

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
God is still speaking,

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**First Congregational United Church of Christ – Sarasota
Annual Meeting: January 24, 2021 – 12:15 p.m. on Zoom**

Call to Order	Warren Bacon, Moderator
Opening Prayer	Carol Fields, Vice Moderator
Confirmation of a Quorum	Janet Tipton, Parliamentarian
2019 Annual Report	
Approval of Team Annual Reports & Membership Report	Warren Bacon
Review & Approval of 2020 Annual Meeting Minutes	Kristi Weiland, Secretary
Nominations Committee Report	Warren Bacon
· Nomination & Election of Team Members	
· Nomination & Election of Officers	
Financial Reports	
· Endowment Fund	Rick McDaniel, Chair, Endowment
· 2020 Balance Sheet	Sarah Dousa, Treasurer
· 2021 Budget	Judy Black, Chair Finance, Funding, & Stewardship
Covenant Statement to Become a Creation Justice Church	Sarah Melcher & Barbara Smith Bacon
Recognition of Immediate Past Moderator, Lori White	Warren Bacon & Carol Fields
Passing of Gavel	Warren Bacon & Carol Fields
Motion to Adjourn	Carol Fields
Closing Prayer	Pastor Wes

Necrology 2020

Michael Amoroso*	Ruth Barnard	Joan Beach
Martha Bueneke	John “Jack” Butler	Fred Clark
Fran Collier	Jacqueline Cully	Bruce Crawford
Harriette Evans	Judy Eddins	Arlene Green
Betty Greenlaw	Richard Hays	Bruce Macgowan
Judy Macgowan	Dr. George Mask*	Tom Myers
Charles Peterson	Keith Pickett	William Picott
Dr. Jean Porter*	William Sexton	John Schaefer
Jim Stewart	Rev. Dr. Robert Smith	Christine Spaulding
William Wendling, Jr.	Michael White*	

(* indicates a beloved friend of First Congregational UCC)

2020 Membership Report

Membership Beginning January 1, 2020	446
New Full Members	10
Associate to Full Membership	1
New Associate Membership	0
Total New Members	11
Members leaving the church by	
Letter of transfer	0
Removed from Rolls (full)	8
Removed from Rolls (associate)	0
Associate to Full Membership	0
Deceased Full/Associate Members	25
Inactive	0
Total Removals	33
Total Membership year ending 2020	424

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 Quorum

Janet Tipton, Parliamentarian

Parliamentarian Janet Tipton confirmed a quorum was present.

2019 ANNUAL REPORTS

Approval of Team Annual Reports & Membership Report

Lori White

Motion to Approve: Gordon Quimby Seconded: Lynn Jones APPROVED

Review & Approval of 2019 Annual Meeting Minutes

Lori White

Motion to Approve: Sarah Melcher Seconded: Gib Mitchell APPROVED

Nominations Committee Report

Lori White

- Nominations & Election of Team Members

Motion to Approve: Ellie Weiss Seconded: Nancy McElroy APPROVED

- Nominations & Election of Officers: Warren Bacon, Moderator; Carol Fields, Vice Moderator; Lori White, Immediate Past Moderator; Kristi Weiland, Recording Secretary; Sarah Dousa and Robin Reich, Treasurer(s)

Motion to Approve: Felix McElroy Seconded: Myron Robinson APPROVED

FINANCIAL REPORTS

Endowment Fund

Rick McDaniel, Chair

For the fiscal year ending September 30, 2019: In accordance with the church by-laws, the Endowment Fund distributes 4% of the undesignated funds annually. \$38,430 was distributed to the Church Annual Budget and \$11,100 to scholarships. The Fund was the beneficiary of the following memorial gifts: \$5,000 Billie Knauss, \$50,000 Karen Matteson, and \$16,000 Jean Porter Estate (received after fiscal year end). Gifts to the Greg Chestnut Music & Fine Arts Fund totaled \$27,200. At fiscal year end, the undesignated balance was \$1,143,718 and the designated balance was \$577,857 totaling \$1,721,575. Currently we have 51 members of the Legacy Society of First Congregational UCC.

Thank you to Nancy Morris for serving as Treasurer of the Endowment/Planned Giving Committees and Team members Roger Weiss, Larry Ream, David Mitchell, Cindy Woodling, David York, and Dale Woodling. If interested in serving on the Committees, please contact any Team member or the church office for details.

2019 Balance Sheet

Judith Black, Co-Treasurer

The 2019 Income Statement was presented. Income exceeded the budget by \$70,458 (11%) and expenses were \$51,958 (8%) under budget creating a positive net variance to plan for the

year of \$122,416. After adding in the \$946 budgeted surplus, the total surplus income for the year was \$123,362.

Motion to Approve: Warren Bacon

Seconded: Gib Mitchell APPROVED

2020 Budget

Sarah Dousa, Chair – Finance, Funding & Stewardship

The 2020 Budget - an estimate of income and expenses necessary to fund the operations and ministries of the Church for one year- was presented. Income: \$663,324. Expenses: \$620,459. Budgeted surplus: \$42,865.

Motion to Approve: Gib Mitchell

Seconded: Sarah Melcher

APPROVED

PROPOSED BY-LAW CHANGES

Lori White

The By-Laws were updated following input from the congregation and council committees. The final draft was available for review prior to the Annual Meeting.

Motion to Approve: Susan Moore

Seconded: Dale Moore

APPROVED

Recognitions

Lori White & Warren Bacon

A sincere thank you to retiring Co-Treasurers **Judith Black** and **Cindy Walsh** for their outstanding work. Also heartfelt appreciation to **Bob Goldman**, Immediate Past Moderator, and **Betty** for their years of service.

