaned up" in our lives and how we go about renewing ourselves.

The March meeting of the Women's Group will be on the fourth Thursday, March 25, at 7:30 at a member's home. For more information, contact Kathy Jens-Rochow at WomensGroup@riverofgrass.org.



SERVICES

March 7: "Principle 3 in Music and Verse: Acceptance of One Another and Encouragement to Spiritual Growth" – River of Grass Musicians

March 14: "Abundant Blessings" – Rev. Naomi

March 21: Service by Mission Statement Task Force

March 28: "Trusting the Unknown" (Passover Celebration Sunday) – Rev. Naomi

MINISTER'S OFFICE HOURS

Wednesday, March 10, 3:00 to 6:00pm
 Thursday, March 11, 9:00am to 12:00pm
 Wednesday, March 31, 3:00 to 6:00pm
 Thursday, April 1, 9:00am to 12:00pm

Please note: Appointments are available for other times and are recommended. Due to Passover and Easter celebrations, the Minister's schedule looks a little different from previous months for March and April.

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

Central Park Elementary School
 777 North Nob Hill Road Plantation, Florida 33324

EVERY SUNDAY

Faith Development Classes: 9:30a.m.-10:30a.m.
Worship Service: 10:30a.m.-11:30a.m. **Coffee Hour:** 11:30a.m. - 12:00p.m.
Children's Fellowship: 10:45a.m. - 11:30a.m

FRIENDLY REMINDERS FOR OUR MEMBERS

Please utilize the north parking lot of Central Park Elementary School on Sundays. This will allow the driveway and closer parking spaces to be available to our guests and physically challenged worshippers. All meetings are held at 324 S. University Dr. in Plantation unless otherwise noted.

River of Grass

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONGREGATION
 324 South University Drive
 Plantation, Florida 33324
 Phone (954) 474-2007 Fax (954) 474-2022
www.riverofgrass.org uuiriverofgrass@aol.com

Newsletter

Editor Bev Kaufman
 Design & Production Deb Rostorfer
 Copy Editors..... Andie Arthur & Janet Schwartz

Minister

Reverend Naomi King

Congregational Administrator

Mitsy Kirkland

Board of Trustees

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 Vice President Paula Rabinowitz
 Secretary Karen Gonzalez
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 Community Awareness Andie Arthur
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 Green Steve Jens-Rochow
 Membership Vickie Koutoulas & Linda Meerow
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 Nominating..... Leana Bresnahan
 Right Relations..... Gary Gonzalez
 Service & Social Justice Alan Meerow & Kay Swicord
 Shared Ministry Diane Lade & Janet Schwartz
 Worship Brit Lundell

WHY GROW?

By Steve Tepper, Board President

At a recent meeting of Florida congregation presidents in Orlando, I posed this question to the assembled group of 50-some congregation leaders: “Why grow?” I was interested in whether our sister congregations around the state were focused on numerical growth, and if so, why? The answers were enlightening and I wanted to share them with you:

- To avoid stagnation.
- Succession planning – Today’s new member could be tomorrow’s leader.
- We have an important message that transforms people’s lives. With more members, we can have a greater impact on our communities and the world.
- Each one of us joined a Unitarian Universalist (UU) congregation because someone opened the door for us. We should do the same for the person who is out there right now searching for a spiritual home.
- Each number represents a human being eager to be a part of our faith community.

I found two things interesting in those responses. First, no one said their congregation was NOT focused on numerical growth. Second, none of the responses had anything to do with money, increasing pledges, balancing budgets, etc. Perhaps it is implicitly understood to be a by-product of growth, but clearly it is not, and should not be a driving force behind a congregation’s desire to grow.

Now the bad news: despite a desire to grow and a focus on growth in congregations across the state, we are failing. Membership in the 45 UU congregations in the state has fallen below 5,000 out of a population of 18 million! That’s less than three hundredths of one percent.

Our District Executive, Rev. Kenn Hurto, has urged our congregations to open a conversation about how we can grow our faith in this time. He says, “Our Fourth Principle says part of our purpose is to encourage ‘spiritual growth in our congregations.’ How would you know if your congregation is doing that?”

