

# 2019 ANNUAL REPORT



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST  
God is still speaking,

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**First Congregational United Church of Christ – Sarasota**  
**Annual Meeting: January 26, 2020 – 12:15 p.m.**

Call to Order	Lori White, Moderator
Opening Prayer	Warren Bacon, Vice Moderator
Confirmation of a Quorum	Janet Tipton, Parliamentarian
<b>2019 Annual Report</b>	
Approval of Team Annual Reports & Membership Report	Lori White
Review & Approval of 2019 Annual Meeting Minutes	Kristi Weiland, Secretary
Nominations Committee Report	Lori White
• Nomination & Election of Team Members	
• Nomination & Election of Officers	
Financial Reports	
• Endowment Fund	Rick McDaniel, Chair, Endowment
• 2019 Balance Sheet	Judy Black, Treasurer
• 2020 Budget	Sarah Dousa, Chair Finance, Funding, & Stewardship
Proposed By-law Changes	Lori White
Recognition of Immediate Past Moderator, Bob Goldman	Lori White & Warren Bacon
Passing of Gavel	Lori White
Motion to Adjourn	Warren Bacon
Closing Prayer	Pastor Wes

## Necrology 2019

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date Joined</u>	<u>Date of Death</u>
Emmanual Spaulding	August 19, 2001	February 15, 2019
Thelma Grosvenor		April 22, 2019
Dick Howard	November 25, 2001	April 28, 2019
Graham Barkhuff	October 14, 1990	June 21, 2019
Merry Texter	March 3, 1991	August 11, 2019
Thelma Clark		August 25, 2019
Judy Treffinger	June 10, 2018	August 27, 2019
Natalie Nemeth	June 12, 2016	August 30, 2019
Jean Jimmerson	October 8, 1989	August 7, 2019
Don Treffinger	June 10, 2018	October 16, 2019
Richard Storm	October 16, 1996	October 19, 2019
Audrey Coleman	January 25, 2004	November 16, 2019

## 2019 Membership Report

New Full Members	26
Associate to Full Membership	
Reaffirmation of Faith	
New Associate Membership	
Confession of Faith	
<b>Total New Members</b>	<b>26</b>
Members leaving the church by:	
Letter of transfer	1
Removed from Rolls (full)	4
Removed from Rolls (associate)	
Associate to Full Membership	
Deceased Full Members	12
Deceased Associate Members	1
Inactive	
<b>Total Removals</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Total Membership year ending 2019</b>	<b>446</b>

**Annual Meeting Minutes: January 27, 2019 – 12:15 p.m.**

Call to Order Bob Goldman; Opening Prayer, Lori White

Confirmation of a Quorum Janet Tipton, Parliamentarian confirmed a quorum of 90 people

**2019 ANNUAL REPORTS**

Approval of Team Annual Reports & Membership Report Bob Goldman

Motion to accept the Reports: Gordan Quimby Seconded: Myron Robinson Approved

Review and Approval of 2018 Annual Meeting Minutes Susan Moore

Motion to accept the Minutes: Bill Moore Seconded: Janet Tipton Approved

**NOMINATIONS AND COMMITTEE REPORT** Bob Goldman

Nomination & Election of Team Members

Motion to accept: Dale Moore Seconded: Susan Raines Approved

Nomination & Election of Officers

Moderator: Lori White

Vice-Moderator: Warren Bacon

Immediate Past Moderator: Bob Goldman

Secretary: Kristi Weiland

Treasurers: Judy Black, Cindy Walsh

Motion to Accept the Slate: Len Hoffman Seconded: Florence Jackson Approved

Financial Reports

Endowment Fund

Rick McDaniel, Chair

**Endowment Fund**

For the fiscal year ending September 30, 2018

In accordance with the church by laws, the endowment fund distributes 4% of the undesignated funds annually. A total of \$38,430 was distributed for 2018 from the undesignated funds. \$8,045 of designated funds were distributed for their intended purposes in the fiscal year. The Endowment Fund was beneficiary of the following gifts: \$25,000 from the Ellwood/York estate, \$51,217 from the Ann Stormzand Estate, \$2,073 from the Lucia Taylor Estate, and \$6,500 in a memorial gift in honor of Florence Bollman.

The balance of the Undesignated Fund on Sept 30, 2018 was \$1,097,806. The balance of the Designated funds was \$539,584. The name of the Music Fund was changed to the Greg Chestnut Music fund in honor of his 30th anniversary at the church.

As of September 30, 2018 we have 50 members of the Legacy Society of First Congregational UCC. Legacy Sunday will be March 17, 2019. An appreciation luncheon will be held following the 11:00 service for current and perspective Legacy Society Members. We do have openings for additional members of the Planned Giving Committee. If anyone is interested in serving on the committee, please contact any of the committee members or the church office for details. A special thank you was made to Cindy Woodling for her work on incorporating endowment information into the church website, and to Nancy Morris for her work as Treasure of the Endowment Committee.