Passing of Gavel from Moderator **Lori White** to Moderator –Elect **Warren Bacon**. Warren expressed his and our gratitude to Lori for her dedicated leadership.

Closing Prayer

Pastor Wes

Adjournment

Nominating Committee Report

Moderator: Carol Fields
Vice-Moderator:
Immediate Past Moderator: Warren Bacon
Secretary: Lynne Woodman
Treasurers: Robin Reich
Michael Johnston

Members at Large

Felix McElroy
Lois Wilkins

Budget, Finance, & Stewardship

Ed Andersen
Bill Brackett
Sue Fields
Christine Knupp
Jerry Long (chair)
Mike Johnston (ex-officio)
Robin Reich (ex-officio)

Celebrating Worship

Evelyn Crooks
Diana Cubberly
George Cubberly
Gib Mitchell
Jeannie Mitchell
Susan Moore
Connie Toops
Tim Toops
Lois Watson

Facilities & Grounds

Dave Abel
Chris Cooper
Don Hoy
Barb Ralph
Rich Rescigno
Bud Rives

Fellowship & Special Events

Sandy Smith (Chair)
Monica Geary
Mary Kukainis
Nancy Morris
Dee Schmidt
Kathie Stewart
Sue Zahn

Growing & Caring

Sandi Armstrong
Nancy Arnzen
Kathy Combs
Jim Fogle
Carol Hagglund
Becky Rives
Cindy Woodling
Dale Woodling (Chair)

Mission Team

Jan Andersen
Kate Eaton
Jan Kamm
Joy Kuhn
Gail Taylor

Music & Fine Arts Team

Ray Baker
Lucy Hedrick
Jim Hunder
Becky May (chair)
Jeff Smith
Jane Hunder
Greg Chestnut (ex-officio)

Peace & Justice Team

Sara Little (Chair)
Barbara Shaver (Chair)
Bill Brackett
Lee and Fred Brockmann
Laurie Etter
Pamela Gore Mead
Carol Hagglund
Sarah Melcher
Barbara Smith-Bacon
Dotty Reed
Carol Rescigno
Lucy Tobias

Spiritual Education & Growth

Jim Cross
Toska Strong (Chair)
Lynne Woodman

Staffing Team

Jim Butterworth
Dennis Crooks
Dick Miller (Chair)
Linda Pursley

Endowment

Rick McDaniel (chair)
David Mitchell
Larry Ream
Roger Weiss
Cindy Woodling
Nancy Morris (ex-officio)

Oasis Center Advisory Group

Jim Butterworth
Craig Collemer
Jim Crumel
Lori White
Cindy Woodling
Greg Chestnut (ex-officio)
Pastor Wes (ex-officio)

Technology Team

Warren Bacon
Jane Hunder
Jerry Long
Tim Toops
Pastor Wes (ex-officio)

Pastor's Annual Report 2020

If you must look back, do so forgivingly. If you must look forward, do so prayerfully. However, the wisest thing you can do is be present in the present gratefully. Maya Angelou

I have been living with Angelou's brilliant quote for the last few weeks, letting these words sit on my heart and sing to my soul. We all felt the stress and strain of 2020 with the pandemic upending our lives and causing our church to minister in new ways. We moved worship online, first using an iPhone and tripod and then moving to a video camera/laptop/our sanctuary soundboard set up. To say all that in one sentence does not do justice to hours that it took to accomplish. My heartfelt thank you to **Gina Bixby** who became our technology guru over the last year. My appreciation to **Sarah Dousa** who worked hard to get our worship to livestream simultaneously on our website on Sunday mornings. **We are now reaching people across the United States and into Canada on Sunday mornings!** I am also grateful for all **you**. You switched to online worship. You downloaded and learned to use Zoom. You sought to open your heart to what God was up to in such a time as this. The song I learned as a child is true especially now, "The church is not a building, the church is not a steeple, the church is not a resting place, the church is the people!" **You, beautifully crafted and created in God's image, people are beloved community.**

Looking back at the last year, I celebrate the dedication and beginning of our Oasis Center for Renewal and Reflection dedicated in honor of our friend, **Bill Wendling**. In many ways, this Center is symbolic for the year. We need safe spaces and places to be God's people. Yet, I grieve that Bill did not get to step inside the building he worked so hard to bring about. I know and feel Bill's presence everytime I walk in the door. In 2020, the Oasis Center launched book conversations; a grief group; sacred conversations on race; and artful prayer opportunities. I celebrate the Thursday prayer service with **Greg Chestnut**. I am honored and humbled by all who read my morning meditations. I also recognize the places I need forgiveness where I misspoke or let fear/frustration guide me. I know as a loving people we seek to live forgiveness with each other.

I look forward to the coming year as the vaccines begin to be given out. I look forward to a second year of teaching, "Mapping Your Life" in January. With the Staffing Team we have recently hired Douglas Kingsley to serve as our parttime Media Specialist. Douglas will be our staff person to run the livestream and help us live into the new digital era. Most of all, I look forward to being able to see you and hug you again. I seek prayerfully and faithfully to live in the present moment, even in its less-than-perfectness. I am grateful for our staff: **Greg Chestnut, Bill Lewis, Bobbi Miller, Gordon Quimby, and Mark Swain** who have done amazing work in keeping the church together in such a time as this. I know you will join me in a round of applause. Please continue to thank our great leadership team of **Warren Bacon, Carol Fields, and Lori White** who thoughtfully and prayerfully lead us through these difficult days. Thank you to our amazing **Church Council** who passed both a *Covenant for Creation Justice* and a *Statement on Racial Justice* this year. Thank you to our financial team of

Sarah Dousa, Robin Reich, and Judy Black, who made sure we stayed on budget and helped in countless ways.