So how do we grow our faith, our reach into the community at this time? Well, I propose that we start by not thinking about the obstacles of “this time.” Is it more difficult to attract members because of an economic downturn? Or are more people seeking answers and respite from turmoil they have never known in their lives?

Or maybe the obstacles of “this time” include our internal difficulties: Who wants to join a congregation that meets in a school cafeteria? We don’t have a mission. We don’t even have a full-time minister. There are many issues about which we don’t agree. And we sure don’t have any money for marketing.

And yet despite those and other obstacles, people still find us, and many of them come back. And come back again. And ask about membership. And sign the membership book. Why is that?

Because we have always been, and still are, a great congregation. We do not always think alike, but we are loving and caring, and we are outstanding at hospitality. That is the first thing visitors see. Then they see our worship service, and we do an outstanding job there as well. Then, back in the literature area, they see our reach into the community: our many social justice, service and green projects, participation in community events.

Five years ago, our congregation lost a minister and a plot of land, and decided to stop focusing on growth. We no longer charged that every member of our congregation is part of the membership committee. Since then we have been waiting for the right time to start growing.

Well folks, that time is never coming, because that time never left. It is always time to spread our message and grow our faith. I urge you to think about that when you talk with friends and neighbors whom you have been reluctant to invite to a service or an event. And I urge you to think about that when you see someone in the hospitality area wearing a handwritten name tag after service. You are now officially deputized as a member of the Membership Committee.

I know you believe, as I do, that our faith and our congregation hold a transformative power. Now spread the word.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

By Vickie Koutoulas, Co-Chair

The Membership Committee is planning its Second Sunday lunch to be held outdoors this month and for the next several months at Deicke Park directly after services. The park is located at 1200 NW 106th Ave, just north of the Central Elementary School where we meet.

A New Member Sunday was held on February 21, at which time the Membership Committee introduced four new members, following a breakfast get-together before services. From the left are Amy Shaw and her son Henri, Deb Rostorfer, Jean Ann Yzer and Ed Lewis.

If anyone is interested in joining us in our exciting journey, please contact us at Membership@riverofgrass.org.



BOARD MATTERS

By Karen Gonzalez, Secretary

See You In Service – It takes being present in service to each other and our community to grow our spirits and strengthen our bonds. Pam Schrimsher visited the Board of Trustees in February to request that we support a campaign to bring this message to our members, and it was approved unanimously. Please read her letter printed on this page.

Upcoming District Opportunities

"Building the World We Dream About"
Florida District Racial Justice Council
Anti-Racism Conference & Workshop
March 13, 2010 ~ 10:00 am to 4:30 pm
UU Fellowship of Boca Raton

Annual District Assembly
"The Challenge Ahead"
With Special Guest, Gini Courter
Moderator of the Unitarian Universalist Association
April 9-11, 2010
Hosted by the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Miami

Please consider supporting our congregation by developing your leadership skills and attending one or both of the above events. For more information, visit www.floridadistrict.org

Committee Work – Many of our committees have been busy updating their charges, which will be voted on at our next Board of Trustees meeting. The Policy committee has been updating some of our policies which were affected by our return to one service and budget actions of last year. These changes will be posted in an upcoming newsletter. The Finance committee is reviewing policies centered on the handling of our monies to tighten protections for all involved in those transactions. An Annual Giving Chairperson has been charged with the oversight of pledge income on a year-round basis. We thank Susan Juncosa for taking on this task.

Compensatory Time For Reverend Naomi – Our minister has been working above and beyond her allotted time in the last few months, as our pastoral needs have been great. The board voted unanimously to remove one day a week of office hours from her scheduled work weeks through the rest of this congregational year to compensate her for this time spent.

District Awards – The Florida District Awards Committee requests your nominations to honor members and friends who have made significant contributions to their congregations and communities. Awards will be presented during our District Assembly, April 9-11, in Miami. Click on the following link to submit a nomination: [Award Information and Nomination Form](#). Please note, the deadline to submit nominations is March 15, 2010.