Endowment Committee/ Planned Giving Committee

Rick McDaniel Roger Weiss David York David Mitchell Cindy Woodling

Dale Woodling Larry Ream

2018 Balance Sheet

Judy Black

The 2018 Income Statement was presented. Highlighted was that our net income was \$135K and that income exceeded budget by 10% . Expenses were 60K below budget. We have \$270K in reserves. Motion to accept the 2018 Income Statement: Sarah Melcher

Seconded: Barbara Smith Bacon Approved

2019 Budget Warren Bacon, Chair Finance, Funding & Stewardship

Warren gave a presentation explaining various factors in the 2019 budget.

Motion to accept the 2019 Budget: Nancy Morris Seconded: Jane Hunter Approved

Note: Following Warren's presentation, Rev. John Hilflicker described the presentation as the best he had ever witnessed.

#### PROPOSED BY-LAW CHANGES

Attendees were asked to vote on two proposed changes in the by-laws.

A. It was recommended that we change the By-laws to reflect changes of two team names and the descriptions of the two new teams on Council, i.e., *Growing and Caring* and *Peace and Justice*.

Leadership Teams: Change A. 1 under Article X to read: The ten Leadership Teams of the church are: 1) Celebrating Worship 2) Facilities and Grounds 3) Fellowship and Special Events 4) Finance, Funding and Stewardship 5) Growing and Caring 6) Mission 7) Music and Fine Arts 8) Peace and Justice 9) Spiritual Education & Growth and 10) Staffing.

The description for Growing and Caring reads as follows:

1. Purpose: General oversight and guidance aimed at helping our church members to grow in faith, invite others in our community to share in growth, and share Christian love within the church.
2. Responsibilities: Faithfully engage our guests and members in growing as disciples and tending our connections as a Christian Community. Works with the Ministers in following up with guests; organizing new member classes and new member reunions; reviews attendance; reviews membership rolls and seeks to create a safe space of warm welcome for all at our church.

The description for Peace and Justice reads as follows:

1. Purpose: Brings awareness to and supports the public witness of FCUCC to issues of injustice and inequality, specifically developing our churches historic commitment to such issues as racial diversity, poverty, the environment, and the LGBTQ community.
2. Responsibilities: Oversees and receives updates on social issues that are important to the church; coordinates special events that deepen understanding of peace and justice issues; makes recommendations to the Moderator team and church Council for communication and advancement of these issues throughout the church.

Motion to accept the change: Thom Reeves Seconded: Warren Bacon Approved

The second change was in the description of the Vice-Moderator's duties. Officers:

Article VIII: C. The Vice-Moderator shall perform the duties of the Moderator in the Moderator's absence, shall be Vice President of the Corporation and Corporate Secretary, and shall perform such other

assignments as the Moderator or the Church Council may request.

Article VIII: E. Change the term Council Secretary to Recording Secretary

Motion: Dale Moore Susan Raines seconded Approved

Recognition of Council members who are leaving Bob Goldman

Recognition of Immediate Past Moderator, Lynn Jones Bob Goldman

Passing of the Gavel from Bob Goldman to Lori White: Lori looks forward to the coming year  
“On the Brink of Everything.”

Motion to adjourn: Bill Moore

Closing Prayer: Pastor Wes

Adjournment

## Pastor's Annual Report 2019

God's amazing and abundant grace as we begin our sixth year of ministry together and the sixty-sixth year of sharing God's love as a church in the Sarasota community. This past year was an incredible blessing. We celebrated our sixty-fifth anniversary. Highlights included our youth participating in the service in February; reflections from members throughout the year including David Mitchell and Bev Carrington who grew up in the church; and having Rev. Dr. John and Kathy Syster back in November. Dr. John preached and shared in both services. Throughout the year, we continually said, "We are on the brink of everything." Greg Chestnut wrote a beautiful hymn using that theme for us to sing. There were many meaningful moments looking back and looking forward as a church. A second highlight for 2019 was my sabbatical. My heartfelt appreciation for the generosity in granting me this time away. It was a refreshing and renewing ten weeks. I enjoyed a trip to Alaska with my family, wrote an Advent devotional, developed classes that will be used in the Oasis Center, read books, and attended a week-long continuing education at Chautauqua Institute in NY, where the theme was living longer lives. The time away was a gift and I am so grateful for **Revs. Sarah Melcher and Craig Collemer** who filled in for me while I was away. In addition, I am so grateful to **Greg Chestnut, Bobbi Miller, Mark Swain, Julie Pennella, Gordon Quimby and Bill Lewis** as well as moderator, **Lori White** for keeping everything running so smoothly while I am away.