As we begin 2021, our eighth year of ministry together, I don't know everything that lays ahead around the corner. What I do know deep in my heart is that we will approach the opportunities and obstacles ahead always aware that **we are not alone**. We share our ministry joyfully and lovingly with each other. And for that truth I shout out, "Thanks be to God! And thanks be to God for the people of First Congregational UCC, Sarasota." God's blessings to you now more than ever.

Celebrating Worship Report 2020

The celebrating worship team has continued to serve throughout this difficult year making sure that important decisions concerning worship and safety were in balance. Before March 15th, the tasks of greeters, ushers, liturgists, and communion servers were accomplished using faithful members of our church. An usher training was conducted in February - one month before we no longer needed ushers. We are looking forward to a refresher training for 2021 services when we return safely to worship together.

As a team we are pleased that we can be a sounding board for our pastor as special worship experiences are planned and created. The end goal is making sure that worship is meaningful and a blessing to our congregation.

Advent, Lent, Holy Weeks, Dr. Martin Luther King Sunday, Earth Day, Pride Sunday, World Communion Day, All Saints Day, and Thanksgiving are important times in the worship life of our church. Bettye Smith shared her reflections on the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King. Her comments gave us hope and made Dr. Martin Luther King Sunday very special. Dr. Marsha Kindall--Smith added to this worshipful day with her inspirational prelude. Lent began with the theme "Worship in Another Key" - little did we know that during lent on March 15th, we start a new adventure of 'live streaming' on Facebook.

Streaming has continued throughout the remainder of the year. Thanks to Gina, Ethan, and Olivia Bixby for faithfully serving on Sunday mornings to give us a wonderful streaming worship experience. Thanks to others who have stepped forward to assist with this new worship experience including the fine musicians that serve each week.

On October 18th, an outdoor worship service began at 9:00 a.m. CDC guidelines are followed and feedback has been very favorable.

Advent Kits were prepared to assist our congregants in their Advent Worship. Feedback has been positive with thoughts of continuing this practice during Lent.

Yes, it has been a difficult year in the Worship Life of our church. Yet, we are a blessed church with a wonderful Minister of Music and Pastor that enriched our lives each Sunday during the COVID pandemic. We look forward to attending worship together safely sometime in 2021.
Submitted by Tim Toops

Facilities & Grounds Report 2020

The Facilities and Grounds team kept busy in 2020. We provided administrative and planning services to Pastor Wes, the moderators, and our Budget, Finance and Stewardship team. These services involved helping with the insurance valuation so that we have accurate records as to what equipment we have on our campus and we also helped provide detailed information for the 15-year asset worksheet which is a tool used for long term planning. Don Hoy is our liaison with the Green Team as they explore if solar panels would be a viable option for our campus. This issue involves a lot of research into items such as how does solar installation affect our warranty on our new sanctuary roof and how does that affect our insurance policy, and more importantly how does having solar align with the mission of the church. This will be an ongoing item for at least the next year and we thank Don for being willing to work with the Green Team and to do research on all the various items that this project would affect. Facilities & Grounds also involves hands on work around the campus. We have a 5-acre site, and our team manages work both inside our buildings and out on our campus. Here are some of the highlights of work we did inside our buildings this year: We undertook repairs to the church office and Sanctuary, and we oversaw the replacement of the air conditioners in the SURE office and the church office.

We also remodeled the side entrance to the Sanctuary into an enclosed area with access to the church office and to the sanctuary. This work involved adding an entranceway, flooring and tile work and the addition of a video surveillance system so that our office area is now a more secure place to work. Visitors are now seen and identified before they are given entry into our building and that gives our staff a more secure environment to work in. Bud (Rives) also built a new camera stand so that the person operating the live streaming equipment for our services can have a safe, secure area to stand on while doing the streaming.

We helped select a new refrigerator for the Sacristy area. We were given a gift card to Rice's Appliances by Carol Carzon and family and this allowed us to replace an old refrigerator that had served us for many years but needed to be replaced. Thank you, Carol for thinking of your church and giving us this card to use. We greatly appreciate the new refrigerator and thank you Bud for helping to re-hang the door so that it opens in the direction we need for our use in that hallway.

We all worked on replacing the ceiling tiles in the Syster Hall kitchen, either by helping to empty the entire kitchen of all items that could be moved or by working with Bud to take down the old tiles and replace with new tiles, (many hand-cut to fit the size of the space). Others cleaned the space and then replaced everything back in the kitchen. Lighting fixtures were repaired or replaced, and light bulbs were updated to LED, where possible. This was a big undertaking, but now the kitchen looks much better and will give us a great start to the new year.

Here are some of the highlights of work that was accomplished outside, on our campus: The team worked on cleaning up the Allen Building Garage which had been on our list for quite some time and we removed tons of sawdust and old lumber that could not be reused, or repurposed and new shelving was installed and now things are much cleaner and better organized.

Another update that had been talked about for years was the removal of all the old railroad ties on the campus near the labyrinth area. This was done and now we have a more accessible, open space. Next, we will be working on removing the current picnic area so that there will be more of an open space for our continued outside worship and hopefully we can do some visioning about how that space can be used in the future to help support the mission of the church.

