

2021

ANNUAL REPORT



First Congregational United Church of Christ of Sarasota, Inc.

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First Congregational United Church of Christ – Sarasota

Annual Meeting: January 30, 2022 – 12:15 p.m. Sanctuary/YouTube/Facebook

Call to Order	Carol Fields, Moderator
Opening Prayer	Jim Butterworth, Vice Moderator
Confirmation of a Quorum	Janet Tipton, Parliamentarian
2020 Annual Report	
Review & Approval of 2021 Annual Meeting Minutes	Lynne Woodman, Secretary
Approval of Team Annual Reports & Membership Report	Carol Fields
Nominations Committee Report	Carol Fields
· Nomination & Election of Team Members · Nomination & Election of Officers	
Financial Reports	
· Endowment Fund	Rick McDaniel, Chair, Endowment
· 2021 Balance Sheet	Robin Reich & Michael Johnston, Treasurer
· 2022 Budget	Jerry Long, Chair Finance, Budget, & Stewardship
Covenant Statement to Become a Racial Justice Church	Warren Bacon & Rev. Ellen Marsey
Recognition of Immediate Past Moderator, Warren Bacon	Carol Fields & Jim Butterworth
Passing of Gavel	Carol Fields & Jim Butterworth
Motion to Adjourn	Jim Butterworth
Closing Prayer	Pastor Wes

Minutes of the 2021 Annual Meeting
First Congregational United Church of Christ of Sarasota
January 24, 2021 via Zoom

Moderator Warren Bacon called the meeting to order at 12:03. Vice Moderator Carol Fields offered the opening prayer.

Parliamentarian Janet Tipton confirmed a quorum of more than 45 attendees.

Approval of reports

The moderator requested approval of the annual report, team reports, the moderators' report and the Green Team report. Sara Little moved to approve; Susan Moore seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of 2020 annual meeting minutes

Gib Mitchell moved to approve the minutes of the 2020 annual meeting; Nancy Morris seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of nominations

Two nomination lists were presented: an updated list of the 2021 teams and their members, and the slate of 2021 officers. Gordon Quimby moved to approve the teams list; Sarah Melcher seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Kristi Weiland moved and Jane Hunder seconded approval of the slate of officers:

Moderator Carol Fields

Vice-Moderator and Corporate Secretary Jim Butterworth

Immediate Past Moderator Warren Bacon

Treasurers Robin Reich, Michael Johnson

Recording Secretary Lynne Woodman

At Large Felix McElroy, Lois Wilkins

The motion passed unanimously.

Financial reports

Cindy Woodling presented a report on the endowment and its distributions. Sarah Melcher moved and Gordon Quimby seconded a motion to approve, which passed unanimously.

Judy Black presented the budget report and the proposed 2021 budget. Felix McElroy moved and Pamela Gore-Meade seconded a motion to approve, which passed unanimously.

Note: financial reports are available on the church website

Approval of Creation Justice covenant

Barbara Smith-Bacon explained that the Council adopted this covenant at its May 2020 meeting in order for FCUCC to formally become a Creation Justice church, a specific UCC designation. Sarah Melcher noted that the covenant is grounded in our theology, moves us toward greater environmental responsibility, spotlights best environmental practices and impacts, and signals

our care for the earth to younger generations. Evelyn Crooks moved ratification of the covenant, Janet Tipton seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Warren Bacon noted that many of the activities in the covenant are things the church has already been doing.

The moderator recognized immediate past moderator Lori White for her service during the past three years, and rounds of applause were made. He also shared a photo of the gift that will be delivered to her as thanks for all her work.

Warren Bacon then passed the gavel (virtually) to the new moderator, Carol Fields.

Gordon Quimby moved to adjourn the meeting; Gib Mitchell seconded. After adjournment, the gathering concluded with a prayer offered by Pastor Wes Bixby.

Respectfully submitted,
Lynne Woodman for Kristi Weiland

Necrology 2021

Boyd Abeli*

Jennifer Greenlaw

Virginia McIntire*

Charlie Pennella

Richard Taylor*

Lois Voltz*

Eleanor Weiss*

(* indicates member of First Congregational UCC)

Pat Barkhuff*

Joyce Harmon*

Carole Sue Metcalf*

Cherie Stiefvater*

Michael Timmons

Russell Waid*

Dr. Wick West*

Walter Beckstrom*

Judith Merrill*

Steven Moore*

Gail Taylor*

Jacqueline Hanna Tutt*

Peggy Wallace*

2021 Membership Report

Due to COVID, no membership classes were held in 2021. We are grateful to welcome 4 new members to our church. Also, with office staff transitions, we do we need complete a membership review in the coming year.