As we look to the coming months, I want to share my goals for 2020. First, I commit to continuing to improve my preaching by attending a Preaching Conference in Atlanta in May 2020. Greg and I will continue to collaborate creatively with members in planning meaningful worship throughout the year. My second goal is to successfully launch the Oasis Center and lead the inaugural class, *Mapping our Lives*, in February with a goal of 20 people attending, including people from outside the church. We are right now developing classes on music and art therapy, the spiritual practice of "meandering", and opportunities for racial reconciliation. It is my prayer the Oasis Center will be a sacred space for rest, renewal, and reflection. Third, I will continue to work with Staffing as we celebrate Julie Pennella's retirement in March. This offers us the chance to step back and prayerfully talk about the staffing models for our church in the years to come. Fourth, I will continue to deepen my own spiritual awareness by working with my spiritual director. Finally, I commit to you that we will explore ways our church can thrive in the coming year by using all the gifts of the people in our church.

As I look back on the year, I sense several moments when the spirit stirred. I am especially aware of how powerful and profound All Saints Day was in November as we named many of our beloved saints who are now in God's eternal embrace. I know so many of these people left fingerprints on my heart. Part of the reality of grief is that we miss the person because s/he brought us joy, support, and especially love. While we may prefer to not grieve, it would mean that we would miss out on the chance to connect deeply with another person. I agree with the poets who say that even when the grief is strong, so is the love the person shared with us. This is particularly true for me right now. I remain grateful for your support and love as a church. I am blessed to be your pastor at such a time as this, when we are on the brink of everything. May God's guidance and grace be with us as we move into this new year and new decade.

*With love ~ Pastor Wes*

### **Moderator's Annual Report 2019**

It has truly been an honor to be Moderator this past year. I am very thankful for the support of Warren Bacon, Vice-Moderator and Bob Goldman, Immediate Past Moderator. Our church council members were engaged and thoughtful in their leadership. I am very thankful for Kristi Weiland, Secretary and our Treasurers, Judy Black and Cindy Walsh, for their significant contributions.

We are very blessed in this church to experience such meaningful worship every Sunday with the Reverend Dr. Wes Bixby as our Senior Pastor and Greg Chestnut as our Minister of Music. The thoughtful sermons and sacred music bring us closer to God. This year we celebrated our 65th Anniversary with the theme, On the Brink of Everything. A Saturday event with Rev. Winton Boyd in February allowed us to explore our relationship with God in the context of different geography. In April, we celebrated with food, fun and entertainment for our 1950's inspired Spring Fling. Recently, we enjoyed a visit from our Pastor Emeritus, Rev. Dr. John Syster.

One of the most exciting events this year was the development of a campus-wide plan that includes the development of our new Oasis Center for Renewal and Reflection. This could not have been accomplished without the diligent work of our Vision Team, under the exceptional leadership of Bill Wendling. The next year brings the opportunity for new programs that will operate in a space conducive to thoughtful reflections and new perspectives. Our campus also saw the addition of a Labyrinth. This has already brought us new opportunities for reflective thought and fresh connections with God and others.

This year also included the Reverend Dr. Bixby's first sabbatical. The congregation was left in the capable hands of Rev. Dr. Sarah Melcher and Rev. Dr. Craig Collemer who guided our Sunday worship and offered pastoral care. The sabbatical provided the Bixby family the opportunity to enjoy some time in Seattle, Vancouver, and Alaska. Rev. Dr. Bixby used the time for writing and professional development. His advent devotional deepened our personal connection with God and the world during this important season.

We continue to be a generous church with our time and treasures. We have partnered with our neighbors at St. Paul Lutheran to provide a monthly community meal for anyone in the Sarasota community. In addition, our active support and participation for SURE now includes the housing of the SURE office in our Outreach building.

The next year will bring exciting opportunities for all of us. Warren Bacon will become our new moderator with Carol Fields assisting as Vice Moderator. It is very reassuring to leave this position in their capable hands. I am thankful to be part of a congregation that continues on the strong, positive path as we welcome a new decade.

### **Celebrating Worship Report**

The celebrating worship team has had a very busy year with members serving in various roles making sure that greeters, ushers, liturgist, and communion servers are available for each Sunday and Special Services. We are blessed with many faithful members of our church who assist with these important tasks that make our worship services meaningful.

As a team we are pleased that we can be used as a sounding board as special worship experiences are planned and created. Reflecting on scriptures, poems, and readings are some of the ways we work together; discussing and dreaming about what can be accomplished to make worship more meaningful for our congregants.

Advent, Lent, and Dr. Martin Luther King Sunday are important times in the worship life of our church. This year's planning also included special worship experiences that reflected on our 65th Anniversary Celebration. Many of our congregants shared 'living' witness' accounts of their memories of our church. Summer highlights included Dale Moore's play 'The Bricks' and worship leadership by Sara Melcher and Craig Collemer.