Last month's minutes can be found in the documents section of www.RiverofGrass.org



AN OPEN LETTER TO CONGREGATION

From Pam Schrimsher

When I was growing up, shops and stores were closed on Sunday, and many had little signs in their windows, "See you in church." As Unitarian Universalists, we work hard to be inclusive, but somehow, "See you in congregation" just doesn't have the same ring tone.

So I propose "See you in service." I believe this captures our essence. It acknowledges our need for community, and it reflects the words we recite Sunday mornings: "And service is our law."

"See you in service" means I need to be with you Sunday morning as part of my community. And you need to be with me. If we do not gather together, we do not have a community. When we don't see one another, little by little, the community dwindles. All of the support we give each other and the good works we provide the world will not exist if our community does not gather.

I am asking you to attend Sunday services. I know there is a horror of asking UU's to do anything, but how will we exist if we do not have community time? I understand not everyone can come to every service. (I myself had to miss out last month so I could walk the A1A Half Marathon with my daughter and niece.) But, if we expect to see each other each Sunday, it is more likely we will.

I know some of us come almost every Sunday. But, I also know that some members only come when the musicians play, or when the minister is in the pulpit, or when their teen is speaking. That does not make community. Your presence is important. We need each other. And Sunday morning is the only time for our whole congregation to gather.

I want all River of Grass members to make coming to Sunday service a priority. I want the adults to set an example for our youth. I want our youth to know religion is as important as school and work.

Imagine a drumming circle that encourages all of its community to come to drum each week. Everyone brings their drum: little, big, bass, snare or taiko; and they sit and drum. Their song goes out to the world, and the members feel energized. Each time the circle plays, the players see the other drummers. They know they are not alone. They know they are part of a community.

Sunday service does the same. Whether we agree with the sermon or not, like the music or not, think the cookies are good or not, the important thing is that we are meeting in community. If we're not there, there is not community.

So, I say, "See you in service."



RIVER OF GRASS TO PONDER NEW MISSION STATEMENT

By Wendell Abern

Who is River of Grass? Where are we heading? What do we hope to accomplish as a congregation? The Mission Statement Task Force wants your help in providing answers to these questions. Plus a few others.

A mission statement, only a paragraph long, has specific measurable outcomes. It is, according to the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) New Congregation and Growth Resources document of 2005, "a concise statement of what a congregation wants to be known for, or known as, within the wider world; what the congregation wants to mean to the community."

In the adjoining sidebar, you'll see our congregation's former mission statements, plus a couple from other UU congregations. We want to create our new one with answers you give us to seven specific questions.

Early this month, we will be distributing a questionnaire containing the seven questions. We will also be publishing the questions in an e-mail to the entire congregation.

On March 21, the Mission Statement Task Force will be giving the Sunday service, when we will detail our mission once again, and report on our progress – which will include reading some of your responses to our questions (with your permission, of course). Subsequent to the service, please bring your coffee into the sanctuary, where we will conduct the first of three input sessions.

As a follow-up, the other two input sessions will be held in the congregation office on Tuesday afternoon, March 23, and Wednesday evening, March 24.

The task force will then pore over your answers and comments, and use them as the foundation for creation of a new mission statement, which we will have ready to distribute to the entire congregation by mid-April – and later, for publication at our annual meeting in May.

MISSION STATEMENTS

River of Grass (current)

More hope. More love. More joy.

River of Grass (formerly)

To provide a progressive religious home for adults and children that values spiritual curiosity and affirms each individual's search for truth and meaning, where people can worship together in an atmosphere of calm reflection and spiritual renewal.

UU Church of Corpus Christi, Texas

As a welcoming and accepting, diverse and inquiring religious community, we unite to provide an environment which stimulates a free exchange and exploration of ideas, fosters spiritual and intellectual growth, and serves as a base for active outreach to benefit the world around us.

First UU Church of San Diego, California

We envision members and friends of First Church as pilgrims traveling on life's journey together – creating a shared ministry through which we can grow our souls in ways truthful to ourselves, caring of others, and sustaining the planet.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO FAITH DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

By Janet Schwartz

At a recent board of trustees meeting, several changes to the faith development section of our congregation's policies were presented to the board for review. The changes primarily included new language that reflects a shared responsibility with the Director of Faith Development; a staff position we no longer have in place.