Membership Beginning January 1, 2021	424
New Full Members	4
Associate to Full Membership	0
New Associate Membership	0
Total New Members	4
Members leaving the church by	
Letter of transfer	0
Removed from Rolls (full)	13
Removed from Rolls (associate)	0
Associate to Full Membership	0
Deceased Full/Associate Members	20
Inactive	0
Total Removals	33
Total Membership year ending 2021	395

Nominating Committee Report

Moderator: Jim Butterworth
Vice-Moderator: Nancy Morris
Immediate Past Moderator: Carol Fields
Secretary: Lynne Woodman
Co-Treasurers: Robin Reich & Michael Johnston

Members at Large

Felix McElroy
Lois Wilkins

Budget, Finance, & Stewardship

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

Celebrating Worship

Evelyn Crooks
Pauline Geary
Harold Mezile
Peggye Mezile
Gib Mitchell
Jeannie Mitchell
Susan Moore
Lois Watson
John Ristow

Facilities & Grounds

Dave Abel
Chris Cooper
Don Hoy
David Kerrigan
Rich Rescigno
Bud Rives

Fellowship & Special Events

Sandy Smith (Chair)
Monica Geary
Mary Kukainis
Nancy Morris
Barbara Ralph

Growing & Caring

Nancy Arnzen
Kathy Combs
Priscilla Crumel
Carol Hagglund
Carol McCloud
Carol Seltzer
Lay Visitation Ministry Team representative

Mission Team

Jan Andersen
Kate Eaton
Jan Kamm
Joy Kuhn
Gretchen Friend Jones
Dotty Reed

Music & Fine Arts Team

Ray Baker
Lucy Hedrick
Donna Booth
Jim Hunder
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

Oasis Center/Spiritual Education & Growth

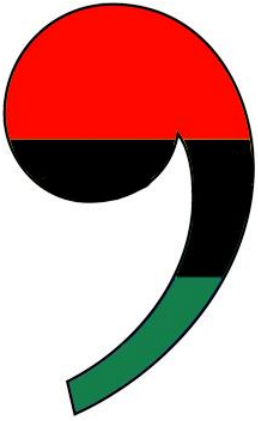
Jim Butterworth
Craig Collemer
Jim Crumel
Toska Strong
Lynne Woodman
Cindy Woodling
Greg Chestnut (ex-officio)
Pastor Wes (ex-officio)

Staffing Team

Dennis Crooks
Dick Miller (Chair)
Linda Pursley

Endowment

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



Dear members of First Congregational UCC of Sarasota:

Attached is the final version of the Racial Justice covenant our church will vote to adopt at the annual meeting on January 30. This document has been previously approved by the Church Council.

Some of you have asked: “We already have a Racial Justice statement. Why do we need a Racial Justice covenant?”

A covenant is deeper and more binding than a statement. It is a promise we make to God, to one another and to ourselves to pursue justice. We already have two covenants, a Creation Justice covenant and an Open and Affirming covenant. Each has an ongoing action plan to guide us in carrying out that commitment, and the Racial Justice covenant will have an action plan as well.

In proposing this covenant, we are joining with churches not only throughout the UCC, but also from multiple other denominations. Together, we are uniting to speak out against, and act in opposition to, racial injustice wherever and whenever it is found.

If you have any questions about this covenant, please contact one of the Racial Justice Mission Group co-chairs, Warren Bacon or Ellen Marsey.

Thank you for your prayerful vote.

The Racial Justice Mission Group

PROPOSED RACIAL JUSTICE COVENANT

First Congregational United Church of Christ (FCUCC)

Sarasota, Florida

November, 2021

We of the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Sarasota, Florida, by vote of our Church Council and congregation, commit to God and one another our covenant with our sisters and brothers of color.

As we celebrate the diversity of the people of God, we commit to remain a congregation that welcomes all our brothers and sisters with love and support. We will be a place in which we all can be fully ourselves and where our full selves are embraced. We will serve as a refuge from hurtful words and harmful actions too often directed against others.

First Congregational United Church of Christ of Sarasota has a history of embracing diversity and racial equity. We have sought and still seek to confront racism and the oppression of all

persons of color. We strive to model the love and grace of Jesus as He reached out to all, especially those on the margins.

We reaffirm our Christian call to understanding and unity through discussion, research and the sharing of personal witness to identify systemic racism in all its forms.

We lament past and current racial injustice conditions, and commit to actionable steps of hard listening and anti-racist engagement by our ministers, church officers, church community and as individual participants in our local and greater community. These steps will build on our current practices of intentionally selecting diverse leadership, and promoting programs and community activities that reflect our stance on diversity and inclusion.

We reaffirm our commitment to policies of equity and steps to dismantle harmful myths, actions, rules and laws. We also commit to celebrating different cultures and voices, both in worship and in our community.

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.... Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8 (New Revised Standard Version)

This covenant statement is hereby adopted this XX day of XXXX, year, by unanimous vote of our Church Council and the vote of our congregation.

Pastor's Annual Report 2021

May God's love enfold and hold you as we begin our ninth year together. I look back over the last eight years at the celebrations where joy has filled our hearts, changes we have faced together, and challenges where we've leaned on God's strength. What has stayed consistent through it all is God's love at our church. It is easier to preach about God's eternal affection and affirmation when I encounter such sacredness in YOU day after day. What has also stayed consistent is worship, caring for each other, and reaching out beyond our walls. In the face of all that is shifting and pivoting, your persistence and presence makes a difference.