Guidelines for the various responsibilities are being reviewed and updated to make sure we are making the worship experience the best it can be! Dr. Martin Luther King Sunday is being planned with poems, readings, and a 'living reflection' of an

important event in his life. We are a blessed church with a magnificent music program and pastoral ministry that enrich our lives each Sunday. Worship is alive and well at First Congregational United Church of Christ.

### **COLLAGE Report**

This was a great year for Collage and we end it with a sense of joy and purpose.

We are joyful for many things:

To have been used by God to reach out to others and show them a place of safety, of love and of support. We saw our numbers grow to 84 including not only the LGBTQ community but a number of our straight friends and supporters.

To have been a part of Granny's Attic. Our work with the Women's UCC earned us almost \$1500, most of which we distributed to our congregational youth group, to the church scholarship fund, to ALSO, a safe place in our community for young LGBTQ kids and their families, and to Friendship House for their new work with a support group for older LGBTQ persons in our community.

To have seen see new faces in our church, LGBTQ individuals from the community who have found a haven.

To have had the opportunity to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Stonewall with our whole church family feeling the love and support, so different from what that group experienced that week-end fifty years ago in New York City.

To have shared fellowship in luncheons at Bravo restaurant and in parties like our Christmas party where between 15 and 50 LGBTQ family members and our straight church friends gathered to share, to support and to uplift one another.

To have been, and continue to be, part of a church family who are ALWAYS there to give support and lend, not just a helping hand, but a strong arm in times of trouble, illness and grief.

And our purpose in 2020 is to do more of the same, to take up our responsibilities to this congregation, to reach out to others in the community who are searching, and to be that strong arm and helping hand to our LGBTQ community.

## **Facilities & Grounds Report**

The Facilities and Grounds team always has something going on. We are blessed to have a 5-acre campus to call our church home and our team oversees things so that we have a safe, hospitable and useable space for everything and everyone that uses our campus. The things we do are not very glamorous, and many go unnoticed, but you would notice if air conditioners stopped working or we had no water to make coffee with, or our sanctuary's lighting and sound system wasn't functioning correctly. We help make sure that Pastor Wes and our staff have people that can come out and paint conference rooms and turn them into office space for local non-profits like we did for the SURE office and the other nursery room in our Outreach Building. We have team members that can fix toilets, unclog drains, oversee lighting repairs and coordinate volunteers to keep our campus mowed year-round.

This year saw us oversee the building of our new labyrinth, the removal of the stage in Syster Hall and then the polishing and cleaning of our terrazzo floors in Syster Hall and in the Outreach building. We had three organized, fun, volunteer days of weeding, trimming and cleanup on our campus, mainly in the late summer and fall. A big thank you to all of the unsung heroes (aka members and friends) who come and volunteer out on our grounds doing trimming, weeding, and vine removal on a regular basis. We couldn't keep up with all of the plant growth without your help and we greatly appreciate your willingness to come even when the weather is hot and humid, as it is, so much of the time!! We completed an FPL audit, started working with the Green Team to find out how we can be even more green and efficient in the upcoming decade. We're in conversations about what chemicals are used on our lawn and how we can do a better job of looking good but being good stewards of our environment.

We've got team members on the Oasis Team helping with advice on that ongoing project and we worked on updating our equipment inventory and fifteen-year asset plan so that we have good numbers to give to our finance team for budgets. We're proud to work with our amazing Pastor who does a lot of work on our campus and is a great painter himself!! We want to offer a heartfelt thank you to our amazing volunteer group of mowers who do such a great job of keeping our campus looking great. They are: Buck Greenlaw, Barney Kavanagh, Mike Knupp, Stephen Landers, Dick Miller and Thom Reeves. This church couldn't survive without volunteers and this team is blessed to have some wonderful people who get things done and are always willing to take on a new project. I'd like to thank Dave Abel, Buck Greenlaw, Don Hoy, Bruce Knight, Barbara Ralph, Bud Rives and the late Graham "Barky" Barkhuff for being so willing to give of their time and talents to

keep this church campus a beautiful, functioning place. Thank you for all that you do!!

### **Fellowship & Special Events Team**

The Fellowship and special Events Team plans and supports church-wide events that create opportunities for fellowship, enjoyments and social interaction within the congregation and a welcome to visitors and newcomers. Team members for 2019 were Sandra Smith (Team Chair), Nancy Morris (Secretary), Joan Beach, Monica Geary, Mary Kukainis, Drue and Len Murray (part-time), and Linda Pursley.

The Fellowship Team assigns a month for each of the church teams, as well as COLLAGE and UCC Women, to host Fellowship time after the worship service. Team assignments given at the January Leadership Retreat and are based on the number of members in each team and the number of services in each month. Thank you to all the groups that hosted Fellowship time in 2019. The fellowship team has urged each of the host teams, in an attempt to become more “green” or environmentally conscious, to use and wash silverware when needed, and to avoid the use of plastic ware whenever possible.