We were able to do some scheduled trimming of the campus with the entire team coming out for some Saturday work before Covid times hit and we worked with the Labyrinth Team, being careful to stay safe and we were able to get some needed trimming and cleanup done before we began outside worship, so the campus is still being kept up to standards. Thank you to all the people that we are aware of that come and trim things around the campus on a regular basis.

Greg Chestnut, Chris Cooper, Dennis Crooks, Jim and Michael Cross, Buck Greenlaw, Barney Kavanagh, Sue & Bill Pallatto, Rich Rescignio, Dawn Swain, Lucy Tobias, Cindy Woodling, Lynne Woodman, and Pastor Wes are routinely here trimming, weeding, and doing whatever is needed to keep our 5-acre campus beautiful and we really appreciate all the effort you put in, it is a wonderful stewardship to our environment that you provide, and it is noticed every day by anyone that comes to our church.

There was also work done in our Garden of the Cross area this year. The team oversaw the recent pressure washing and re-sanding of the bricks in the garden area and Susan and Bill Pallatto do a great job in maintaining the plants around the cross area. We had issues with vandals leaving toxic, oily materials in that area around the cross earlier this year and Sue & Bill have been working hard to save & restore the plants in the garden that were damaged by this act and we really appreciate all the hard work they have put in to make sure that sacred space is maintained and is source of peace and beauty for all who come to our campus.

We also want to give a big thank-you to Mark Swain, our campus manager. Mark's duties changed dramatically once the campus was not being used for as many activities as normal and he took on all the lawn mowing for this year. Our team of wonderful, volunteer mowers were able to take a break but hopefully in 2021 we'll be able to use both sets of people to keep our campus in shape.

Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the entire Facilities & Grounds Team for stepping up and helping wherever and whenever needed this year. This team is blessed with folks who have unique capabilities that are extremely helpful to this team and to keeping our campus and buildings in good working order all the time. Thank you, Dave Abel, Chris Cooper, Don Hoy, Barbara Ralph, Rich Rescignio and Bud Rives. Without you so many things would not have happened, could not have happened and our church is blessed that you all volunteer your time and talents for this team and that you help keep our church buildings and campus in great shape...thank you for all that you do!! Also, a big thank you to Pastor Wes, who loves trimming bushes and wrangling star jasmine bushes and is an integral part of this team. We

love working so closely with you and we thank you for all that you do for our team and for our entire church.

Susan Raines

Fellowship & Special Events Report 2020

The Fellowship and Special Events Team plans and supports church-wide events that create opportunities for fellowship, enjoyment and social interaction within the congregation and a welcome to visitors and newcomers. Team members for 2020 were Sandra Smith (Team Chair), Nancy Morris (Secretary), Monica Geary, Mary Kukainis, Linda Pursley, and Sue Zahn. Sadly, this year we lost a loyal and hard-working member of our team, Joan Beach.

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 are given at the January Leadership Retreat.

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

We began the year with new and creative ideas for engaging and encouraging the congregation to participate in fellowship after worship at a "special day" one Sunday each month. In January, we celebrated National Pie Day, and members brought a variety of delicious pies to share as refreshments. February was Chocolate Lover's Month with members once again donating many different chocolate desserts. Plans were well under way for a Chili Cook-Off in March with over a dozen chefs signed up to compete. And then came Covid.....

Since we have not met in person for worship, there also have not been any in-person fellowship events. Our exciting plans for more "Special Days" are on hold, along with the Chili Cook-Off. Our team is eager to meet and greet our church family in person and host everyone at Fellowship Time. We promise a big celebration when we are all able to be together again safely.

Respectfully yours,

Sandy Smith

Fellowship Chair

Budget, Finance & Stewardship Report 2020

The team, consisting of Ed Andersen, Bill Brackett, Mike Johnston, Christine Knupp, Jerry Long, Bruce Woolley and Judith Black, with the hard work of the co-treasurers Sarah Dousa and Robin Reich, had a year like no other.

The challenges of 2020 with its Covid-19 requirements of social distancing and self-quarantining was a source of deep concern as we stopped having in-person worship, activities and meetings. It was unknown how the 2020 budget would fare as folks could not participate at church in the customary manner.

God has blessed First Congregational UCC! Our congregation stepped up to the plate and hit a home run in 2020, despite the unknown. Pledges and donations met (and sometimes even exceeded) projected budget levels for most months.

As of the November 30 month-end figures (the most recent available at the time of publication deadline for the Annual Report) total income actually slightly exceeded budgeted projected

income. That, coupled with reduced expenses attributable to Covid-19 activity level changes, netted the church the ability to stay ahead of unknowable possible deficits and expenditures. BF&S kept a very close watch to ensure the church would be adequately funded throughout the year under these circumstances.

THANKS TO OUR CONGREGATION at November 30th budgeted year-to-date income exceeded projections @ 100% of budget while expenses were @ 90% of budget.

The balance sheet shows sufficient balances for the general fund and designated funds to comfortably enable continued work of the church going forward.

Over the course of the year highlighted achievements included:

- Progress on Oasis funding
- Accurately enumerating the church's assets and continued detailed insurance review
- Capital Plan criteria received ongoing evaluation for items to be included, and review of timelines for projected needs are surveyed and adjusted
- CDs at Morgan Stanley continue to be assets for the church, although with disappointing earnings potential as overall financial market instruments offer only very low interest returns
- Gordon Quimby (Collector) researched, recommended to BF&S, and initiated an improved method for pledges and donations to be made electronically
- Stewardship initiated and conducted a successful campaign for funding the work of the church in 2021
- Lori White agreed to manage the process for disbursements of Celebration and Memorial Funds
- Procedures to modify check writing and other financial necessities were set up in a manner conforming to safe Covid-19 practices
- BF&S team members met with each team to help prepare their 2021 budget projections
- Special unanticipated cost requirements in connection with live streaming were funded and a Technology Team formation was approved, becoming active under Moderators' supervision
- We Zoomed A LOT.