It is important to acknowledge that 2021 was a year of transitions. We welcomed Douglas Kingsley as our Media Specialist; we said, "Good-bye" to Bobbi Miller (office administrator) and Bill Lewis (bookkeeper); we welcomed Pam Hendrickson as bookkeeper. We also welcomed Terri Chapman as temporary office administrator. As of January 2022, we said, "God's blessings" to Gordon Quimby (collector) and Terri Chapman. We are fortunate to have Sue Fields as our new collector. We are searching for a new office administrator. This would be more than enough, but we also know COVID cause constant re-evaluation of how we gather. There is a grief that will take years for us to mourn and changes we do not even realize have occurred. We also face serious challenges to God's creation; equal rights for LGBTQ brothers and sisters; and heartbreaking, soul aching discrimination and racism. These three areas reflect two of our covenants on Creation Justice and Open & Affirming; and importantly what we will be voting on our Racial Justice covenant at our Annual Meeting at the end of January.

For me, these covenants are more than words on a page. They reflect who we have been, who we are, and who we pray we will be. Our church has cared for creation from the beginning with Green-Thumbers gathering every Saturday and the work we have done to create a campus as sacred ground inside and out. Last Annual Meeting we covenanted to be a Creation Justice Church and we need to live those words. One bold idea is to explore solar panels at our church. Since we live in the Sunshine State, such a move would help minimize our carbon footprint. I think about our church voting to becoming Open and Affirming over twenty years ago. We have lived this stance by showing up at PRIDE weekend and financially supporting local organizations working with LGBTQ. Our COLLAGE group is working on a special project sharing our history of inclusion over the years and will premier that this year. We will continue to stand up for equality. I am grateful for the diversity of races that call First Congregational UCC, "home" and the work that has been done to welcome people. At the same time, I know the work is not finished. Racism is often subtle and so often isn't recognized for the ways our words and actions hurt those who are not white. As a church we will continue to do what we can to live the truth that in Christ the dividing walls come tumbling down.

As we prayerfully live our Covenants, the words will take on life and breath in worship, fellowship, and service. We will continue to let these Covenants guide us in choosing Love Offering recipients at Easter and Christmas. Last year, Finance Team changed banks to PNC who more reflect our values of inclusion and diversity. We will continue to have Sacred

Conversations on Race and encourage everyone to attend COLLAGE (LGBTQ group) gatherings. We will continue to support Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity (SURE), Family Promise, and the monthly free community meal. Along the way, we will laugh, cry, love, and seek to be the body of Christ in these days. My heartfelt thanks to **Carol Fields, Jim Butterworth, and Warren Bacon** ~ your moderators! My deep gratitude to our staff: **Greg Chestnut, Mark Swain, Pam Hendrickson, Douglas Kingsley, Gordon Quimby, and Sue Fields**. Most of all, to **you**, dear brothers and sisters. We are who we are because of each of you. The church is always the culmination and combination of those who are showing up and opening up. The church is always the blending and bringing together of those who are present. **You are the church and I am blessed to be your pastor.**

With great love and God's blessing for the coming year ~~ Pastor Wes

Moderator Report 2021

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths” (Prov. 3:5-6).

Truly, God has directed our path this past year. God has provided ways in which we have been able to serve Him and our community during these challenging times. We have continued to provide meaningful worship, manage the business of church, and serve God's people and planet.

We began 2021 by making a Covenant to support Creation Justice and we begin this new year of 2022 by seeking approval to making a Covenant to support Racial Justice.

God is still speaking to us!

With the introduction of our new Technology Team, led by Jane Hunder, we have made great strides in getting our word out to the church through video livestreaming. We've invested in new equipment and employed Douglas Kingsley to manage our digital services. We have enhanced our services with the use of a new video monitor to display special image at the front of our sanctuary.

We have made great improvements in making the Oasis Center a beautiful and accessible place to expand the ways in which we offer worship and service. There is a real connection between our beautiful new space and the outdoors. From the heart of the Oasis Center you can hear the beating of drums, see the release of butterflies, gather on the Wendling patio and worship at the newly dedicated altar in honor of Mike White.

We celebrated coming back to in-person worship in October enhanced by the return of our choir and special musicians. Our numbers have grown and we celebrated Christmas Eve with over 200 worshippers!

We continue to beautify our grounds and celebrate with banners displaying our commitments. Look for our new Inclusion and Creation Justice banners.

We have been generous with our gifts to Easter and Christmas Love offerings, to the Salvation Army Angel Tree, and to support of students at Alta Vista School. We have supported the distribution of food and supplying meals for the community. We continue to promote activities which support our Open and Affirming Covenant and our Creation Justice Covenant.

We've gone through transitions in our staff this year and want to thank the continued amazing service of our Pastor Wes Bixby, our Minister of Music Greg Chestnut and our Campus Manager Mark Swain! We say "good-bye" to Bill Lewis (past bookkeeper), Bobbi Miller (past office manager), Gordon Quimby (past collector) and Terri Chapman (temporary office manager). Thank You! We welcome Pam Hendrickson (bookkeeper) Sue Fields (collector) and, Douglas Kingsley (media specialist).

