

First Congregational UCC

During February there are many meaningful moments for our church.

- On **February 6th**, we will gather for our Leadership Retreat on Zoom. This is a great chance for those serving on Teams and in leadership to connect.
- On **February 14th**, Valentine's Day, **we have a GREAT invitation for you. Please send a valentine to the church members who are alphabetically before and after you in the directory.** And, if you want to take this invitation up a notch, send valentines to the people you sat around on Sunday mornings.
- Lent begins on **February 17th** with two services, *see below*.



As we begin the month and throughout the season of Lent, we will center on one word. Words matter and make a difference. Words create world. One single word, just like one photo, can open our imaginations in powerful ways. I invite you to read the descriptions below with the word of the week. Maybe you want to write a definition for each word prior to the service; consider what image comes to mind when you read that word; or experiences and encounters you have had with the word. I pray that in the coming weeks, these words would open us to God whose creative Spirit continues to craft anew through words today.

Worship on Sunday mornings:

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

February 7 ~ Our focus word is "Questions" with the scripture Luke 7:18-23. We will celebrate Holy Communion together.

February 14 ~ Our focus word is "Heart" with the scripture Luke 9:28-36. Remember to send Valentines to church friends!

Ash Wednesday, February 17 ~ Two services; our focus word is "Dust" with the scripture Luke 9:43-56. Two services – see the side bar.

February 21 ~ Our focus word is "Good" with the scripture Luke 10:25-42.

February 28 ~ Our focus word is "Knowing" with the scripture Luke 13:6-9, 18-21.



February Hours

Pastor Wes:

Mon.-Thurs.: 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Bobbi:

Wednesdays: various hours

Mark:

Mon. – Fri.: 7 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Greg:

Tues. – Fri.: various hours

Ash Wednesday



ASH WEDNESDAY

On February 17th, we begin the season of Lent. This year, we want to invite you to a season of prayerful reflection and renewal. We long for Lent to be an Oasis to YOUR soul.

We will have two services:

Zoom service at 7 p.m.

Outdoor Worship around the labyrinth at noon. Please wear a mask and bring a lawn chair. Please know that we will not offer an imposition of ashes this year.

Both services will invite you to turn your heart toward the coming forty days with our intentions.

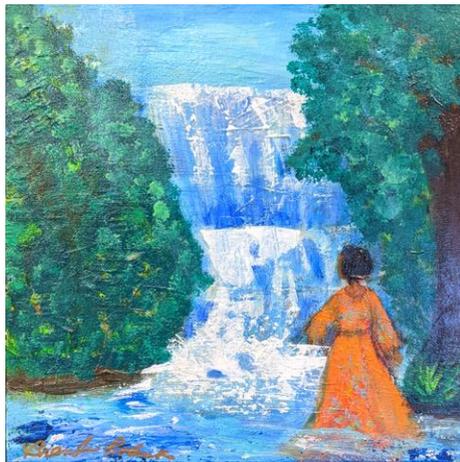
March 7 ~ Our focus word is "Lost" with the scripture Luke 15.
March 14 ~ Our focus word is "Money" with the scripture Luke 16:19-31.
March 21 ~ Our focus words are "Surprise Hospitality" with the scripture Luke 18:31-19:10.
March 28 ~ Our focus word is "Palm" with the scripture Luke 19:29-44.



With great love to you all ~~ Wes

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.*



by Brenda Robinson "created with special water"

Amazing Opportunities in February

Thursday Service: 1 p.m. on Facebook Live. (**February 4 & 11**) No prayer service on February 18.

Oasis for the Soul: Thursdays at 1 p.m. during Lent beginning **February 25**

Grief Group will continue to meet on Zoom every **Tuesday at 1 p.m.** We welcome anyone who needs a safe space to process the heaviness of our hearts as we mourn the passing of those we love.

Sacred Conversations on Race: Wednesdays at 3 p.m. on Zoom.

