

## First Congregational UCC

During March there are TWO amazing opportunities for YOU, both of which are part of our unfolding **Oasis Ministry for Reflection and Renewal**:

*Breathe*

First, we are moving our **Thursday prayer service** from **Facebook to Zoom** beginning **March 4<sup>th</sup> at 1 pm.** This will allow the service to be more interactive. You can share your prayer concerns. Plus, Greg and I will be able to see you. We will record the session and post to Facebook, Youtube, and our website.

**March 4:** Learning to Fall

**March 11:** Learning to Walk in the Darkness

**March 18:** Telling Your Story

**March 25:** Telling Our Story

Second, **Balanced Body & Mind Blueprint ~ Tuesdays (March 2, 9, 23, and 30) at 4:15 on Zoom**, we have partnered with health and life coach **Meghan Jones** to offer a class on nutrition, exercise, and mindfulness. Many of us have been blessed by Meghan's violin playing in church, most recently on Christmas Eve. Meghan is also a certified Integrative Nutrition Health Coach and Personal Trainer. She brings amazing insights and will help all of us during Lent to bring together mind, body, and soul. **Space for this class is limited to 10 people.**

To sign up for either – or BOTH – Oasis opportunities, please email Pastor Wes.

### 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.**

**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*



### March Hours

**Pastor Wes:**

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

**Bobbi:**

*Wednesdays: 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m.*

**Mark:**

*Mon. – Fri.: 7 a.m.-3 p.m.*

**Greg:**

*Tues. – Fri.: various hours*



**Maundy Thursday ~ April 1**  
**Join us for a Zoom Service**

**at 7 p.m.** as we center our hearts and open our lives to the Last Supper. This is a chance to open your heart to the part of Jesus' story and YOUR story where the shadows of life loom large. For the Zoom link, please email Pastor Wes.

**Good Friday ~ April 2**  
**Two services, at noon in the Garden of the Cross and 7**

**p.m. on Zoom**, as we open our hearts to our God who suffers and struggles. We will open our lives to the parts of our story where there is brokenness and pain.

*All are welcome to participate in these services.*

## Amazing Opportunities in March

- ❖ **Thursday Service (March 4, 11, 18, 25)** at **1 p.m.** on Zoom we will begin a series entitled, "Breathe," centering our thoughts and opening our hearts to God's presence. *Please see description and themes on page 1.*
- ❖ **Tuesday (March 2, 9, 23, 30)** at **4:15 p.m.** on Zoom, Healthy Living with **Meghan Jones.**
- ❖ **Wednesday (March 3, 10, 17, 24) Sacred Conversations on Race** at **3 p.m.** on Zoom. During March we will be watching parts of the PBS series, "The Black Church: This is Our Story, This is Our Song," hosted by Henry Louis Gates Jr. Please email Pastor Wes for the Zoom link and to learn more about the importance of the church within the African-American community.

## 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:

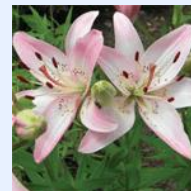
Sara: [sarajlittle@me.com](mailto:sarajlittle@me.com) or  
Barbara: [barbarashaver@me.com](mailto:barbarashaver@me.com)

**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 to follow):  
<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., March 16** ~ Memorial Drive: A Daughter's Memoir by Natasha Trethewey. We welcome new members to join the fun conversation! Contact Nancy McElroy: [fnmcelroy@gmail.com](mailto:fnmcelroy@gmail.com) for more information.



**Easter Lilies**

**\$10 each**

*Please Email Pastor Wes with your order and dedication requests by March 15.*



**Creation Justice:** Our church recently adopted our Creation Justice Covenant, so that we may now apply to the UCC for formal designation as FCUCC a Creation Justice congregation. Theologically, a covenant is a relationship with God. Among the agreed upon statements in this approved covenant we "... 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."

**Sacred Conversations on Race:** Though we have a racial justice statement, we are seeking to move that statement to a covenant as well. Much has been gained from the ongoing Sacred Conversations on Race. But to move forward with our commitment and covenant with God, it is time for dialogue and discussion of our racial justice statement. To accomplish this, the Peace & Justice Network intends to form volunteer two-person teams from those who have participated in Sacred Conversations to reach out to every church team for their input and discussion. Stay tuned for updates on this important initiative to be the church for all.