We've managed our money well! Thanks to the dedicated time and service of our Treasurers Robin Reich, Mike Johnston and Finance Team chair Jerry Long along with all the members of the Finance Team, we are in a financially sound place. And, thanks to our Stewardship Team, the generosity of our congregation and the budget management of our Treasurers we have met our dream budget goals for 2022!

I am grateful to have served as your Moderator this past year. I owe my gratitude to Pastor Wes for his guidance and patience, Warren Bacon (past Moderator) for his leadership by example and encouragement, Jim Butterworth (new Moderator) for his willingness to serve and enthusiasm for the future and to Nancy Morris (new Vice Moderator) for her commitment to service and leadership in so many areas of our church! I am thankful to every Team that serves this church. Each of you is truly a servant of God. Thank you for accepting me. I am, in many ways, richer for the opportunity to serve.

In Christ's Love, Carol Fields

Celebrating Worship Report 2021

With Covid still a factor in our lives, during 2021 the Worship Team was charged with making a number of decisions related to the safety of our congregation. Among them were masks or no masks, singing or no singing; roping off pews or not; hymnals in the pews or piled in the back of the sanctuary; moving the 9 o'clock service to the Oasis Center/Wendling Terrace or remain outside at the labyrinth. Also included in the safety decisions was how to handle communion. Passing trays was not an option. Congregants were urged to bring their own items for communion but for those who didn't, we had to have an alternative. We began with the little plastic cups packaged with a wafer on top and then decided to add a cup with a grape (for the wine) and crackers.

We were faced with making decisions about the best way to make key holidays meaningful. For Holy Week Maundy Thursday and Good Friday were zoomed or live-streamed and were incredibly powerful. Easter Sunday was celebrated with an in-person and a livestreamed service complete with lilies and the singing of Lauren Patsos. For All Souls Day we voted to continue

the releasing of butterflies outside at the 9 o'clock service and the lighting of candles at the 11 o'clock. For Thanksgiving we supported the use of the brass at the 11:00. Our next holiday decision was related to Advent for which we selected a theme of Less is More. The poster and devotionals provided congregants with many meaningful activities, not just ones to be done individually but also in community with others. Advent decisions included Christmas Eve and how many services to hold. Ultimately, we agreed on a 5 o'clock outdoors, 8 o'clock in both in the sanctuary and livestreamed, and an 11 o'clock at which communion was served.

A focus of the Worship Team was to find ways to incorporate our covenants and the Racial Justice Statement into our worship. As a result, we supported both Coming Out Day and Pride month. In February we put on a performance of *Freedom's Plow* by Langston Hughes, accompanied by the singing of African American hymns. We ended the 2021 year with a performance of a poem by Maya Angelou, *Amazing Peace*, a poem urging peace and love among people of all beliefs and backgrounds. We are now working on plans for a service in the spring combining our Creation Justice Covenant and our focus on diversity.

The Worship Team is grateful to our Pastor, Wes Bixby, not only for his outstanding leadership and guidance of our team but also for his willingness, as a true Congregationalist, to listen to the variety of opinions reflecting the diversity within our congregation.

Facilities & Grounds Report 2021

The Facilities and Grounds Team was busy during the past year. The team members collaborated with Pastor Wes, our moderators, and our Finance Teams to plan our needs and services.

Beginning with the Air Conditioning units: All furnace filters were serviced and new air scrubbers were installed to improve air quality in the sanctuary. Installation was done by Wentzel Heating and Air Conditioning Company. Also, a new A/C unit was installed to cover the back of the sanctuary due to a worn out compressor and repairs that were needed.

Concerning the Oasis Center: The Wendling Terrace was designed and created with a new concrete deck and a new sidewalk to facilitate getting from the parking lot to the back of the building. Rocks were added to the front and the back of the building to create a clean appearance and reduce weeds. A new heavy sliding glass door was installed at the back of the Oasis Center. This allows Pastor Wes and Greg Chestnut to lead services to people sitting inside the building and outside on the terrace and grass areas. Also, new front doors were installed that have windows in them to allow those people entering and leaving the Oasis to have a clear view.

Concerning the Sanctuary and chapel: The damaged sanctuary glass was replaced. The stained glass windows and the plexiglass covering in the chapel were professionally cleaned by Dutchman. Chapel lighting systems were upgraded to LED lights. Most of the lights in and around the campus are being replaced with LED lights. The inner office, finance office and

workroom had new blinds installed by Bud Rives. The parking lots and driveway was seal coated this summer by ToriTom.

Our stormwater drainage system,(retention pond), behind the Oasis Center was inspected and recommendations were received. The skimmer on the concrete control structure was damaged and required repair. Bud Rives and Mark Swain handled this needed repair.

Concerning the campus area itself:

Our irrigation system had many issues that needed addressed. Rich Rescigno met with different irrigation companies to discuss what needed to be done. Accurate Irrigation Company was hired to examine and fix broken pipes and sprinkler heads, which were many. New sprinkler systems were added to the existing system to cover the Butterfly garden, Ellie Weiss Memorial Garden , the front of the church. New pipes were installed under the driveway to access the butterfly garden area. Rich R. also investigated different pest control services and a change was made to Fahey Pest Control. Tru Green was discontinued.