The changes were incorporated over many pages of policy, too numerous to include in this newsletter article, and have instead been attached to the newsletter as a separate document. In compliance with our Policy on Policies, the changes will be approved or rejected at the next board meeting scheduled for March 11. If you have any questions or concerns in regard to these policy changes, you are asked to direct your questions to either Kathy Jens-Rochow or Janet Schwartz at Board@riverofgrass.org.

MINISTERIAL ASSESSMENT

By Steve Tepper, Board President

This month the Personnel Committee rolls out the Ministerial Assessment process, as specified in our By-Laws and our Letter of Agreement with Rev Naomi. Through useful resources from the Florida District office, we have developed an assessment survey which will be provided to a random sampling of congregation members and leaders.

If you are selected, your participation is very important, as only a small percentage of congregants have been selected to participate. The goal of this assessment is to create a baseline from which ministry goals can be established. Future assessments will be used to determine if progress has been made toward the established goals. Note that a new sampling will be drawn for any future assessments.

Once the assessment results have been received, compiled and used for goal setting, summary feedback will be provided to the congregation.

EMPHASIS ON FUNDRAISING

By Elly Keane, Auction Chair

Mark your calendars, save the date. This year's FUNdraising Auction is Saturday, November 13, 2010. If you want to join the team to continue the fun, the 2010 Auction committee is forming. Contact Elly Keane at Auction@riverofgrass.org if you are interested.

Party/ Party/ Party – Now that you have had a chance to check your calendar and the holidays are over, you may want to attend one of our March Auction activities. There may still be some tickets available. The 70's party (not 80's) is on Friday, March 5th, followed by the new date for the Martini Party, Saturday, March 6. Ladies, just for you: Friday, March 12th is the ladies sleep-over party. Please contact Auction@riverofgrass.org for more information.

MARCH 2010



Tue.	2 nd	6:30-8:30pm	Leadership Roundtable
Wed.	3 rd	7:30-9:00pm	Covenant of Right Relations Task Force
Fri.	5 th	7:15-9:00pm	Best of 70s Party (Auction Event) Simplicity Circle
Sat.	6 th	11:00am-12:30pm	Martini Party (Auction Event) Membership Committee
Sun.	7 th	9:30-10:30am 10:30-11:30am 11:30am-12:30pm	Sunday Classes Sunday Worship Youth Group
Mon.	8 th	7:15-9:00pm	Broward Green Simplicity Circle
Wed.	10 th	7:30-9:00pm	Circle of Light
Thu.	11 th	7:15pm 7:30-9:00pm	Board Meeting Men's Group
Fri.	12 th	6:30-8:30pm	Ladies Pajama Party (Auction Event) Mindful Meditation Community
Sat.	13 th	10:00am-12:00pm 6:00-8:00pm 7:30-9:00pm	Wildpine Covenant Group Journey Towards Wholeness: Cultivating Inclusivity Spiritual Art Group
Sun.	14 th	9:00-10:00am 9:30-10:30am 10:30-11:30am 11:30am-12:00pm 11:30am-12:00pm 12:00-2:00pm	Empty Bowls Project Sunday Classes Sunday Worship Board Report Back Covenant of Right Relations Input Session Second Sunday Lunch
Mon.	15 th		Newsletter Deadline
Tue.	16 th	7:00-9:00pm	Finance Committee

Wed.	17 th	7:30-9:00pm	Covenant of Right Relations Input Session
Thu.	18 th	7:00-9:00pm 7:30-9:00pm	Executive Board Meeting Women's Group
Fri.	19 th	7:15-9:00pm	Simplicity Circle
Sun.	21 st	9:30-10:30am 10:30-11:30am 11:30am-12:30pm 12:30-2:30pm	Sunday Classes Sunday Worship Youth Group Meeting Swamp Rose Covenant Group
Mon.	22 nd	7:15-9:00pm	Spring Equinox Green League of Broward
Tue.	23 rd	1:00-3:00pm	Mission Statement Input Session
Wed.	24 th	7:00-9:00pm	Mission Statement Input Session
Thu.	25 th	7:30-9:00pm	Men's Group
Fri.	26 th	7:15-9:00pm	Broward Spring Break Begins Green Committee
Sat.	27 th	7:00-9:00pm	Ner Tamid
Sun.	28 th	9:30-10:30am 10:30-11:30am	Passover Begins Sunday Classes Sunday Worship