The first Sunday of each month is Birthday Sunday when birthdays for that month are celebrated and birthday cake is served at Fellowship time.

In April, Drue and Len Murray, with the help of the Youth Group, coordinated a Friday evening Spring Fling for the congregation. The menu and decorations were 1950’s themed, along with music by a DJ and an Elvis impersonator. Tickets were priced at \$10, and the proceeds went toward the Youth Group mission trip.

Thanksgiving 2019 UCC was again held in the same locale as the previous year, the hotel meeting room behind the Der Dutchman Restaurant. Joan Beach coordinated the selling of the tickets.

In December, the congregation was invited to participate in two special Sunday Fellowship hours. On December 15, members were asked to bake their favorite cookies to share during Fellowship time, and on December 29, the congregation was asked to bring a Christmas bread. Both invitations were well received and resulted in a variety of goodies to eat. Look for more “Special Event” Sundays in 2020! The Fellowship Team members are always available to help out with special church functions and Fellowship Hour in addition to our month of hosting, and we welcome any suggestions that you may have for additional opportunities for church wide fellowship.

## **Finance, Funding and Stewardship Report**

The Finance, Funding and Stewardship Team is pleased to report that in 2019, our 65th anniversary year, we achieved positive financial results for the sixth year running. Thanks to the generosity of you, the congregation, our contributions exceeded budget for the year by about 10%. Rental income and investment income also both exceeded budget. And again this year, we continued to do very well holding the line on expenses. Even in the light of unexpected expenses such as new security measures and removal of a tree struck by lightning, our overall expenses came in at just 92% of budget.

On the balance sheet side, our operating reserves are healthy. We have approximately 4 ½ months of budgeted expenses covered between the general operating reserves and the facilities and grounds reserves. We continue to work on refining our 15-year capital plan to ensure that we are accounting for all known upcoming expenses.

The team had many goals for the year. Our primary goal was, of course, to prepare the 2020 budget, and we did that with a slightly new approach this year. We wanted to bring greater transparency to the 2020 budget process by moving away from budgeting based on prior year's allocation towards a thorough consideration of activities and initiatives for the coming year. We approached each Leadership Team asking them to prayerfully consider their actual planned activities to arrive at their 2020 budget request. This went extremely well, and considering that the teams comprising music, internal and external ministries account for about 18% of our budget, this is a significant step toward honing the budget process.

Also, with regards to the 2020 budget, we continue to strive to use historical data to help us arrive at more accurate projections. As you may know, we budget income based on several sources, pledge income being key as it is a known entity. It is much harder to project non-pledged income, so historical data helps us refine that projection. We also made every effort to predict the income and expenses down to the month they occur. Thus, as each year ends and we are able to analyze the figures, we are able to refine our budget with greater accuracy.

Another goal for the team was to improve the returns on our investments which were in a bank savings account earning virtually no interest. Early in the year we invested \$200,000 of reserves into a CD ladder with maturities occurring every 3 months. We have also invested another \$200,000 of reserves into an institutional US Treasury bill mutual fund. Our goal is to maximize investment income and maintain liquidity in a safe manner keeping in mind FDIC limits. This strategy paid off. Untouched, it is projected that these investments will yield about \$7,800 in income next year.

When the year began, we had a Financial Policies & Procedures document that was incomplete and outdated. We took it on as a goal to create a new one, and this continues to be a work in progress. The new manual will be comprehensive and will become a living document for future financial leaders of the church. We expect the document to be ready for the new Finance Team's review in early spring, 2020. Lastly, we proposed changes to the church bylaws to better reflect the purpose of the team.

As some of us move off the team and new faces join, we all want to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your generosity and support in helping First Congregational UCC realize its mission

### **Growing and Caring Team Report**

This was the second year since the Growing the Congregation and the Caring for the Congregation teams merged into a single team and the new team seems to be functioning well in performing the duties of the previous two teams. The team consisted of five church members with the pastor regularly attending our monthly meetings in an advisory roll.

The team staffed three new member luncheons during the year, learning from each group what attracted them to the church. Additionally, we discussed ways to improve new member sponsorship and ways to integrate new members into church activities and governance. We also provided "welcome bags" in the narthex for visitors. The bags contained church materials, schedules of upcoming events, and other "goodies". We also discussed various types of devotional materials that could be placed in the narthex for parishioners.

Perhaps the largest project to the year was providing Easter and Christmas gifts during those holidays to "shut in" church members. This year, besides the traditional Easter lilies and Christmas poinsettias, we assembled and delivered Easter baskets and Christmas stockings with candies, stuffed toys, puzzle books, ornaments and other items to brighten the recipients' spirits. Both the baskets and stockings were well received. Special thanks to the Lay Visitation Team for their help in delivering these items.

As we move into 2020, the team is considering new ways to advertise the church to the community. The opening of the church's Oasis Center for Reflection and Renewal in early 2020 may provide an opportunity for such advertising.