The picnic shelter and grill in the back of the campus was removed.

All areas of the campus were weeded and trimmed as needed by a host of volunteers who worked hard to rid the campus of weeds and overgrown shrubs etc... A new garden area was created and installed called the Ellie Weiss Memorial Garden. This is located behind the Oasis Center and adds beauty to the area. Another new garden area was installed in the front of the church to increase our curb appeal and create a more inviting place for people who may not be familiar with our church.

All of our large oak trees had many heavy large limbs hanging over the sanctuary, Syster Hall, and Oasis Center. Many of these limbs were cut and removed by Paradise Lawn and Tree Service. This increased the safety of the buildings and allowed much more light in and around the church.

These are the major highlights of the Facilities and Grounds Team this past year. Many thanks to all of our team members who all dedicated many hours of service to the church and campus. Included are Bud Rives who is truly dedicated and capable of many of our maintenance needs. He does many things that are needed but are not even known by many of us. Rich Rescigno has supervised the pest control and irrigation areas of the church and contributed many hours to trimming and cleanup of the church. Don Hoy has been available as needed to help with the landscaping needs and has done much trimming and cleaning as well. Dave Kerrigan assisted Wes and advised us onto the need for new air conditioning systems and what to install for cleaner air. Dave Abel has been available to assist with cleanup days at the campus and other jobs needed and is always willing to help. Barbara Ralph was very helpful in investigating the needed lights in the chapel and together with Greg Chestnut helped to get the project completed. And last but certainly not least is our pastor Wes who was always available to advise and assist with all the projects ongoing. Without Wes, I would not have been able to be a team leader. He has helped me in many ways. I am grateful to all my team members and they have accomplished a lot this past year. There are many other members of the church who have

helped the team with our maintenance of the church. These include Connie Toops, Tim Toops, Kathy Combs, Buck Greenlaw, Alleyne Kess, Jane Hunder, Jim Hunder, Rob Quarles, Judy Whorpole, Lynn Woodman, and Robin Reich and many others.
Respectfully submitted ~ Chris Cooper

Fellowship & Special Events Report 2021

The stated mission of the Fellowship and Special Events Team is to plan and support church-wide events that create opportunities for fellowship, enjoyment and social interaction within the congregation and a welcome to visitors and newcomers. Our team was and continues to be seriously challenged in carrying out our mission due to continuing pandemic. For a few months, we hosted a monthly zoom coffee hour with the theme “Conversations around Food”. The conversations were lively and interesting, but not well-attended. Finally, in October, with Council’s approval and Covid protocols in place, we began in person Fellowship time after the 11 am service. These gatherings have been sparsely attended, and it has been difficult finding enough people from the different teams willing to host them. I can only assume that the continuing pandemic makes people reluctant to participate in social gatherings. Therefore plans for our team remain flexible and/or on hold for the coming year.

Respectfully yours ~ Sandy Smith, Fellowship Chair

Budget, Finance & Stewardship Report 2021

The team, consisting of Ed Andersen, Bill Brackett, Mike Johnston, Christine Knupp, Jerry Long, Bruce Woolley and Sue Fields, with the hard work of the co-treasurers Mike Johnston and Robin Reich.

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:

- Completed Review of our Financial Procedures
- Accurately enumerating the church's assets and continued detailed insurance review
- Major Expense Plan (15 yr.) criteria received ongoing evaluation for items to be included, and review of timelines for projected needs are surveyed and adjusted
- CDs continue to be assets for the church, although with disappointing earnings potential as overall financial market instruments offer only very low interest returns
- Stewardship initiated and conducted a successful campaign for funding the work of the church in 2022
- We continued to dream as we helped in the efforts with Alta Vista School
- We Zoomed A LOT.

Growing & Caring Report 2021

The COVID pandemic continued to re-shape the mission of the Growing & Caring Team. Prior to COVID, our Team's mission was largely defined as delivering Easter lilies and Christmas poinsettias to shut-ins and working with new members, including hosting new member luncheons, finding sponsors, and integrating new members into the life of the church. Since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020 and continuing through 2021, our Team has focused largely on its "caring" mission. In coordination with the Lay Visitation Team which maintains contact with those church members in hospitals, rehab facilities or adult care facilities, we continued to maintain contact with members who were shut-in due to illness or injury, those who recently lost a spouse, partner or significant other, and those recently released from hospitals or rehab facilities. Because the pandemic generally prohibited any type of visitation or personal contact, most of our interactions with church members was via phone, e-mail or regular mail. At the end of 2021, Pastor Wes developed a new tool for tracking church members in care facilities, shut-ins and those needing prayers which will aid the mission of both Lay Visitation and our team.

We also worked to expand our "caring" mission to the greater congregation. In this regard, we sent out numerous Valentine, Thanksgiving and Christmas cards to members of our congregation. We also encouraged church members at Valentine's Day and Christmas to send cards to the two church members ahead of them in the church directory and the two members

behind them in the directory. This idea was well received by the congregation and proved a source of providing connection for those who felt they were losing contact with their fellow church members.

