



First Congregational UCC



On September 9, 2001, I was ordained as a minister in the United Church of Christ at Urbandale UCC in Iowa. It was a day of celebration, a day of new beginnings, and a day of blessings beyond words. You know well that two days later the world forever changed with 9/11. Gina and I moved to New Hampshire in the days following the attack. In those September days twenty years ago, it felt like life had forever

changed. In **these** September days of 2021, I feel like life continues to forever change. The church is changing with COVID, addressing the continued discrimination that hurts so many of our African American and LGBTQ brothers and sisters; declining church attendance and increased use of technology. **There are so many opportunities and obstacles.**

Even after twenty years of experiences and encounters; over one thousand sermons preached; countless funerals and weddings; and I don't want to even think about meetings attended—I **still feel like a beginner in many ways. It is a new world that calls forth curiosity and courage; fierce faithfulness; and a reliance on God's grace.**

With my 20th anniversary of ordination and the changing world, my heart tells me it is a good time to focus on "Calling" stories in the Bible. We are going to listen to the calling of Moses, Jeremiah, Jonah, Noah, Samuel, Hannah, Mary, and others in the coming weeks/months.

I want us to let these stories connect to our story and the bigger story of God's still persistent prayerful plea to be collaborators with the Holy. In August, we celebrated the foundational faith claim that YOU are created in God's image with gifts. You can explore your gifts by asking:

1. Where do you feel most alive?
2. Where do you lose track of time?
3. Where do you feel a nudge/urge/energy to learn or explore more?

In the coming months, we will continue to tend the seeds planted in the sermon from August 15 where the questions above were offered. **If this is a topic YOU would like to explore more, I warmly**

Office Hours

Pastor Wes:

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

Terri Chapman:

Mon. & Thurs.: 10:00 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Mark:

Mon. - Fri.: 7 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Greg:

Tues. - Fri.: various hours



- **Outdoor worship ~ 9 a.m.** in the Oasis Center. **Masks are encouraged.**
- **On-line worship ~ 10:55 a.m.** Livestream on Facebook, YouTube and our website.
- **In-person, in-the-sanctuary with masks, social distancing.**
- **Zoom Coffee Hour at noon** will return in September!

welcome you to participate in Bible Study on Tuesdays at 6:30 p.m. on Zoom and Wednesdays at 11 a.m. in the Oasis Center. As we explore the theme of "Calling" and how that thread interacts with your life, we will also turn to the wisdom of **Parker Palmer, Alexandra Elle, and the VIA inventory.**

It is my prayer in this season you will sense God's presence moving in your midst in amazing ways—the Spirit stretching you—and the love of each other cheering you on to be the YOU God is still crafting/creating you to be. I believe in order for God to work with us, we need to show up. I pray in worship and small groups we will find spaces/places to do this.

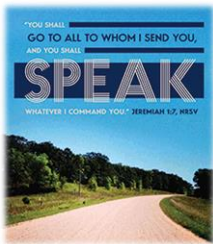
With great love to you all ~ Wes

Worship in September

With the exception of September 5, we continue to worship at 9 a.m. in the Oasis Center, at 10:55 a.m. in-person in the sanctuary, and at 10:55 a.m. online (Facebook, YouTube, Website)

September 5 ~ ONE Service only at 11 a.m. in-person or on-line. Members of our **Worship Team** will present Langston Hughes' poem, *Freedom's Plow*. Dr. Marsha Kindall-Smith will share her talents on the piano and singing. Pastor Wes will lead **Holy Communion** and Greg Chestnut will offer a special prelude that day. Let us join together in worshipping God!

September 12 ~ We begin a sermon series on "Calling" (see Pastor's Article) by focusing on God's call to Moses in Exodus 3.



September 19 ~ We continue the sermon series on "Calling" focusing on Jeremiah 1:4-10—we will tie this to our calling as a church in living and becoming a Racial Justice congregation alongside our covenants for Open and Affirming as well as Creation Justice.

September 26 ~ We will explore the "Calling" story of Jonah Chapter 1 focusing on what are we running from and what are we running toward?



October 3 ~ World Communion Sunday at all services! We will continue the "Calling" sermon series by listening to the call of Noah—God's nudge to do hard things.

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. ~ IN-PERSON in the Oasis Center to discuss the Bible passage for the upcoming Sunday.