**Open and Affirming:** And while our church has been open and affirming for 20 years, our **Collage** is hitting the "refresh" button to include in its statement the ONA terms (Open and Affirming).

Please look for ways to participate in both important discussions. Contact Sarah Melcher with any questions.

**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](mailto:sarajlittle@me.com) with any questions and for your free link.**

**Webinars: (Thursdays from 7 to 8:30 p.m.)**

- 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/>



**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 **adult civil citations**.

Please join us on **March 29, 2021 @ 6:30 p.m. on Zoom**. As a leader in the SURE organization, our church has committed to bring 200 people to this important event. Together with 24 member congregations, our elected officials will be asked to support the adult civil citation program that will ensure non-violent, adult misdemeanors do not become a part of a permanent record impacting future opportunities for jobs/housing and instead provide services/treatment as necessary. **SURE** is hoping 1,000 attendees 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 by attending this Zoom. **Together, we can make a difference!** Zoom link will be made available closer to March 29. Questions: Gib Mitchell 941-374-3069; Jeannie Mitchell 941-724-0074, [gejmitchell@comcast.net](mailto:gejmitchell@comcast.net).

## Green Team News: March 22 – World Water Day

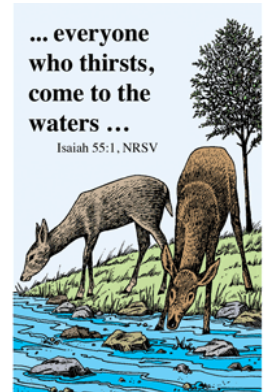
Join the Green Team in observation of this day! <https://www.worldwaterday.org/>



Water connects all of us. The slow drip from a stalactite, the burbling of a garden fountain and the rush of water from a spillway remind us of the many ways water is present in our lives. Roaring surf, whitewater rapids and slowly flowing muddy rivers provide recreation and vital transportation.

Scripture tells us that water intertwines throughout human history and reminds us of our obligation to respect and use its gifts wisely. Stories of the Creation in Genesis, and stories of Nash and Moses show God's love for God's people. Our traditions of baptism symbolize the cleansing power of this precious resource.

Over the years, people in industrial societies have failed to respect and safeguard the waters of the earth. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century people began to realize the need for protection of our most vital resource. Treaties and legislation were enacted to prevent large scale pollution. But many of us are clueless as to how our everyday living habits affect our most precious gift—clean water. Here are some simple practice steps each of us can take.



### USE LESS

- Make sure there are no leaks in your residential plumbing systems.
- When possible, replace faucets, showerheads and toilets with low-flow fixtures.
- Use your dishwasher. (5 gallons vs. 27 gallons per load)

These simple steps will help the earth and save you money in the process. Did you know that many municipal utility companies calculate your sewage disposal fee based on your monthly water intake?

Runoff through the storm sewer systems contributes to algae blooms which kill fish and other marine life, not to mention tourism.



- Don't water your garden or landscape plants unless absolutely necessary.
- Replace lawns with native vegetation.
- Use reclaimed water or rainwater for outdoor irrigation where available.
- Fertilizer use is prohibited in our part of Florida from June 1 to September 30 to prevent runoff.

These simple changes in your everyday living will contribute to the health of coastal and inland waters.



**Community Meals:** Help us celebrate our 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of providing a monthly community meal at St. Paul Lutheran Church. Our meal is cooked by Sandy Smith with home-baked cookies from 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 **help in preparing our take-out meal**. Please join us on **March 23 from 4 – 6 p.m.** Volunteer and/or inquire for more details--Carol Hagglund at [carolhagglund@gmail.com](mailto:carolhagglund@gmail.com).



## PROJECT 180 PREPARES FOR STRONG VOICES STRONG SUBJECTS LECTURE SERIES' EIGHTH SEASON

Tickets now available for Project 180's Annual Lecture Series in  
March, April, and May

In partnership with The Boxer Diversity Initiative, Project 180 presents its eighth season of the nation's only annual lecture series dedicated to prisoner reentry topics. The 2021 season addresses ***The Intersection of Trauma, Addiction, and Incarceration: Implications for Mental Health and Well-Being.***

The Strong Voices Lecture Series provides meaningful public education about prisoner reentry issues and features nationally recognized scholars, industry experts, community leaders, and those impacted by incarceration and reentry.