Growing & Caring Report 2020

As with virtually every aspect of our church life in 2020, the mission, responsibilities, and activities of the Growing and Caring for the Congregation Team changed dramatically over the course of the year. In February, we sponsored a New Member luncheon. The luncheon provides an opportunity for interested individuals to learn about the mission and proud history of our church and to connect with church members both new and old. We ensured that all those interested in joining the church were provided a sponsor as well as information on church programs and activities. We also contacted church members who had become less active over the past year to ensure that they were aware of ways to remain connected to the church and the congregation. We also made Care Pamphlets and other religious materials available in the narthex and Syster Hall. In March, we prepared Easter baskets for members of our church in

long-term care facilities, rehab facilities, or who for health reasons were isolated at home. And then the COVID pandemic hit and, indicative of our activities for the remainder of the year, our Easter basket were never delivered.

Our team's mission rapidly changed. We began by reaching out, in coordination with Pastor Wes, by phone, e-mail, or mail to church members, particularly our more senior members, to determine if they needed any assistance. As our church services transitioned to live-streaming, we reached out to our many church members who might need assistance to view these services. When it became clear that some church members might not have the necessary computer equipment or training to view the on-line church services, the services were recorded on CD mailed to these members. The Growing and Caring team again reached out by phone and mail to ensure that members were aware of the availability of these CDs. We also assisted Pastor Wes in updating the church's emergency contact information for all church members.

Throughout the pandemic, the Growing and Caring team members made literally hundreds of contacts by phone or mail with church members to ensure their well-being and provide a sense of connectivity with the church. This included reaching out with cards and letters over the Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. We worked in close coordination with the Lay Visitation Ministry Team throughout the year to ensure that church members in hospitals or other care facilities were being contacted on a regular basis. In the end, every Growing and Caring team member felt that the team's work was both fulfilling and rewarding.

At the beginning of 2020, our team consisted of Nancy Arnzen, Karen Crane, Carol Hagglund, Becky Rives, Cindy Woodling (Lay Visitation Ministry Team liaison), and Dale Woodling (chair). We are very grateful that during the pandemic we were joined by Sandi Armstrong, Kathy Combs and Jim Fogle.

Missions Report 2020

With many of our traditional activities put on hold due to the pandemic, the team has managed to carry through with our two main fund-raising projects: the Easter Love Offering and the Christmas Love Offering. Easter Love, which benefits the church's wider community in the world, generated \$14,000. Christmas Love, which benefits organizations in our smaller community, generated \$20,409.33.

During August, in coordination with Dr. Shirley at Alta Vista Elementary School, we determined that cash donations would be most useful for them. In that regard we raised \$7,000 to be used toward school supplies, clothing, etc for that economically challenged neighborhood.

In looking toward a more normal future in 2021, we plan to reconnect with our neighbor, the Sarasota Point Rehab facility, by making table decorations or holiday baskets. We also will revive the custom of soliciting volunteer information from the members of the congregation, and recognizing each of the outside organizations our members help support with time and talents. This is always an eye-opening and amazing exercise.

Beginning in January we look forward to launching our agreement with the All Faiths Food Bank by making the church campus available for their food distribution once a month.

Music & Fine Arts Report 2020

The wonderful members of the Music & Fine Arts Team have adapted to the challenging year that 2020 turned out to be and we did so with commitment, creativity and a sense of humor! As chairperson I want to extend my deepest thanks for the opportunity to serve with this wonderful team!

Some of the musical contributions we have experienced are:

- On January 17, Carrie Newcomer – singer, songwriter and author graced our sanctuary with a fabulous concert that was enjoyed by many church and community members
- On March 2, 175 attendees enjoyed a concert of “Eight Horns” in our sanctuary featuring some of the area’s best brass players
- Plans began for a group called “Oasis Singers” a group of choir and non-choir members who would work on learning familiar, singable songs that can bring comfort to those at the end of life or who are home-bound – comfort to be available 1:1 and/or in facilities. This will be revived once it is safe to do so.
- Regular, in-person choir rehearsals and singing for services ceased in late March.
- Zoom choir rehearsals started on June 17th and have continued! The choir spends this time doing some of our regular warm-ups, learning/reviewing songs, reviewing theory and sight-reading – all to help keep our skills sharp for the day we sing together again in person. And of course there is some social time! Big thanks to Lauren Patsos and Douglas Kingsley for technical help with our Zoom rehearsals, our section leaders (Lauren Patsos, Susan Raines, Rob Quarles and Ethan Bixby) for helping to lead the choir.
- Thanks to technology, the congregation has been able to enjoy a member of the choir as hymn leader each Sunday, and we have appreciated the special guest musicians that played Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve

In other news:

- We participated in our church’s Green Team Assessment
- Greg’s planned sabbatical during the summer of 2020 has been postponed and we look forward to supporting his plans when the time is right
- Greg has continued to help with Team Players – helping them participate in virtual services and having Zoom social time together
- As other teams did, we held Zoom meetings and look forward to the day we can sing together in church, hear live music and meet together in person!