As the church began to open up to in-person services, our Team became cognizant of the need to be in contact with church visitors and potential new members. During the pandemic, many “visitors” began following our Sunday services through our live-streamed broadcast. Our team worked with the Worship Team to try to identify and extend a welcome to these and other visitors. Another significant project designed, among other things, to attract new members was our new church website developed by church member Sarah Dousa. Our team provided input to Sarah as she developed the website and the end product should prove an invaluable asset in attracting visitors to our church for years to come.

Our team members are Sandi Armstrong, Nancy Arnzen, Kathy Combs, Priscilla Crumel, Carol Hagglund, Cindy Woodling (Lay Visitation Ministry Team liaison), and Dale Woodling (chair). We thank them for their caring service to our church during another challenging year.

Missions Report 2021

This year our team was excited to get off zoom in the fall and see each other in person. We are down to four members since sadly losing Gail Taylor last summer. Mission does a Christmas Love and Easter Love Offering every year. In 2021 we intentionally tried to include organizations that address our core values and covenants. We will be addressing the Creation Justice covenant in the 2022 Easter Love. We also made use of the Heindel Family Foundation Fund and the Flanzer Trust to increase our giving capabilities. We were able to raise 13,500 for Easter Love and \$15,322 for Christmas Love. We also do fund raising for Alta Vista Elementary School across the street at the start of the school year and we were able to raise \$4645 dollars for them this fall. In keeping with our "Love Your Neighbor" theme in December we met and put together and delivered 75 gift bags to the residents of Sarasota Point. In April we met with members of the Racial Justice Team and decided to initiate a sister church relationship with one of our local primarily Black congregations. Since we are such a small committee we asked the Staffing Committee to join us in this effort. We met with them in May and again in November to plan and we do have two churches interested. We were wanting to start in January 2022 but due to the extremely high numbers of covid we will hold off a month or two. We would like to start with a Book Club that explores Jesus and the Disinherited by Howard Thurman led by Ellen Marsey and then attend the Howard Thurman Workshop the first week of April 2022.

Jan Andersen, Chair Mission Team

Music & Fine Arts Report 2021

The wonderful members of the Music & Fine Arts Team have continued to serve together in 2021 to ensure that music and fine arts remain strong at First UCC 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:

- The choir met via Zoom weekly from January - May and monthly throughout the summer. The choir spent 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. 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 or the section leaders as hymn leader each Sunday, and we have appreciated the special guest musicians that played on Easter
- In addition to Zoom rehearsals the choir met outside two times over the summer for some social time and as you can imagine, we had to sing - it was lovely to harmonize together!
- Regular, in-person choir rehearsals joyfully resumed on September 15th with all singers masked and with a bit of distance between our chairs. To say we were all thrilled to be back in the chapel singing together is an understatement!
- The choir returned for singing for worship on October 3 and they so appreciate the loving reception and appreciation
- The Thanksgiving and Christmas service included the return of the Sarasota Brass Quintet and Christmas eve was beautifully enhanced by Natalie Helm (cello) and Meghan Jones (violin) - such a joy to have our guest musicians back with us
- In other news:
- 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 recently began meeting 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

The Peace and Justice Network's busy year's main accomplishment for 2021 has been to nurture the development of FCUCC's three new covenants.

The **Creation Justice Covenant** was approved by a vote of the Congregation at the Annual Meeting in January, 2021. The green EcoJustice Banner has been installed and will be dedicated on Jan. 23, 2022. The green team continues to provide outstanding educational opportunities to enlighten our congregation about the environment and living into being a “green” church.

The **Open and Affirming Covenant** was approved by our Church Council on March 16, 2021. COLLAGE members participated in a seven part Open and Affirming (ONA) webinar series sponsored by the National UCC Church led by Andrew Lang starting in Feb. 2021. This served as the theological basis for church progressing from an Open and Affirming Statement which has been apart of FCUCC’s bylaws for the past 20 years to turning that bold statement into a Covenant. Our Open and Affirming Covenant and our INCLUSIVE Banner were dedicated June 6, 2021 as a part of our June Pride Celebration.

The **Racial Justice Covenant** will be voted on at our Annual Meeting on January 30, 2022. A *Racial Justice Statement* was initiated and written by our Peace and Justice Team and members of the Juneteenth Seminar. The Racial Justice Statement was approved by Council in July 2020 and shared with the Congregation. A weekly discussion group “Sacred Conversations on Racial Justice” (SCOR) was begun as we shared articles, book studies, videos, and movies to further educate ourselves. The Peace and Justice Team along with members from Sacred Conversations started discussing ways of turning the Racial Justice Statement into a covenant in February 2021. During the summer the Church Council approved the formation of the Racial Justice Mission Group whose task it has been the formalize our Racial Justice Covenant and to continue to develop educational opportunities to enhance our congregation’s awareness on this important issue of Racial Justice.

P and J also continues to be advocates of the following mission teams in our church:

SURE; Laurie Etter- SURE is an Ecumenical Justice Ministry Network of 24 congregations who work together to bring about God’s realm in our community.