Lenten Ethical Meal Pledge

Join the Green Team and commit to a more plant-based diet during Lent. Meatless Mondays is an easy way to get started. Why try this? Because, the environmental cost to produce a plant-based diet is dramatically lower than that of a meat-based diet. More information at links below. Questions? Contact Barbara Smith-Bacon or Sarah Melcher.

- A few links of recipe inspiration (more soon!):

<https://www.cookinglight.com/food/vegetarian/plant-based-recipes-for-a-year-of-meatless-mondays>

<https://www.eatingwell.com/gallery/13658/meatless-monday-healthy-vegetarian-recipes-you-must-try/>

- Read more about the positive environmental impacts of taking the pledge: <https://tzuchi.us/blog/everyone-can-be-a-changemaker>

Join the Zoom Conversation

- **Sunday Coffee Hour at Noon** ~ You are **always welcome** to join in the conversation and connect with other members!
- **COLLAGE Tuesdays @ 11 a.m.** ~ Collage is our LGBTQ and Ally Group – all are welcome to join our Collage group on Zoom for support and faithful discussions.
- **Tuesday Bible Study @ 6:30 p.m.** ~ We meet on Zoom to discuss the Bible passage for the upcoming Sunday.
- **Wednesday Bible Study @ 11 a.m.** ~ We meet on Zoom to discuss the Bible passage for the upcoming Sunday.
- **Tuesday Book Club @ 1 p.m., February 16** ~ The Invisible Life of Addie LaRue by V. E. Schwab. Contact Nancy McElroy: fnmcelroy@gmail.com for more information.

Peace and Justice Network News

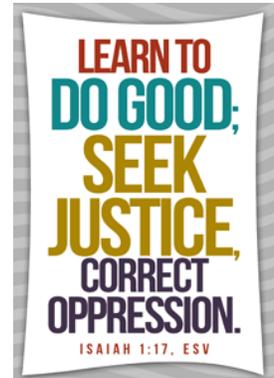
The Peace and Justice Network invites you to be a part of its email network to receive news of events and ways to make our voices heard by petitioning our legislators and officials for justice ministry causes currently in our focus. If you want to be "in the know," contact:

Sara: sarajlittle@me.com or
Barbara: barbarashaver@me.com

Green Team News: The Peace and Justice Network congratulates our Green Team for its industrious year-long efforts to provide creation awareness, education and advocacy experiences. The Team has promoted our church's recognition and designation by the National UCC as a Creation Justice Church. The next step is for approval of the covenant at the annual meeting. If approved, our covenant is then sent to National UCC. Stay tuned for updates.

Racial Justice: Although Council approved our Racial Justice Covenant Statement in July 2020, we are seeking a greater understanding of this important statement. Collaborating with Council and in meeting with each team, The Peace and Justice Network will be available to assist the team's implementation and the living out of what it means for FCUCC to have Racial Justice a part of our core values.

Sacred Conversations on Race occur each **Wednesday at 3 p.m. on Zoom**. Call Rev. Bixby for the link. All are welcome to join in a respectful conversation.



Community Meals: Help us celebrate our 3rd Anniversary of providing a monthly community meal at St. Paul Lutheran Church. Our meal is cooked by Sandy Smith with home-baked cookies by the many bakers in our church added as a sweet treat. Reverend Stephen Hoffman provides a written prayer for each box. We need your home-baked cookies and if you are able, we could use your help in preparing our take-out meal. Please join us on **February 23 from 4 – 6 p.m.** Volunteer and/or inquire for more details--Carol Hagglund at carolhagglund@gmail.com.



SURE (Sarasota United for Responsibility & Equity): For 24 years SURE has been working on important community action initiatives with many successes. Together with 24 other congregations SURE powerfully addresses community problems in Sarasota County. This year's emphasis is on **affordable housing** for lower wage earners who service our community and **adult civil citations**. Both initiatives require "people power" to make our voices heard.