Strong Voices is an integral part of Project 180's Mission to reintegrate formerly incarcerated citizens into community life and serves as one of the organization's major fundraisers to provide stable housing, educational programs, and resources to currently and formerly incarcerated individuals.

Project 180 will host the three-part lecture series on ZOOM with opportunities for guests to engage with Project 180 residents in breakout rooms. All lectures begin at 11:30 a.m. and end at 1:00 p.m.

### **Event Topic: Trauma and Incarceration**

**When:** Friday, March 5, 2021

**Featuring:** *Hank J. Brightman's unique background and inquisitive mind make him one of the most fascinating speakers in the field. Dr. Brightman is a criminologist, psychotherapist, research professor at the US Naval War College, certified clinical trauma professional in private practice, and graduate of the Assisi Institute's Archetypal Pattern Analyst Program. Introduction by Sheriff Kurt Hoffman.*

### **Event Topic: The Intersection of Trauma, Addiction, and Incarceration**

**When:** Friday, April 2, 2020

**Featuring:** *John Annis, Senior Vice-President for Collaboration and Impact at the Charles & Margery Barancik Foundation, moderates a panel with local experts P.J. Brooks, Tom Knight, and Kristie Skoglund.*

### **Event Topic: In His Own Words**

**When:** Friday, May 7, 2021

**Featuring:** *Jody Feinroth, formerly incarcerated citizen, shares the ways in which trauma, addiction, and incarceration have affected his life journey.*



Tickets may be secured on the Project 180 website at  
[www.project180reentry.org/lecture-series/](http://www.project180reentry.org/lecture-series/)

**About Project 180:** With office space on our church campus, Project 180 seeks to reduce recidivism by providing workforce education and financial literacy classes for inmates; an annual reentry lecture series for the public; information and referrals for formerly incarcerated individuals seeking housing, programs, and employment; and a comprehensive, whole-life residential program for men in recovery.



## Birthdays

3/1	Bonnie Richards Jack Stewart	3/18	Don Laing Susan Raines
3/2	Nancy Alger Jeffrey Carlson Judy Jones Rachel Taylor	3/19	Pat Myers
3/3	Wes Bixby	3/20	Maxine Althouse Mercedes Traba
3/5	Sharon Quimby	3/21	Sydney Starcher
3/6	Carol Rescigno	3/23	Dannie Vance Gwen West
3/7	Kelly Beachler Toska Strong	3/24	Page McCloud Becky Tavares
3/8	Wick West	3/25	Jennifer Joseph
3/9	Barbara Ralph	3/26	Judith Plerhoples
3/10	Lucy Hedrick Geraldine Mattson	3/28	Harold Kuhn
3/11	Audrey Shutters Lori White	3/29	Rowena Janssens Carol Jeanine Johnston Roberta Miller
3/13	Charles Hamilton	3/30	Pauline Geary Katherine G. Stewart
3/14	Bob Millar		Joseph Yocum
3/16	Michael Cross	3/31	Michael Johnston

## THANKS *from the* HEART

*I would like to take this opportunity to **thank** my church family for all the prayers, words of comfort, cards and all the expressions of care and support I received since Russell's illness and eventual passing. It has helped me more than you know to be a part of a faith community such as we have here at First UCC. I hope you all know how much I have appreciated and leaned on your love.*

*Blessings and love to all,*

*RuthAnn Waid*



*Anniversary  
Celebration*

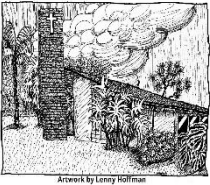
### Happy Anniversary to You . . .

3/4	Barney & Nancy Kavanagh
3/19	Stephen & Christine Hoffman
3/21	Patricia & Bonnie Lipton
3/25	Bruce & Marcia Knight



*In  
Memory  
Of*

*Jennifer  
Greenlaw*



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC CHURCH  
 1031 Euclid Ave  
 Sarasota, FL 34237  
[www.uccsarasota.com](http://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](mailto: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 Manager .....Mark Swain  
 Media Specialist.....Douglas Kingsley  
 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](mailto:office@uccsarasota.com); Website: [www.uccsarasota.com](http://www.uccsarasota.com)

**We are worshiping 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.**