Currently we are continuing working on Juvenile and Adult Civil Citations.

The annual Nehemiah Action of engaging community leaders will be April 5, 2022.

Project 180; Pamela Gore-Mead- Project 180’s mission is to reintegrate formerly incarcerated citizens to community life. This year they added another residence to the one they maintain and manage. They sponsor Strong Voices, Strong Subjects.

Brady; Carol Rescigno- In April Brady held a Zoom Conference to hear Tom Gabor, a noted gun safety expert. Brady Sarasota returned in October to weekly Bayfront Park Rallies, participation in Sarasota Police Department “National Night Out” and held it’s 5th annual Vigil for Victims of Gun Violence where Christian Heyne VP of Brady policy gave a presentation and our Priscilla Crumel shared her poem “Peace Abounds”.

Community Meals are served at St Paul Lutheran Church on the Fourth Tuesday of the Month; Carol Hagglund- co-ordinates a team of volunteers to cook, serve and clean up. Due to COVID meals were served outside in boxes up until September 2021 when they started serving meals indoors again to fewer people with spacing.

Spiritual Education & Growth Report 2021

Spiritual Education and Growth, like all of our teams, experienced challenges in 2021. Not only were we impacted by COVID, we also experienced a dramatic decline in the number of school aged children. This has been coming for several years as our youth have aged but we decided that it no longer makes sense to hold Sunday School classes when there aren't any youth to attend.

That being said, we still reached out to our young congregants and held three zoom activities that were fairly well attended. As restrictions lifted and life became a bit more normal, however, waning interest saw the conclusion of those.

Late this summer we attempted to revive in-person activities through a program called Second Sunday Spectaculars. Unfortunately, only one of them had any respondents so the second and third were cancelled.

In the fall, it was decided that SEG would pitch its tent under the umbrella of the Oasis Center and that we would collaborate with them since our goals of enrichment through spirituality are so closely aligned. We've zoomed a couple of times and it seems like it will be a good fit for both of us.

The year was not without cause for celebration. We were able to award 5 scholarships to our members, including a substantial award to John Ristow to enable him to further his journey through seminary. We also discovered that using a different calculation metric, we are able to utilize more of the endowment funds than previously thought. This will allow us to be more generous with the amounts of the scholarships.

Another achievement is the creation and upcoming installation of a QR code for the information at the labyrinth. This will allow walkers to access the information on their phones and not need to take paper copies. The paper option will still be put in the holder, this will just give people the choice of digital or physical access to the information. This should be completed the second or third week of January.

Respectfully submitted ~ Toska Strong, Chair Spiritual Education and Growth

Staffing Report 2021

The Staffing Team for 2021 consisted of Linda Pursley, Dennis Crooks and Dick Miller (Chair). We were joined in our meetings by Pastor Wes Bixby and Vice-Moderator Jim Butterworth. During the past two years, we have experienced phenomenal changes for our Church and its personnel needs. Presently, we have three full-time staff members: our Senior Minister Wes Bixby; our Minister of Music Greg Chestnut; and our Campus Manager, Mark Swain. We also have several part-time positions: Office Manager, Technology Specialist,

Bookkeeper, Collector and four Choir Section Leaders. Whereas all three full-time staff have remained constant, we have seen changes in part-time staff.

In January, Douglas Kingsley joined us as the Technology Specialist and completed his probationary period in March to become a permanent employee.

In April, Bobbi Miller resigned as Office Manager to pursue a full-time position at Sarasota Memorial. The office was manned by church Volunteers until Terri Chapman came in September on a temporary basis. We were sad to see Terri leave at the end of December to accept increased hours at her second job. While we continue the search to fill this position, we are blessed that four congregation members, Jane Hunder, Carol McCloud, Nancy Morris and Connie Toops, will be volunteering in the office on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. This year, the Team has worked to reimagine the Office Manager job description. In April, the Team polled all Team Leaders and Staff on their needs for administrative support. The Team has also consulted with the Finance Team and Treasurers. We believe the resultant job description better reflects the needs of the church into the near future.

In July, Bill Lewis resigned as the church bookkeeper. We are grateful for his many years in this position. He has been succeeded by longtime church member Pam Hendrickson. Gordon Quimby resigned as Collector as of the end of the year. The Team is thankful for Gordon's service. During his tenure, he introduced many process and communication improvements. Church member Sue Fields accepted our offer for this position and has worked closely with Gordon during December.

During this year, our Team has joined with the Missions Team to search for relationships with predominately black congregations in Sarasota, with a goal of early 2022 to begin this effort. As we entered 2021, our Church necessarily had adapted to pandemic-related restrictions with primarily online worship and meetings. During 2021, the Church evolved to offer vibrant hybrid online/in-person worship, meetings, education and fellowship offerings. These changes impacted all Staff, who all helped guide the church through these changing times with flexibility, ingenuity and faithfulness. For this, the Staffing Team is very appreciative, and we the Church are blessed.