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 2020

Peace and Justice Network Annual Report for 2020

“An injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere”

The Network this year has remained active after transitioning to ZOOM in March for meetings and connections with our members and partners.

The Green team; Barbara Smith-Bacon, Sarah Melcher- The team was successful in constructing a detailed application for FCUCC to be a Creation Justice Church. The Covenant Statement is to be voted on at the Annual Meeting in January. We have all learned and been enriched from our participation in the events the team offered the Church. Their report with details is found separately.

Racial Justice; Barbara Shaver and Sara Little - P and J signed on to *Equality Florida's Racial Justice* statement in May after the murder of George Floyd and the protests that followed. We began to educate ourselves and quickly decided that FCUCC needed such a statement and call to action in keeping with our Church's stated Vision. A *FCUCC Racial Justice Statement* by P and J with input from members of the Juneteenth seminar was constructed with a 2 page list of resources. It was approved by Council and shared with the Congregation on our Web Page. A weekly discussion group facilitated by Rev Bixby, "Sacred Conversations on Racial Justice" was begun as we shared articles, book studies, videos, and movies to further educate ourselves.

One of our actions was to strongly encourage the Sarasota School Board to provide education for their teachers and staff on Cultural Responsiveness. We are continuing to look at ways our Church can live into the Racial Justice Statement and the call to action.

SURE and Project 180, two of our P and J Network members are now occupants on our church campus.

SURE; Laurie Etter- SURE switched to using ZOOM for the house meetings which was successful and continues it's important community action work in Criminal Justice with support for Juvenile Citations and now Adult Civil Citations. They also continue to work toward the provision of affordable housing for the lower wage working people who service our community. SURE representatives attended Commissioner Meetings.

The SURE rally is March 8 and the Nehemiah Action is planned for March 29th, both most likely on ZOOM.

Project 180; Pamela Gore-Mead- Project 180 is our newest member of our Network. It's mission is to reintegrate formerly incarcerated citizens to community life. Many of these men have nothing when released. The Project works with qualified men to provide education, financial literacy, food, jobs, clothes, housing and other needs so they do not have to return to unsuitable environments or criminal activity. They recently added a second residential home to Nick's house which served 6 men. Their new initiative is First Week Out that is to provide what is immediately needed by the newly released to be successful in entering the community.

Brady; Carol Rescigno- As the country entered the COVID shutdown and people were setting record highs for gun purchases Brady's new campaign was End Family Fire to encourage gun safety in homes. Our local Brady group was able to negotiate a deal for Bill Boards in support of this campaign. They also secured TV spots and passed out brochures. Their annual Vigil Dec 11 was via ZOOM and featured the Brady President and a national speaker, a father whose daughter was killed at Parkland High School.

Community Meals; Carol Hagglund- Due to COVID safety concerns the meals were discontinued indoors. A team of volunteers co-ordinated by Carol distributed boxed meals cooked by Sandy Smith to recipients outside on the designated days. Team and FCUCC

members baked cookies to add to the boxes. Rev Stephen Hoffman provides a written prayer for each box. The Christmas meal was a large success as numbers doubled.

Equality Florida. They worked to curb legislation that would have removed important protections for LGBTQ people and continue their work for the education and safety of all. The annual fund raiser was entertainment by known stars and speakers by Zoom. Peace and Justice Network members; Chair- Sara Little, Co-Chair and Secretary-Barbara Shaver, Bill Bracket, Carol Hagglund, Carol Rescigno, Lee Brockmann, Lucy Tobias, Laurie Etter, Barbara Smith-Bacon, Sarah Melcher, Pamela Gore-Meade, Steve Scott, Fred Clark until his passing.

Spiritual Education & Growth Report 2020

Youth:

Before COVID, Sunday School Classes were provided. In addition, a Kayak Adventure and an educational tour and interactive meal with youth and their families at The Mosque were made available. After COVID, two FEST (Families Enjoying Shared Time) were offered to youth and their families via Zoom.

Scholarships:

Jo-Jo Starcher, Ian VanArsdall, Nathan VanArsdall, and Garvey McFarland each received scholarships in the amount of \$1800.

FEAST:

Five opportunities for members of the congregation and community were planned for LENT; however, due to COVID only two Thursday Events took place: Meditation through Music and Faith Journeys. The Celebration of Spring on the Labyrinth, Creating Visual Arts, and the fieldtrip to ECHOFARM were cancelled.

Labyrinth:

The labyrinth was available to individuals and small groups throughout the year. It became the site for the weekly 9:00 AM Sunday Worship during the Fall.

Staffing Report 2020

The Staffing Team members were Jim Butterworth, Dennis Crooks, Linda Pursley and Dick Miller. We were joined in our meetings by Pastor Wes Bixby and Vice-Moderator Carol Fields. The Team started the year with several goals, including streamlining job descriptions and other staff documents, and updating the Employee handbook. We also wanted to explore the correct staffing pattern for a 400-member congregation. Some of these goals were realized, but the events after February resulted in changes we could not have imagined. These gave us a vision of who we are and should be as a church, sometimes quite different from that which we had a year ago.

Early in the year we constructed a short survey questionnaire regarding the congregation's expectations for the Senior Pastor. This was meant to provide us with one piece of data to be used for future staffing discussions. The survey was submitted to a small sample of members, including Council members and past Moderators, and was completed in June.

On March 5th, we celebrated Julie Pennella's many years of faithful service to our Church, upon her retirement as Parish Nurse.