April Highlights

Thu.	1 st	Passover Seder
Sun.	4 th	Easter
Sun.	11 th	Flower Communion
Sun.	18 th	Justice Sunday
Sun.	25 th	Earth Day

PROPOSED COVENANT FOR RIVER OF GRASS

We, the members and staff of River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation, agree to strive to be in relationship with each other and with the larger community in ways that build a safe, healthy, nurturing environment and strengthen our common bonds.

To that end, we are committed to putting forth our best efforts to live out the ideals expressed in this, our covenant of right relations.

COVENANT OF RIGHT RELATIONS IS ONE STEP CLOSER

By Gary Gonzalez

The Covenant of Right Relations Task Force is thankful for your participation in the survey we distributed in November and December 2009. We had over 50% participation and your feedback was overwhelmingly positive and constructive. Thanks to you, we were able to craft the next draft of our Covenant of Right Relations, one that is reflective of how River of Grass aspires to be in right relationship with each other and with our community. We believe it is an important first step in assuring that we will remain open, constructive, and loving in our dialog and demeanor when we meet the inevitable conflict that often arises when passionate people discuss important issues.

We are presenting it here for you to review. We will be available for any member who wishes to discuss the Covenant with us at Central Park Elementary School on March 14, after Sunday service, and again at the church office Wednesday night, March 17. We look forward to meeting with you.

Members of the task force are: Leana Bresnahan, Gayle Giese, Gary Gonzalez, Bev Kaufman, Janet Schwartz, Audrey Stang, and Carolyn Sant Angelo.

“Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech and the inability to listen to others, I am committed to cultivating loving speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and relieve others of their suffering. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am determined to speak truthfully, with words that inspire self-confidence, joy, and hope. I will not spread news that I do not know to be certain and will not criticize or condemn things of which I am not sure. . . . I am determined to make all efforts to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small.”

Thich Nhat Hanh from *The Heart of Buddha's Teaching*, Chapter Twelve: Right Speech.

Welcoming and Hospitality

We practice hospitality and inclusion, welcoming all those who enter and showing a genuine interest in each other. We honor and respect the diversity of opinions and the differing cultural perspectives of others. We are all stewards of this sacred space.

Listening and Speaking

We listen with respect and attention, without assumptions. We speak and respond thoughtfully.

Conflict and Reconciliation

We acknowledge our mistakes and shortcomings and are willing to forgive ourselves and others. We make every effort to settle differences openly, directly, and with compassion. We strive to build trust in all our relationships.

Celebration, Support, and Service

We support each other in times of joy and need. We serve with generosity and good humor. We recognize and acknowledge the service of others.

SECRET PALS PARTY

By Laura House, Faith Development Chair

Since August, the Compassionate Journey kids have had a chance to get to know each other better while reaching out and helping those outside our congregation. This time of year, though, we traditionally return to building friendships between generations here at River of Grass through Secret Pals.

Over the period of a month, students exchange notes with their Secret Pals, sharing information about themselves. February 7 was finally the day to learn that Secret Pal's identity. It was a treat to watch each pair find each other and then sit down for some conversation and Valentine crafts together. Thanks to everyone who participated in this River of Grass tradition!



CAMPOUTS WITH FULL MOON (SONS AND) DAUGHTERS

By Diane Lade and Jan Stemper, Full Moon Daughters Co-Coordinator

The first River of Grass congregational camping trip organized by the Full Moon Daughters was more like a flotilla. Almost 40 congregation members, their families, friends – and even one intrepid dog – shoved off in canoes and kayaks on Jan. 23 and headed down the languid Peace River, near Punta Gorda on Florida’s west coast. Most of us camped along the river, enjoying dinner together, evening worship, s’mores and a lively game of Firelight Charades.

