

First Congregational UCC

What is God Up To?

I have found myself asking the above question many times recently. What is God up to amid a pandemic, polarization, racial inequality, discrimination, economic hardships, blaming and shaming each other, and the ways we harm all of God's creation (including our fellow humans)? Honestly, I don't have a one-size-fits-all answer to this question. What I do have are a few holy hints and grace-filled guesses I pray are of God. I pray that what I have would help inspire your thinking on this question.

Beginning **October 25th through November 22nd**, we will let this question be at the center of our worship together.

November 1 ~ All Saints Day. Focus passage is Exodus 5:1-9. What is God up to? God is up to liberation.

November 8 ~ Healing Service Sunday with communion.

Please have bread/juice ready. **9 am** worshipers are invited to bring your bread/juice with you to worship. Focus passage is Matthew 26:12-26. What is God up to? God is up to being present during pain and uncertainty.



November 15 ~ Stewardship Sunday. Focus passage is Matthew 3:13-17. What is God up to? God is up to naming and claiming. God is up to renewing and restoring.

November 22 ~ Thanksgiving Sunday. Focus passage is 1 John 4, selected verses. What is God up to? Love.

November 29 ~ First Sunday of Advent. Theme for Advent is: ***What are you waiting for?***

Please remember – **November 1st is the end of Daylight Saving Time.** Please turn your clocks back one hour and enjoy the extra hour of sleep.

We continue to **worship outdoors around the labyrinth at 9 am** each Sunday. We continue to Livestream on Facebook and our church's website at **10:55 am each Sunday.**

With great love to you all ~~ Wes



Office Hours Sept:

Pastor Wes:

Mon-Thurs 8 am- 4 pm

Bobbi:

Wednesday 9 am to 3 pm

Mark:

Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri 7 am to 3 pm

Greg:

Tues-Fri, various hours

Advent Is Coming

The season of Advent begins on November 29th!

We realize Advent will be different this year. So, we want to engage you in preparing your heart in new ways. The Worship Team is putting together Advent resources for YOU that will be available to pick up at church!!

These resources will be ready by November 15th. Please watch your Midweek Message for the exact times when you can pick up your Advent Preparation Kit for 2020!

Oasis for the Soul Opportunities

The Oasis Center for Reflection and Renewal Mission:

Become a source of spiritual nourishment, renewal, reflection, inspiration, encouragement, and healing

Five Amazing Opportunities in November:

1. **Grief Group** will continue to meet on Zoom every Tuesday at 1 pm. We welcome anyone who needs a safe space to process the heaviness of our hearts as we mourn the passing of those we love.
2. **Wednesdays at 1 pm** group discussing *Finding Water* by Julia Cameron
3. **Sacred Conversations on Race** ~ Wednesdays at 3 pm on Zoom
4. **Story People Service** ~ Thursdays at 1 pm on Facebook. Please tune in each week!
5. **Artful Prayer** ~ December 3rd at 2 pm on Zoom ~ Cindy Woodling will lead us in a holy way to pray during the season of Advent.



Join the Conversation on Zoom

Sunday Coffee Hour at Noon ~
You are **always** welcome to join
in the conversation and
connecting with other members!

December 7 and 14 at 3 pm
We are discussing **Rob Bell** ~
Everything is Spiritual

COLLAGE Tuesdays at 11 am
Join our Collage group on Zoom
for support and faithful
discussions.

Tuesday Bible Study~6:30 pm
We meet on Zoom to discuss
the Bible passage for the
upcoming Sunday.

Wednesday Bible Study~11 am
We meet on Zoom to discuss
the Bible passage for the
upcoming Sunday.

Tuesday Book Club

Please contact Nancy at
fnmcelroy@gmail.com for more
information on the November
book offering.

STITCHES OF LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP

Greetings to all the faithful knitters! I would like to get a box off to our friends in South Dakota in early October so that they can be prepared for the winter. If you have items you would like to contribute to this worthy cause, please bring them to the church and I will pick them up there. Please include your name with whatever you leave. For anyone who is not familiar with our program, we knit items such as hats, scarves, mittens, and anything else you like to make, primarily for children for the reservations and Native Americans of South Dakota. We knit in our homes or on our travels. If you want to join in, just start knitting (or crocheting). I have patterns, needles and yarn if you need them. Thank you for your help with this project. **Ethel Rudy**

Green Team Update

Did You Know???

In these times of the COVID pandemic more of us are seeking to find extra strong cleaners as a protection for our living spaces and the surfaces we come in touch with every day, But, do you know the difference between cleaners and disinfectants? More importantly, when to use each one?

Surfaces that are touched by large numbers of people are more in need of disinfection. Surfaces that are touched by your family or a small number people [folks who are in a social bubble or in a small office] can benefit from a thorough cleaning according to many health professionals.

Cleaning refers to the removal of dirt and germs from surfaces, but does not necessarily kill germs. However, removing germs lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection (the amount of virus you are exposed to matters). Cleaning products in the U.S. are under minimal regulatory oversight and contain chemicals known to cause many health issues. Most chemical cleaning agents are regulated by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Warnings on the labels will range from “caution” to “danger.”

Products claiming to be disinfectants are required to undergo laboratory tests to certify they really perform as claimed. These products will have an EPA registry number on the label. If the number isn't there, the claims are most likely false. Containers for these products sometimes require special disposal.

Look up your cleaning products on the internet and consult vetted resources, such as the [Environmental Working Group's list](#) for safe *cleaning* products as well as the CDC and EPA lists for effective *disinfectant* products.