Job descriptions were updated and incorporated into a new Conditions of Employment document for each staff member. These documents will be updated and then reviewed and signed by each staff member annually. Also, the Employee Handbook was updated and received Council approval July 14th.

During the year, Team members met with their assigned staff members, along with their supervisor, Pastor Wes. Staff annual evaluations were finalized during August and September. Even though the pandemic created considerable interruption of work hours, the Staffing Team recommended the continuation of regular payments to Staff, regardless of the actual hours worked. This was approved by Council and continued to the end of 2020.

This year, the use of virtual technology has become necessary in all aspects of the church's mission. It soon became evident that a new staff position was necessary to help with this.

Working with the newly formed Technology Team, a job description for a part time Media Specialist position was written. Following interviews, Douglas Kingsley was chosen and will begin January 1st. The Team is thankful for the time and expertise provided by Gina Bixby, making possible the virtual worship services provided throughout these past months.

Two goals for 2021 are to create a church preparedness policy to keep the staff and congregation safe as we emerge from COVID-19 and for similar future events, and to continue working to determine the correct staffing pattern for our church.

The Staffing Team is grateful for the flexibility and dedication exhibited by our church staff as we successfully maneuvered through this difficult year. We look forward to emerging from this as a stronger church, ready to adapt to whatever new challenges we face in the future.

Respectfully submitted,
Dick Miller

Endowment Committee Report and Financials 2020

In accordance with the church by laws, the endowment fund distributes 4% of the undesignated funds annually. A total of \$43,912 was distributed for 2019 from the undesignated funds. \$7,500 of other designated funds were distributed for their intended purposes.

The Undesignated Endowment Fund was beneficiary of \$16,000 from the Jean Porter estate, \$30,911 from the Thelma Becker (Clark) estate, \$3000 from the John Leland Adams estate, \$18,632 from the Merry Texter estate, and \$113,000 from the Joan Beach estate. The Greg Chestnut Music and Fine Arts Fund received \$150 from Larry Ream in memory of John Shaefer, and \$185,421 from the Judy and Bruce Macgowan estate.

The following members have committed to making a planned gift to First Congregational UCC.

Anonymous (4)	Lori White
Bill and Pat Grubb	June Wolgemuth
Marsha Kindall-Smith	Susan Raines
Rick & Patrice McDaniel	Dale and Cindy Woodling
Sara Little and Barbara Shaver	Len & Drue Murray
Bruce* and Judy Macgowan*	Craig Collemer

Billie Knauss*
 Felix and Nancy McElroy
 Richard Miller
 Fran Collier *
 Pauline Geary
 Carol Hagglund
 Gregg Royer *
 Joan Sheil
 Roger & Ellie Weiss
 Larry Ream
 Carol Seltzer
 Lucia Taylor*
 Elizabeth Wildhack
 Richard * & Debbie Hayes
 Jean Walker
 Mary Kukainis
 Lynn Jones
 Myron & Brenda Robinson
 Audrey Shutters
 Bill & Susan Moore
 David York
 Fred & Lee Brockmann

Phyllis Collins
 Pat & Graham* Barkhuff
 Ginny McIntire
 Fred Clark *
 Bev Laier
 Betty Rundlett
 Ginny Mcintire
 Ann Stormzand *
 Lucy Hedrick
 Bruce Woolley
 John* & Connie Schaefer
 Bill Wendling* & Lynne Woodman
 Joan Beach *
 Vince Amoroso * & Tam Milton
 Helaine Eckstein
 Greg Chestnut
 Warren & Barbara Smith-Bacon
 Jean Simpson
 David & Susan Mitchell
 Minton* & Sandra Tinsley
 Nancy Morris

*deceased

We encourage you to commit to making a planned gift to First Congregation. By doing so, you help to ensure the continuation of our church.

Rick McDaniel, David Mitchell, Larry Ream, Roger Weiss, and Cindy Woodling

STATEMENT OF ENDOWMENT FUND ACTIVITY
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Year ended September 30, 2020

Balance, October 1, 2019	\$1,721,575
Increases:	
<u>Gifts Received</u>	
Memorial Gifts -	181,543
Gifts to Greg Chestnut Music & Fine Arts	185,571
Net Increase in Values	162,867
Return to UCC Scholarship	4,232
Return to Ellwood/York Scholarship	<u>4,720</u>
	538,933

Decreases:

2019 Disbursement to the Church Annual Budget	43,912
Scholarships	7,200
Administrative Fee 2019	<u>500</u>
	51,612

Balance September 30, 2020 **2,208,896**

3 year comparison

<u>Year Ended 9/30/18</u>	<u>Year Ended 9/30/19</u>	<u>Year Ended 9/30/2020</u>
\$1,637,390	\$1,721,575	\$2,208,896

Covenant Statement
to Become a Creation Justice Church

We of the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Sarasota, Florida, by vote of our Church Council and ratification by our Congregation, do solemnly commit to God, one another, and all creatures, to walk in God's ways by cherishing the earth and all living beings who dwell upon it. This is the divine creation and we commit to promoting its health and sustainability.

We acknowledge at the outset that we are inseparably part of the web of life; our well-being dependent on the welfare of fellow creatures. We recognize the utmost value in creation - inherent value independent of creation's usefulness for us. In this covenant, we understand that our creation is in crisis, in large part because of human activity. As a consequence, we promise to educate ourselves and others about the causes of and solutions to environmental degradation.

We commit to finding ways to respect and conserve our natural resources for the benefit of future generations and for the future of the planet. Because of our covenant with God and the earth, we will seek divine guidance and strive to follow God's will. We will pursue justice for the earth, protect vulnerable living things from exploitation, and seek remediation of the environmental damage humans have caused.