Wednesday @ 3 p.m. ~ Sacred Conversations on Race (SCOR)

***Zoom links available through Pastor Wes.**

Peace and Justice Network News

Creation Justice Meditation

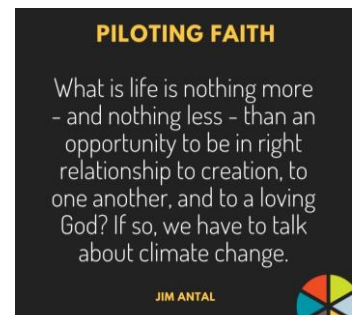


Many years ago, a brave and prophetic colleague/friend named [Jim Antal](#) began sounding the alarm of climate change. I remember him saying to me, "***Cameron, if faith leaders don't start speaking about the damage we are causing our planet, then we will reach a point when all we will ever talk about is grief.***" I thought I understood what he was saying. I realize now that I had no idea.

Yesterday the U.N. climate panel released its most comprehensive assessment of climate change yet. Calling the report "**Code Red for Humanity,**" researchers and scientists are clear: we are in trouble. They wrote, "*Many changes due to past and future greenhouse gas emissions are irreversible for centuries to millennia, especially changes in the ocean, ice sheets and global sea level.*" While we must stay on course to lower our CO2 levels and other pollutants, we must also acknowledge that we have passed a point of no return. We have fundamentally changed the quality of life for every living creature on earth.

Here are the highlights:

1. Humans are to blame for the warming of the planet. No debate.
2. Temperatures are going to continue to rise.
3. The weather is becoming more extreme.
4. The icecaps are disappearing. Arctic summers could be free of snow.
5. Seas are rising, and nothing we do will stop them.



They then highlight several possible futures for the world, none of which are ones we wish for our grandchildren. After reading the report's summary (the actual report is over 3,000 pages long), I went outside to sit by the trees at the shoreline of our lake. It was a beautiful day. The fish were jumping. The breeze was cool on my face. The ducks swam over to offer their greeting.

"*I'm so sorry,*" I whispered to all of them "*I'm so heartbreakingly sorry for the harm we have caused you.*" Then I remembered Jim's words. Grief. We will speak of unimaginable grief.

In his book ***Climate Church, Climate World***, Antal writes, "*Only by fully grieving all that we have lost can we fully enter into the new tomorrow that God is preparing. We have so much to mourn: personal grief over loved ones lost and homes destroyed; ubiquitous grief over the long emergency that has straight-jacketed our lives; and anticipatory grief over the catastrophe that we are handing over to our children. . . . We need to acknowledge our grief over the ongoing ruination of Creation. Only by doing so can we be receptive to a message of hope.*"

He goes on: "*Hope is the most important contribution people of faith can and must make as humanity confronts the climate crisis. To become people of hope we must be willing to stare reality in the face.*"

So, we sit with grief in these days. We also act with hope. The story of faith is one of life, death and life again. Hope, despair, hope again. But that hope is born of leadership and action. We must all do what we can to protect our little corners of the world. Perhaps with enough of us loving the planet back to health, we can literally save the world.

We are in this together,

Rev. Cameron Trimble, Author of [Piloting Church: Helping Your Congregation Take Flight](#)

Sacred Conversations on Race

We continue our Sacred Conversations on Race on Wednesdays at 3 p.m. We will discuss *Neutral Ground* on September 1 and September 8. You are welcome to join us at any time; just ask for the Zoom link. There is much to be learned from this time of sharing.

First UCC Women



SAVE THE DATES! The First Congregational Women's Association is prayerfully planning to reconvene on the first Tuesday of every month in October, November, and December this fall. We gather at 11:30 a.m., have a simple sandwich/salad lunch, and enjoy a special program.

October 5:

Pastor Wes Bixby will share slides of God moments and a sneak peek at his upcoming 52-Week Devotionals for Husbands coming out in December.

November 2:

A speaker from C. I. W. (the Coalition of Immokalee Workers) will share their successes and challenges.

December 7:

We will prepare our traditional "Shoebboxes for (shut-in) Seniors." It is not too early to be picking up items for men and women – candles, sox, postage stamps, greeting cards, chap sticks, pens, moisturizer, small books of devotions, etc.

Community Meal – September 28



We continue our monthly ministry of serving and providing a hot, nutritious and balanced community meal at St. Paul Lutheran Church. While Sandy Smith cooks our meal to share, **we need your home-baked 9x13 cakes** for the dessert. Because we are back to in-person, we **need help with setting up and serving the meal.**

Dinner will be served in St. Paul's Fellowship Hall from 4 – 6:30 p.m. on **Tuesday, September 28.** We will wear masks and we will be careful.