Information for this blurb was adapted from [TheSmartHuman.com](#) by Dr. Aly Cohen, a board-certified rheumatologist and Frederick vom Saal, professor of neuro- and reproductive biology.

Peace and Justice Update

Green Team- See their column above.

SURE- The SURE House Meetings have been successful. Thanks to all of you who participated. The October 5th Community Problems Assembly had 176 Network members from 23 congregations. The Affordable Housing Crisis: In Sarasota County 42% of households are trying to deal with an unaffordable living situation. Of jobs that are most available, 9 out of 10 jobs do not pay enough for someone to pay the average rent on a one bedroom apartment in the area. Yet, County Commissioners voted to remove the affordable housing requirement of Developers and have not included any funding for Affordable Housing in the 2020-2021 budget. SURE is organizing for a major write-in campaign. You can join us and email SURE's site, suresarasota@gmail.com, for more details and suggestions of points to make in your letter writing to support Affordable Housing for working people.

Brady - The "End Family Fire" continues as they are now trying to address gun suicides and impulsivity. **Brady at FCUCC**; Dec 11th, Friday at 7 pm. a Brady Vigil for Victims of Gun Violence will be lead by Jim Crumel at FCUCC. This Virtual Vigil will feature the National Brady President Kris Brown and National speakers for Brady such as Fred Guttenberg, whose 14-year-old daughter was killed in the Parkland shooting.

Church Council - As Council is working on team assignments for next year, we would welcome a few more P and J team members to volunteer as we continue our current projects and possible new additions. Contact; One of the Council Moderators.

Community Meals - 1. The team from FCUCC has been continuing to serve delicious home-cooked meals take-out style. If you wish to deliver your home-baked Cookies they can be delivered to St Paul's Church on Bahia Vista at the kitchen back entrance at around 4 pm on the 4th Tuesday of the Month. Appreciation for the work of Rev Stephen Hoffman who attaches a new prayer for participants to each of the to-go boxes monthly.

Equality Florida Suncoast celebration will be live streamed to Facebook and YouTube on

November 15th at 5-6pm as the major fund raiser for the year for Equality Florida. The celebration features Comedian Judy Gold of the Rosie O'Donnell show, 2 winners of the popular RU Paul show and Equality Florida leaders. See the Equality Florida website eqfl.org for more details and to make a donation.

Racial Justice Discussions; The *Florida Conference* Anti-Racism Resolution to establish an Anti-Racism Ministry has passed! You are invited to Sacred Conversations on Race on ZOOM each Wednesday at 3pm through FCUCC. Rev Bixby can give you the link. It is a thought-provoking conversation about racism. On Oct. 14 we learned about our Church's journey into becoming a racially diverse congregation. We read Rev. Dr. John Evans' history and had two Church members and leaders, Jim Crumel and Lovette Harper, share their insights about witnessing the work of FC's Rev John Syster and Rev John Evans to make our church a place of welcome. This session was recorded by Rev Bixby. All are encouraged to learn of our early Church History for Racial Justice and Equality.

The Cultural Responsiveness Workshops that began for Sarasota schools for professional development were canceled by the new Sarasota School Superintendent, Dr Asplen after a few people misinterpreted it and mounted a misleading media campaign. However, 85% of Sarasota teachers are for this informative program led by a respected author and educator that has been well accepted by several school systems across the country. Our P & J Network decided we should write a letter in support of Cultural Responsiveness Training in the schools. Individual Sarasota citizens are encouraged to write in support of this very informative program that has been used successfully throughout the country.

Article submitted by Barbara Shaver, Peace and Justice co-chair with Sara Little

Happy Birthday to You ...

11/1	Gretchen Friend-Jones Charles Shipman, Jr. Jacci Tutt	11/21	Janet Baker Mary Kukainis
11/2	Pat Lipton	11/22	Jodi Kleppinger
11/4	Cory Kuhn Ethel Rudy	11/23	Dennis Crooks James Moody
11/7	Christine Hoffman	11/24	Lindsay Prospect Eric VanArsdall
11/8	Betty Goldman Roger Leach Sandy Phelps	11/25	Marjorie Hall Leonard Hoffman Betsy Traba
11/9	David Crane	11/27	Mae Reid Johnnie Williams
11/11	Bob Goldman	11/28	Susan Mitchell
11/16	Norma Compton	11/30	Steven Moore
11/18	David Abel Jeff Smith		
11/20	Dottie Donovan		



Happy Anniversary to You ...

11/6	Cat and Ann-Marie Drennen
11/10	Charles and Marilyn Shipman
11/25	Harold and Peggye Mezile
11/27	Sarah and Michael Dousa

IN LOVING MEMORY

Jacqueline Cully
Betty Greenlaw

STAFF

Senior Minister Rev. Dr. Wes Bixby
 Minister of Music Gregory Chestnut
 Office Manager Bobbi Miller
 Campus Manager Mark Swain
 Bookkeeper Bill Lewis
 Collector Gordon Quimby

OFFICERS AND VOLUNTEERS

Moderator Warren Bacon
 Vice Moderator Carol Fields
 Past Moderator Lori White
 Co-treasurers Sarah Dousa & Robin Reich
 Online Newsletter..... Thom Reeves
 Pastor Emeritus Dr. John Syster
 Contributing Photographer Susan Moore

Who We Are

*We are an open and affirming congregation of the United Church of
 Christ in the Florida Conference of the UCC.*

Telephone: (941) 953-7044; Fax: (941) 952-5245

Email: office@uccsarasota.com; Website: www.uccsarasota.com

**We are worshipping on-line via Facebook Livestreams each week at
 10:55 am and the service is posted to our website for streaming by
 1 pm each Sunday afternoon.**