## **Lay Visitation Ministry Report**

The Lay Visitation Ministry (LAM.) Team is in its fifth year of ministry on behalf of the congregation. Currently, there are twelve members the LAM. team.

At its simplest, Lay Visitation Ministry is a ministry of presence and active listening. It's a ministry of being truly present for someone and to deeply listen to him or her. It is a ministry in which we believe we are vessels through which God can work. Much of our work is learning to get out of the way of our own agenda and feelings so that we can truly listen and let God work through us. It is one dimension of the ministry of pastoral care to the congregation of our church.

The members of the LAM. team visit members and friends of the congregation who are confined to their home, in a nursing, rehabilitation, assisted living facility, are a patient in a hospital or hospice facility and generally unable to attend worship and other activities at the church or they currently experiencing a difficult time in their life. Our visits are to be a ministry of presence and deep listening wherein we bring the love of God and the congregation to these individuals and/or their families. Hundreds of visits were made in 2019 on behalf of the congregation.

Our team meets monthly for a two-hour time of education, support, and reflection. Usually the first hour consist of an educational component related to topics or issues we might experience during our visits. Some of the topics include: grief, bereavement, active listening skills, communicating with persons living with dementia, the power of music to communicate, etc. Following a brief time of refreshments and fellowship, one member of the group will then share a report on a visit(s) made recently. The purpose of these reports is to deepen our understanding of how present we were to the person we visited and to gain insights as to how me might make a future visit more meaningful for the person we're visiting.

Everything shared in our monthly gatherings is kept in the strictest confidence.

The members of the team feel blessed to be able to bring the congregation's love and concern to the individuals they visit each month.

A new dimension to our ministry which began in 2019 is the Healing and Prayer Service held the third Sunday of each month following worship. Two members of the LAM. team are in the front of the sanctuary to offer prayers of healing and, if desired, anointing with oil and/or lay on of hands. Members of the congregation are invited to come forward for specific or general prayers for healing for themselves, someone else, or the world. This is a meaningful time of prayer for those who are led to seek prayers of healing.

The team members also help to deliver Christmas stockings and Easter baskets to those in our congregation who are in hospitals, nursing homes, rehabilitation facilities, or in their homes as well as to those who have lost a love one in the past year. This, too, is a meaningful outreach to our church members.

The members of the team are: Janet Baker, Joan Beach, Alleyne Kess, Pauline Geary, Sherry Mange, Judy Mandible, Diane Miller, Dick Miller, Barbara Shaver, and Cindy Woodling. Craig Collemer and Sara Little are the co-leaders and Pastor Wes is always a supportive member of our team.

## **Mission Team Annual Report 2018**

The Mission Team's purpose is the oversight and coordination of activities which specifically express awareness of the gospel message of reconciliation, peace, and generosity to the poor and oppressed. The activities throughout 2019 were as follows: **EASTER LOVE OFFERING** - The committee provides the leadership to collect for world wide charities such as One Great Hour of Sharing, Neighbors in Need, Strengthen Our Church, Church World Service Back Bay Mission, Joseph Evans Scholarship Fund, Coalition of Iambically Workers, UCC Coalition LGBTQ Concerns, Partners in Health Dr. Farmer, and Helps International. In 2019 \$16,500 was distributed to these charities. **SARASOTA POINT MAY BASKETS** - This year we reached out to our neighbor Sarasota Point Rehabilitation Center and created an event for the residents. In coordination with UCC Women's Club, May baskets were created and were distributed to each resident during an afternoon of music and a "Love Thy Neighbor" celebration. In addition, during National Nursing Home Week in May we dipped ice cream for the Sarasota Point staff and residents. **SUMMER HUNGER COLLECTION** - Food was collected and distributed through All Faiths Food Bank to students who depend on school lunches for their primary meal. After school ends in the summer these students were provided with basic foods to take them through the summer. **SCHOOL SUPPLIES COLLECTION** - We coordinated collecting school supplies for our neighbor Alta Vista Elementary School. the school administration provided a list of needed items and four large trolleys of supplies were distributed and greatly appreciated. **HURRICANE DISASTER COLLECTION** - After Hurricane Dorian devastated the Bahamas, a collection was taken and distributed through qualified charities. **SARASOTA POINT THANKSGIVING PROJECT** - We supplied the materials and supervised residents in making centerpieces for a Thanksgiving Dinner for residents and their families. **CHRISTMAS LOVE OFFERING** - The committee provides leadership in the collection of funds dedicated to local charities in the Sarasota/Manatee county area such as All Faiths Food Bank, All Faiths Backpack Program, Also Youth, Bethesda House, Children First, Mental Health Community Center (Prospect House), Orchard Place, Resurrection House, Second Chance/Last Opportunity, SURE, The Pines of Sarasota, and UCC Christmas Fund. Last year \$19,300 was distributed. This year \$18,625 was distributed. In addition to these activities, the Mission Committee had committed

\$5,000 per year for three years to the UCC Pension Fund Capitol Campaign.