What to expect: *As our guests arrive, we are able to interact and provide appetizers and coffee. Before the meal begins, we offer a blessing and then our serving line begins. Following the meal, dessert of cake and ice cream (a favorite) is served. And, of course, there is cleanup and setup. If you can help in any way, please let me know. Your offerings of food and fellowship to those in need is very much appreciated.*



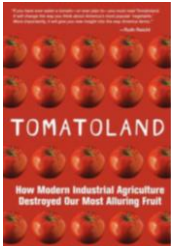
Volunteer and/or inquire for more details: Carol Hagglund at carolhagglund@gmail.com.

Staffing Team Update



The Staffing Team is delighted to welcome **Pam Hendrickson** as our new bookkeeper!! Pam has been a member of the church for over 30 years. In her professional life Pam works as the VP of Accounting Operations for a local property management company. Pam has worked as our collector/counter in the past and we are DELIGHTED that Pam is returning to our staff. A heartfelt and warm welcome to Pam!!

Ready Readers Resumes



Ready Readers will resume meeting in person in September and new readers are welcome. The first meeting will be on **Tuesday, September 14, at noon in Syster Hall.** *(Please note the date change for this meeting.)*

We will be discussing ***Tomatoland* by Barry Estabrook.** This book is based on James Beard's award-winning article, "The Price of Tomatoes," and is the story of how modern industrial agriculture destroyed our most alluring fruit.

For more information, please contact Sandy Smith (sandysmithvi@gmail.com or 340-227-5121.)

Kings And Queens Bridge

Kings and Queens Bridge will resume in October, Covid restrictions permitting. We welcome new players who are interested in playing contract bridge for fun. We usually play the second Monday of each month (October – July) from 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. in Room 9 of the Education Building.



Please contact Ethel Rudy at 941-727-0122 or email Ethel at ethelhr@verizon.net whether you are a new or returning player.

Stitches of Love & Friendship



Greetings to all the faithful knitters. I would like to get a box off to our friends in South Dakota in **early October** in preparation for winter. If you have items to contribute to this worthy cause, please bring them to the church and include your name with your items.

If you are not familiar with our program, we knit items such as hats, scarves, mittens and anything else you like to make to be shared primarily with the **children of the reservations and Native Americans of South Dakota.** We knit (or crochet) in our homes, on our travels or wherever you feel inspired. Should you need patterns, needles or yarn, I have them. Thank you for your help with this project.—*Ethel Rudy*

Artful Prayer

Artful Prayer returns in October! This is a wonderful opportunity to learn new ways to express your spirit with prayer. No art experience required! These will be Zoom sessions making it easy to participate from wherever you are.

Mark your calendars now for the second Thursday of each month:

October 14 ~ November 11 ~ December 9 ~ January 13



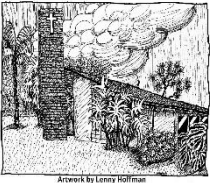
September Birthdays



September Anniversaries



9/1	Robert Bryant	9/18	Lavilla Watson		
9/2	Christy Boyer Dale Moore	9/19	Joann Evans Nancy Kavanagh		
9/3	Linda Short	9/20	Timothy Christensen Eric Kuhn Madge Potts-Williams	9/2	Page & Carol McCloud
9/4	Joyce Harmon Kit Leggett	9/21	Bonnie Lipton	9/2	Bob & Sandy Phelps
9/5	Barbara Mask Charles Williams	9/23	Lucy Tobias	9/5	John & Sherry Mange
9/6	Ellen Marsey	9/24	Joslyn Kirkegaard	9/7	Warren Bacon & Barbara Smith-Bacon
9/7	James Althouse	9/25	Marcia Knight Nancy McElroy	9/7	Donald & Dorothy Dumford
9/8	Richard Miller Carmen Ramsey	9/26	Suzanne Horner Judith Marville	9/8	Woody Fletcher & Jennifer Walker
9/9	Gary Larson	9/27	Susan Pallatto	9/15	Lee & Bettye Smith
9/12	Guy Spencer Dr. June Wolgemuth	9/28	Fred Brockmann Jennifer Mitchell Connie Toops	9/20	Richard & Toska Strong
9/13	Deborah Woods	9/29		9/27	Lloyd & Melanie Kalisak
9/14	Sharon Rump Gerald Wunning	9/30	Carrie Metzger	9/29	Doug & Julie Chismar
9/16	Evelyn Crooks Joy Sick			9/30	Roberta & Becky Mae Miller



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC CHURCH
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 Sarasota, FL 34237
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Altar Flowers

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 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
 Campus ManagerMark Swain
 Media Specialist.....Douglas Kingsley
 Office AdministratorTerri Chapman
 Bookkeeper.....Pam Hendrickson
 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.

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