Please mark your calendars for two dates—**March 8 and March 29, 2021**. On March 8 SURE plans to hold a rally for our church to support this year's initiatives. At the SURE Rally, information will be shared with all being encouraged to rally friends and fellow church members to support and attend The Nehemiah Action. As a leader in this effort, FCUCC has set a goal of 200 people to attend what will most likely be a virtual event. Together with 24 other congregations, SURE is hoping 1,000 will make it clear to our elected officials that we are strong in our desire to make our voices heard for positive change. We need your help. **We can make a difference!**



ONA (Open & Affirming Coalition): Collage, our LGBTQ and Ally Group, are participating with our National UCC's Open and Affirming Coalition to increase our visibility both within our church as well as in our community. Among our goals is to reaffirm our covenant as an ONA church. ONA is now being included in the Peace and Justice Network, which provides representation at Council meetings.

Webinars ~ Have you ever wondered what that "Q" means on LGBTQ? What are all those different colored Flags about at Pride? What pronoun do I use for our Transgendered friends? To help increase your savvy and enable us to live into our Open and Affirming Covenant of the United Church of Christ, the ONA Coalition is providing these seminars. The webinars will be available free to our entire congregation due to the Church purchasing a group pass.

Contact Sara J. Little at sarajlittle@me.com with any questions and for your free link.

The Webinars will be on the following **Thursdays** from **7 to 8:30 p.m.** and include:

WEBINARS

- February 4, 2021: ONA 101 – Explaining what ONA is
- February 11, 2021: ONA and the Bible
- February 18, 2021: 1-to-1 Conversations about ONA
- February 25, 2021: Beyond Binary
- March 4, 2021: Gender and the Bible
- March 11, 2021: Transgender 201
- March 18, 2021: Bi 101 – Bisexuality/Pansexuality
- March 25, 2021: ONA 201



For more information only: <https://openandaffirming.org/ona-webinars/>

February
BIRTHDAYS

Anniversaries
to Celebrate



2/1	Beverly Carrington	2/14	Laura VanArsdall
2/2	Roger Morris	2/16	Garvey McFarlane
	Joanne Warman	2/18	Harold Kamm
2/3	Bud Rives III	2/19	Rick McDaniel
	Richard Strong	2/20	Karen Abel
2/4	Marilyn Brandt		Cathy Drennen
	Natasha Bryant		Marlene Goldberger
	Dale Woodling		Elaine Hevrdejs
2/5	Sarah Melcher	2/23	Barbara Smith-Bacon
2/6	Ann Spencer		Jan Wood
2/7	Kyle Kuhn	2/24	Warren Bacon
	Nydia Muniz-Smith		Jean Simpson
2/9	Robert Phelps	2/26	Lois Watson
2/10	Diana Cubberly	2/27	Nathan Richards
	Carole Patterson	2/28	Connie Schaefer
2/12	Barbara Yocum		

Happy Anniversary to You . . .

- 2/1 Barbara Shaver & Sara Little
- 2/2 Jeanne & Gary Woning
- 2/16 Dawn & Mark Swain



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC CHURCH
 1031 Euclid Ave
 Sarasota, FL 34237
www.uccsarasota.com



The 2021 Flower Chart is NOW ready for YOU! Do you have a special occasion coming up this year? Would you like to celebrate on an upcoming Sunday service? Each Sunday, there is an opportunity for two

bouquets. **The cost is \$40 per bouquet, payable to the church.** Please sign up for a Sunday by emailing **Bobbi** at admin@uccsarasota.com We are grateful for the fresh flowers every Sunday that bring the beauty of God's creation into our worship space.

STAFF

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

OFFICERS AND VOLUNTEERS

Moderator..... Carol Fields
 Vice Moderator Jim Butterworth
 Past Moderator Warren Bacon
 Co-treasurers... Robin Reich & Michael Johnston
 Pastor Emeritus..... Dr. John Syster
 Contributing Photographer Susan Moore
 On-line Newsletter ... Carol McCloud, Wes Curry

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 a.m. and the service is posted to our website for streaming by 1 p.m. each Sunday afternoon.