### **Music & Fine Arts Report**

This has been another busy year for this team but the willingness of each of our team members allowed things to progress very smoothly. As chairperson I want to extend my deepest thanks for the opportunity to serve with them.

Some of the musical contributions we have experienced are:

- In March, Kent Tritle, Director of Cathedral Music and Organist at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, was our Artist In Residence. In addition to working very successfully with our choir to perform the Haydn, Little Organ Mass on March 10th, he performed an organ concert for both church members as well as our community.
- On February 17, Our combined choirs and brass quintet celebrated the launch of our 65th Anniversary year in a festival worship services. In May, Elyse Lauzon, horn, performed special music.
- EnsembleNewSRQ continues to use our Church for their performances and considers this to be their home.
- In November, Sorella Duo presented a cello and piano concert in our chapel for the second year. Sisters Natalie and Rebecca Helms have performed throughout the United States and the world. In December, members of the Sarasota Orchestra and Sarasota Opera performed an EclecticLite Concert in the chapel.
- In June, we were delighted with the contribution that the Sarasota Music Festival Musicians made to our worship service.
- Also, in December, our combined choirs and the Sarasota Orchestra Brass Quintet enhanced our worship with the Randol Bass Gloria.
- Guest musicians, including a harp, flute, violin, and cello helped make our Christmas Eve services very special and inspiring.
- Our Handbell Choir as well as the participation of our Team Players from time to time are greatly appreciated. This year new drums were purchased and used in several services.

In other news:

- We participated in our church's Strength and Needs Assessment to help leadership plan our church's move forward.
- In January, we were able to surprise Minister of Music, Greg Chestnut with a celebration of his 30 year ministry with us. Choirs prepared a special anthem, guest musicians from the Sarasota Orchestra provided special music, and the Music Endowment Fund was re-named the Gregory Chestnut Music Endowment Fund.

- Our 1901 Steinway Grand piano in the sanctuary was sent to New Jersey in April for a complete re-building. This was made possible through a major gift from Bruce and Judy Macgowan.
- As other teams did, we took our turn at participating in coffee hour in Syster Hall.

We are proud of the contribution that our music program plays in the life of our church and look forward to another year.

### **Peace & Justice Report**

A high-light of our participation in FCUCC's 65th Year has been the initiation of a "Green Team," Co-Chaired by Sarah Melcher and Barbara Smith-Bacon, to focus on our congregation's becoming one of UCC's Creation Justice Churches. The goals are to conserve energy by using renewable resources and limiting our use of fresh water; to recycle and cut down on the use of single-use plastics; and, in general, to nurture our resources (land, water, air, habitat, etc.) for future generations. The Green Team Co-Chairs have attended meetings with each team on the church council to enlist their aid with this project. Suggestions on how individuals can do their share, are being included in weekly bulletins, Pastor Wes's mid-week messages, and monthly newsletters.

The P & J Network continues supporting many outreach programs, such as SURE, whose office is now located on our campus; Equality Florida; Brady Sarasota with its rallies, vigils, letters, and phone calls to government officials about gun safety legislation; the Iambically housing emergency; and voting rights issues, along with other timely concerns. P & J periodically provides voter registration and vote-by-mail applications for new residents, new voters, and those whose handwriting has changed due to age or illness.

This year's leadership for the Peace & Justice Network has been provided by Laurie Etter, Chair; Sarah Melcher, Recording Secretary; Sara Little, Council Representative; and Lee Brockmann, Corresponding Secretary. New Co-Chairs for 2020 will be Sara Little and Barbara Shaver.

We invite visitors and new members to our meetings, held from 4:00 pm- 5:00 pm in Syster Hall on the 4th Tuesday of each month.

### **Spiritual Education & Growth Report**

The Spiritual Education and Growth Committee members (Jim Cross: Chair, Christine Hoffman, Toska Strong, and Lynn Woodman meet monthly during the winter, spring, and fall of 2019.

This report will be organized under three headings: Youth, Labyrinth, and FEAST Activities

Youth: Sunday school was offered by trained teachers on most Sundays during the winter, spring, and fall of 2019. Attendance was sporadic; however the teachers reported that those who attended the classes felt that the curriculum was meaningful to their spiritual needs. The members of SEG wish to express our appreciation to all those who served as Sunday school teachers in 2019.

TEAM Players provided several opportunities for the youth to participate in the leadership of the worship services during the year. Parents and youth were asked to sign a covenant for each of the leadership opportunities. The youth met on two or three Thursday nights to prepare for their responsibilities in the selected worship services. Examples included, The Sixty-Fifth Anniversary Celebration, Martin Luther King Sunday, Veteran's Day, World Communion Sunday, and Christmas Eve. The members of SEG wish to thank all those who volunteered to provide help with the Thursday Evening meals and activities, especially Lori White and Greg Chestnut.