This was the first overnight trip where the Daughters, our outdoor spirituality group for women and girls, invited the men and boys along. The males basically were well-behaved and seemed wowed by the abundance of delicious food; camping with women is fun, guys! But the best newcomer award went to Pepper, the Tepper family’s pooch, who showed no fear when we spotted alligators on the banks and went obediently into her tent at lights out.

We plan to offer another congregational trip next year – and would like your feedback. Are you interested in a River of Grass camp-out? If so, what would be good dates for you? Would you prefer booking it during a holiday, so people could camp two nights instead of one? Would you like to car camp instead of canoeing? Please e-mail us at: FullMoonDaughters@riverofgrass.org.

The girls scarcely got back from one trip before they were packing for the next one, the fourth annual group camping trip to Cayo Costa State Park. The Full Moon Daughters braved rain, wind and cool temperatures at the park on February 13 thru 15. They had a wonderful weekend of bonding, singing and laughing in the great outdoors.

With night temperatures in the 30’s the group slept in rustic cabins. The days were filled with long walks and exploring the beach for sand dollars and seashells. Evenings they gathered for a warm meal and a sing-a-long around the campfire.

Watch the weekly update for an announcement about our March outing. The next camping trip is Nov. 5-7 in Bahia Honda, with spots this year directly on the ocean! But sorry fellas, girls only.

TREASURER’S TIDBITS

By Michael Richardson, Treasurer

At this point in our Congregation’s Fiscal Year, it is projected that both expenses and revenues will come in below the budgeted levels that were agreed to by the vote at last year’s annual meeting. At this point all members should have received a tax statement showing where pledges stand for the first half of the River of Grass Fiscal Year.

I encourage each person to review where you stand to ensure there have not been any oversights with pledge payments. If you pledged through checking withdrawal please ensure that you set this up through your financial institution. If you pledged previously through credit card and find that paying your pledge by check or online payment is not working, please notify our Congregational Administrator so that the credit card payment can be put back in place. As treasurer I want to help make your pledge as easy as possible to fulfill.

	Budgeted	Actual
Expenses	\$126,762.50	\$111,175.55
Annual Giving	\$56,646.94	\$49,802.00
Offerings (Plate)	\$10,675.56	\$6,570.24
All Other Income	\$16,181.69	\$18,871.82
Reserve Acct as of 1/31/2010		\$628,975.34

This shows that we are tracking significantly under budget on expenses and revenues. A copy of the budget to actual is available for review at the office. The TD Ameritrade Portfolio Balance shows a gain of \$853.57 for the month of January.

If you have any questions on the financial detail please email me at Treasurer@riverofgrass.org. I welcome your questions or concerns as the Finance Committee starts to put together the budget for the 2010 to 2011 Fiscal Year which begins July 1, 2010.

GREEN TIP

Have you been using your fireplace during the recent cold weather? A crackling fire in the fireplace may make you feel warm and cozy, but traditional wood-burning fireplaces are major energy wasters. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, a blazing fire sends as much as 24,000 cubic feet of air per hour up the chimney, along with about 90 percent of the heat produced by the fire and some of the heat produced by a home’s furnace.



Fireplaces also generate a lot of air pollution. Wood smoke contains carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxides (NOx), and fine particulates that can aggravate health conditions.

Several options are available for upgrading your fireplace so you can cozy up to a fire while actually increasing your home’s energy efficiency and reducing pollution:

- **Wood stoves.** Units certified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) generate between two and five grams of particulate matter per hour of operation compared with the 40 to 60 grams per hour generated by a conventional fireplace. They also operate at 80 percent efficiency. You can purchase a freestanding unit or one that inserts into your existing fireplace.

- **Gas fireplace inserts.** Natural gas- or propane-fueled inserts offer the warmth and ambiance of a fire without the need to load wood or dispose of ash. Gas inserts are up to 80 percent efficient and generate low levels of pollution.

There are also several ways to improve the operation of your existing fireplace and prevent heat loss:

- **Install tempered glass doors** and keep them shut when the fire is lit.

- **Install a heat-air exchange system** that will blow warm air back into the room (minus the smoke).

– Submitted by Steve Jens-Rochow,
Green Committee Chair