

# **River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation**

## **Policies**

**March 2010**

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# **Policies of the River of Grass Unitarian Universalist Congregation**

## **Part I: General Policies**

### **1. Board of Trustees**

- 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 of Trustees.
- D. The Board shall approve General Assembly delegates.

### **2. Building Usage**

- A. Scheduling:
  - 1. All congregation-related events on or off Congregation property shall be scheduled through a designated person, with conflicts to be resolved by staff. Standing and special committees shall keep the office advised of their planned activities in advance. A master calendar should be kept in the office so dates, times and location can be assigned on an efficient basis.
- B. Building Rental:
  - 1. Non-members may use the Congregation property with proper approval and scheduling. A deposit of \$200 will be required in advance. The deposit will be returned in full (excluding any repairs caused by renters' use) less a fee for clean up.
  - 2. Non-members may rent the congregation hall for a fee of \$250 for an approved 4-hour time-block. A fee of \$50 will be charged for each additional hour. Arrangements for additional time usage must be made in advance. Additional fees for office space may be negotiated.
  - 3. River of Grass members using the property for a non-congregational function will be asked to pay a usage fee of \$100 to cover electricity and other cost incurred from that usage. Members are expected to leave the property clean and restored to its prior

arrangement. Members also have the option of paying to have the property professionally cleaned.

4. Board has the right to waive any fees.

5. All non-congregational groups using the property shall be required to carry Special Events insurance coverage.

C. Clean Up:

1. For a congregational function, the property shall be left clean and restored to its prior arrangement.

D. Smoking:

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

E. Polling Place:

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

F. Proposed Permanent Installations:

1. The Site Committee prior to installation must approve all future items of a permanent nature.

**3. River of Grass Fund Raising:**

A. All fund raising events must first receive Board approval.

**4. Committees, General**

A. Committees not listed as standing committees in the Bylaws may be established by the Board of Trustees as needed.

B. Anyone may attend a committee meeting, but it is the responsibility of the chair to decide who is a member of the committee, unless membership is otherwise specified for the committee in the Bylaws.

C. Committee chairpersons shall be responsible for keeping expenditures within the approved committee budget unless otherwise managed by staff as stated in their job description, contract, or letter of agreement.

D. All committees are encouraged to meet on a regular basis at a regular designated time and place. Committee chairpersons are to check the congregational calendar, even if meetings are scheduled off congregational property.

E. Committee Chairpersons and group leaders are responsible for clean up and locking the building (s) after meetings.

## **5. Confidentiality**

- A. The Board of Trustees 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 of Trustees 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 Annual Giving Committee, Congregational Administrator, President, 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 of Trustees that all persons serving on committees, ad hoc committees, boards, 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 which he/she 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 of Trustees.

## **7. Congregational Communications**

- A. Announcements
  - 1. It is preferred that announcements be included in the printed 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.” These index cards should be turned over to the minister 15 minutes prior to the service. At the Minister’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 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 electronic update 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 e-mails will be allowed per activity/event, and it is encouraged that the e-mail not be duplicative. Any exception to the 2 e-mail 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 of Trustees 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 membership with the UUA. The responsibility for completing this online certification and updating the congregation's information shall fall to the Congregational 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 Minister's Discretionary Fund is a second checking account. Additional accounts may be authorized as necessary for special funds by the Board of Trustees.
- B. Reimbursements for out-of-pocket expenses and donations to or purchases at any fund-raisers will not be considered pledge payments.

### **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 him/her.
- B. In the absence of the minister for a prolonged period, the President or Vice-president will have the responsibility of signing up new members.
- C. Resignations: members may withdraw from membership by submitting a written resignation to the Minister or President or Membership Chair.
- D. Membership Roll: the official roll for denomination purposes shall be updated annually by the membership committee and shall be submitted to the Board on or before January 10. A preliminary figure shall be submitted to the Board prior to the Board meeting in January.

### **10. Memorial and Other Gifts**

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

## **11. Minister/Employee Contracts**

- 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 President of the Board of Trustees. No photocopies of these sensitive documents may be made and these documents may not be removed from the office or e-mailed.

## **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 are responsible for the publicity of matters within their jurisdiction and for submission of news items relative to their committees to the Newsletter Editor. The Board of Trustees shall 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 of Trustees 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. These policies in no way alter the Bylaws of the Congregation.
- B. The Board of Trustees 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. New policies shall be:
1. Reviewed at one Board meeting
  2. Announced in the next copy of the congregational newsletter with a contact person listed.
  3. Approved or rejected at a Board meeting following publication in the newsletter.
  4. Made available at Sunday service, in the Board meeting minutes, and in an updated policy manual on the website within two weeks following passage.
- 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 candidacy 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 of Trustees. The Board of Trustees 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 Community Awareness Committee 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 Community Awareness committee or a Board of Trustees appointed spokesperson.

## **18. Incidents**

### **A. Incident Report Policies**

1. When an incident occurs requiring 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 of Trustees member should be notified and fully informed so an incident report can be completed and filed.

## **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 Director of Faith Development (DFD)'s, or in the absence of a DFD, Faith Development Committee Chair, and minister's approval.
  - 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 in the absence of a DFD, Faith Development Committee Chair, and minister's approval. 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. Background checks will be done on staff and volunteers who work with children and youth.

### **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.
- B. The DFD or FD Chair may schedule Children's Fellowship on Sunday mornings during service. In that case, children in the 6<sup>th</sup> grad and under are dismissed during service to attend Children's Fellowship, if given permission by their parent(s). Youth in 7<sup>th</sup> 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, they 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. Florida District Policies apply in addition to our own for youth participation in District sponsored activities

### **4. Building Safety for River of Grass Controlled Classrooms**

- A. There will be no lighting of candles or chalices at either Central Park Elementary or the congregation's office. Battery operated candles may be used.
- B. Smoke detectors will be tested monthly, and batteries replaced twice yearly.
- C. Emergency evacuation routes will be posted in all FD classrooms. Fire drills will be conducted at the discretion of the DFD or FD Chair.
- D. In case of emergency need to evacuate the building at Central Park Elementary, the designated meeting place for all children and adults will be the North parking lot
- E. Cleaning supplies will be kept out of reach of children (in kitchen) or in the supply closet. The supply closet will have a latch at least 5 feet above floor height.
- F. Knives and other sharp implements will be stored out of reach of children.
- G. Fire extinguishers will be available in the sanctuary and kitchen.

### **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 posted in the FD office. 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 the policy in the Faith Development Information packet.
- C. Copies will be available at all times in a readily accessible place.

## **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 ascertain 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, nor 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 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 March 2010