During the year, the youth assisted in several church related activities; including The Pancake Dinner, The Easter Egg Hunt, and the Tuesday Community Meal at St. Paul's.

During June five of the youth completed a five-day mission experience in Miami. The theme was "immigration". The youth assisted in a food bank, a day-care center, a shelter for women and children, and bearing witness at the Homestead detention center for youth. Their leader, Lynn Jones reported that the trip was a wonderful experience and that our youth represented our church well.

Three of the youth attended the Fall Youth Retreat in Parish.

During the fall, five youth and two adults completed the confirmation classes.

In the spring, scholarships were awarded to four youth who are currently pursuing college degrees.

Labyrinth: The Pave the Path Fundraising Campaign held in January and February of 2019 was successful and the permanent eleven-circuit, octagonal labyrinth was completed on the campus during the summer. The Florida Conference approved a grant application to provide funding for the establishment of a labyrinth ministry. The dedication of the labyrinth took place in October and was well attended by members of the congregation and the community. During the fall, THE SEEKERS (the Labyrinth TEAM) offered a facilitator's training session and a series of labyrinth walk opportunities.

FEAST (Friends Eating and Studying Together): Four classes were offered on Thursday mornings during Lent of 2019. They were provided by Greg Chestnut, Sandy Smith, Sarah Melcher, and Lisa Kauffman. A change of format is recommended for 2020.

## **Staffing Team Annual Report for 2019**

The Team consisted of Dick Miller (chair), Linda Pursley, Dennis Crooks and Florence Jackson and was joined by Pastor Wes. We were sorry to see Florence leave the Team in June after serving faithfully, especially working with Little Pilgrim through difficult times. In December, we welcomed Jim Butterworth, who will join the Team in January.

One goal this year was to work more closely with Finance. This was accomplished by more proactively setting staff salaries along with Finance and having the Staffing Chairperson on the Stewardship Team.

Meetings were held individually with all staff during April and May to discuss progress with their goals for the year and any concerns they may have. Year-end evaluations were conducted in November and December, during which each staff member discussed what is going well, what could be better and their goals for 2020.

As a Team, we are privileged to work with the hard-working, dedicated and caring staff of First Congregational UCC.

**Nominating Committee Report for 2020 Leadership**

**Moderator:** Warren Bacon  
**Vice-Moderator:** Carol Fields  
**Immediate Past Moderator:** Lori White  
**Secretary:** Kristi Weiland  
**Treasurer(s):** Sarah Dousa  
Robin Reich

**Council Members at Large –**

Jerry Oliver

**Celebrating Worship**

Evelyn Crooks  
Lenny Hoffman  
Gib Mitchell  
Jeannie Mitchell  
Susan Moore  
Bettye Smith  
Lee Smith  
Connie Toops  
Tim Toops

**Facilities & Grounds**

Susan Raines (Chair)  
Dave Abel  
Chris Cooper  
Don Hoy  
Barb Ralph  
Rich Rescigno  
Bud Rives

**Fellowship & Special Events**

Sandy Smith (Chair)  
Joan Beach  
Monica Geary  
Mary Kukainis  
Nancy Morris  
Linda Pursley

**Budget, Finance, and Stewardship**

Ed Andersen  
Judy Black  
Bill Brackett  
Christine Knupp  
Jerry Long  
Bruce Woolley  
Sarah Dousa (ex-officio)  
Robin Reich (ex-officio)

**Growing & Caring**

Dale Woodling (Chair)  
Marlene Goldberger  
Carol Hagglund  
Cindy Woodling (Lay Visitation Rep)

**Missions**

Jan Andersen  
Ruth Bieber  
Kate Eaton  
Jan Kamm  
Joy Kuhn  
Gail Taylor  
Ruth Ann Waid

**Music & Fine Arts**

Lucy Hedrick  
Jane Hunder  
Jim Hunder  
Becky May (chair)  
Diane Miller  
Dotty Reed  
Jeff Smith  
Greg Chestnut (ex-officio)

**Peace & Justice**

Sara Little (Chair)  
Barbara Shaver (Chair)  
Nancy Arnzen  
Fred Clark  
Laurie Etter  
Earl and Nancy Alger  
Nancy Alger  
Bill Brackett  
Lee Brockmann  
Fred Brockmann  
Carol Hagglund  
Pamela Meade  
Sarah Melcher  
Carol Rescigno  
Steve Scott

**Spiritual Education & Growth**

Jim Cross (Chair)  
Christine Hoffman  
Toska Strong  
Lynne Woodman  
Christy Boyer

**Staffing –**

Dick Miller (Chair)  
Dennis Crooks  
Linda Pursley  
Jim Butterworth