THIS COVENANT STATEMENT IS HEREBY ADOPTED this 19th day of May, 2020, by unanimous vote of the Church Council of the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Sarasota, Florida.

RATIFIED this ___ day of _____, 2020, by a Congregational vote of the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Sarasota, Florida.

COLLAGE Report 2020

Coalition of Laity for Lesbian and Gay Equality (established over 20 years ago)

In early 2020 the leadership of Collage changed from one coordinator to Gay/Lesbian Co-facilitators with an advisory committee. Current co-facilitators are Jerry Oliver and Pauline Geary. Advisory Committee consists of: Pastor Wes, Sara Little, Barbara Shaver, Dale Moore, and Dick Miller.

The group met once in person in the new Oasis Center on the church campus for lunch and discussion of plans for the future. The group's plans were interrupted by the need to shut down in person meetings due to the COVID pandemic. Members of COLLAGE then started meeting weekly on Zoom for the duration of the pandemic. The weekly discussions have been most helpful in continuing the support of members safely. The average attendance of the weekly meetings has been 10-15 people.

COLLAGE joined other LGBTQ organizations in support of the Equality Florida statement condemning racial violence and affirming that black lives do matter. Several COLLAGE members regularly participate in Sacred Conversations about Race.

The advisory committee is scheduled to meet next on Zoom 01/11/2021 to discuss future planning of COLLAGE.

Lay Visitation Ministry 2020 Annual Report

The Lay Visitation Ministry (LVM) Team is in its sixth year of ministry on behalf of the congregation. Currently, there are ten members the LVM 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 aspect of the ministry of pastoral care to the congregation of our church.

In a "normal" year, the members of the LVM team make hundreds of visit to 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. When the Covid 19 pandemic settle upon us, we made necessary and wise changes as visitation in individual homes and care-facilities was not an option for the foreseeable future. The LVM team immediately

started extending the church's outreach to those we were visiting primarily through telephone calls and sending cards.

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. We have continued these gatherings monthly via Zoom. Our time together consists of an opening devotional, a presentation by one of our members regarding issues they've been pondering as a result of a visit or phone call (the focus is on how our member was able to be present to the person they were visiting or speaking with), and then Craig offers an educational component related to issues that might arise in our visits and phone calls and how we might make a future visit or conversation more meaningful for the church member. 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.

Another dimension of our ministry which began in 2019 is the Healing and Prayer Service that was held the third Sunday of each month following worship. We hope to be able to resume this ministry in the future which provides an opportunity for members of the congregation to come forward for specific or general prayers for healing for themselves, someone else, or the world. This was a meaningful time of prayer we look forward to resuming in the future when it's safe for us to gather for worship once again.

The collaboration with the Growing and Caring Team, our 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, Alleyne Kess, Pauline Geary, Sherry Mange, Judy Manville, Dick Miller, Barbara Shaver, and Cindy Woodling. Craig Collemer and Sara Little are the co-leaders and Pastor Wes is actively supportive of our ministry for which we are grateful.

We join our congregation in prayer for the well-being and safety of all our members and friends in this challenging times.

First Congregational UCC Women of Sarasota July 2019-June 2020

The First UCC Women meet in Syster Hall on the first Tuesday of each month at 11:30 for Worship, Luncheon and Program. Our first meeting of the year was held on November 5, 2019 with a program from Echo Farms. On November 13, several members joined with the Sisterhood of Temple Beth Sholom for a Memories Road Show which was held at Temple Beth Sholom. Our December 1st meeting was dedicated to filling and wrapping Christmas Shoe

Boxes for Seniors. We filled 49 boxes and Mark Swain; Campus Manager delivered them to the Herald Tribune for us. We were able to meet for 3 meetings in 2021: January 7, Dr. April Glasco of Second Chance, Last Opportunity spoke to us, February 4, Mote Marine gave us an insight on the many aspects of marine life they oversee and on March 4, Jamie Lowicz, Principal of Oak Park School gave a talk on the many things the school provides for children with disabilities.

On January 25, 2020, several members attended the Southwest Area Regional Meeting of Florida UCC Women at Pilgrim United Church of Christ in Port Charlotte. We were responsible for presenting the program for the event. Our very own Sarah Melcher was the speaker for the program. She gave a presentation on the UCC's Creation Justice ministry.

In 2018, the three remaining circles from UCC Women joined to form Circle of Friends. Circle of Friends meets on the third Tuesday of the month at 10:30 a.m. in the Chapel at Plymouth Harbor. In October, Kay Showker presented a program on travel, highlighting Cuba; November, Donna Papenhausen worked her magic of art with us, at our December meeting we made Christmas trees for the patients in Plymouth Harbor nursing facility. On January 21, our own Bill Bracket spoke on his and his late wife Ann's missionary experiences. In February we were delighted to have our own Susan Moore show us how to start an Autobiography.

Covid-19 brought everything to a halt shortly after the Association's March meeting and the Circles of Friends scheduled March 17th was canceled. This was to be a presentation by the Sarasota Honey Company, and we look forward to rescheduling it when it is possible to meet again.

Each year, First UCC Women through the generosity of its members, which is all women of the church, donates to charities. This year's recipients were: All Faiths Food Bank - \$500, Meals on Wheels - \$500, Second Chance, Last Opportunity - \$500, Baby Basics - \$200, Sure - \$200 and SPARCC - \$100.

Nancy Morris, President