Respectfully submitted,
Dick Miller

Technology Team 2021

As we all know, the past two years due to Covid -19 have been full of many challenges, especially in the area of Technology, and 2021 was no different. We have learned that Technology serves our entire church family. We have learned there are meaningful ways to conduct worship and make presentations through live streaming. There definitely was a learning curve. However, our hiring of Douglas Kingsley to lead our Technical Support along with Gina Bixby's help has allowed our church to move forward in a nearly seamless way.

Because of the generosity of our membership and a grant, new cameras, wiring and a tv monitor were purchased.

Special services such as Celebrations of Life and Weddings were livestreamed as well as our worship services. The new cameras have allowed many more camera angles for our worship services, and loved ones have been able to "attend" meaningful, online Memorial services when the church was "closed" due to Covid. Our Christmas, Holy Week and Easter Services, although online, brought our church family together and continues to do so.

We have learned much over this year and are grateful for the patience and support of our church family.

May this New Year bring us closer, both in person and through Technology.

Yours in Christ, Jane Hunder, Technology Team Chair

Endowment Committee Report and Financials 2021

In accordance with the church by laws, the endowment fund distributes 4% of the undesignated funds annually. A total of \$45,748 was distributed for 2020 from the undesignated funds. \$13,452 of other designated funds were distributed for their intended purposes. The Undesignated Endowment Fund was beneficiary of \$5,000 from the Fred Clark estate. The Greg Chestnut Music and Fine Arts Fund received \$162,412 from the Judy and Bruce Macgowan estate. Vonda and Paul Leonard donated \$25,000 to the Oasis Center.

Anonymous (4)

Vince Amoroso * & Tam Milton

Pat * & Graham* Barkhuff

Dr. Fred & Lee Brockmann

Fred Clark *

Fran Collier *

Dennis and Evelyn Crooks

Pauline Geary

Richard * & Debbie Hayes

Bill and Pat Grubb

Drs. Marsha Kindall-Smith & Hugh Smith

Mary Kukainis

Vonda Leonard

Bruce* and Judy Macgowan*

Ginny McIntire *

Bill & Susan Moore

Nancy Morris

Felix and Nancy McElroy

Susan Raines

Warren Bacon & Barbara Smith-Bacon

Joan Beach *

Greg Chestnut

Craig Collemer

Phyllis Collins

Helaine Eckstein

Carol Hagglund

Lucy Hedrick

Lynn Jones

Billie Knauss*

Bev Laier

Dr. Sara Little and Barbara Shaver

Rick & Patrice McDaniel

David & Susan Mitchell

Rev. Dale Moore & Dr. Steve Horowitz

Len & Drue Murray

Dr. Richard Miller

Larry & Charlaine* Ream

Myron & Brenda Robinson
 Betty Rundlett
 Carol Seltzer
 Ann Stormzand *
 Audrey Shutters
 Minton* & Sandra Tinsley
 Roger & Ellie* Weiss
 Lori White
 Dr. June Wolgemuth & Ed Dupree
 Bruce Woolley

Gregg Royer *
 John* & Connie Schaefer
 Joan Sheil
 Rev. Dr. Jean & Paul* Simpson
 Lucia Taylor*
 Jean Walker
 Bill Wendling* & Lynne Woodman
 Elizabeth Wildhack
 Dale and Cindy Woodling
 David York

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.

The Endowment/Planned Giving Committee: Rick McDaniel, Dave Mitchell, Roger Weiss, Larry Ream, Cindy Woodling, Dale Woodling, David York

**STATEMENT OF ENDOWMENT FUND ACTIVITY
 FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
 Year ended September 30, 2021**

Balance, October 1, 2020	\$2,208,896
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Increases:

Gifts Received

Estate Gifts- Joan Beach/Fred Clark	\$30,000
Gifts to Greg Chestnut Music & Fine Arts	\$80,466
Gifts to Oasis Center -Vonda & Paul Leonard	\$25,000
Stock for Parishioners Pledge	\$884
Net Increase in Values	<u>\$568,059</u>
	\$709,409

Decreases:

2020 Disbursement to the Church Annual Budget	\$45,748
Scholarships	\$12,952
Administrative Fee 2020	\$500
Stock Sale, Parishioners Pledge	<u>\$884</u>
	\$60,084
Balance September 30, 2021	<u>\$2,858,221</u>

3 year comparison

<u>Year Ended 9/30/19</u>	<u>Year Ended 9/30/2020</u>	<u>Year Ended 9/30/2021</u>
\$1,721,575	\$2,208,896	\$2,858,221

Covenant Statement to Become a Creation Justice Church

Our Team's major success in 2021 was formal designation for First Congregational UCC Sarasota as a Creation Justice Church. To achieve that, the Creation Justice Covenant was approved by Council by unanimous vote in May 19, 2020, and then unanimously ratified by vote of the Congregation at Annual Meeting on January 24, 2022. We submitted our application for designation as a Creation Justice Church on March 5, 2021; designation was awarded as of March 19, 2021.

While designation has been informally recognized, the church has not yet celebrated that designation. Working with Pastor Wes, we identified January 23, 2022 (when Florida Arbor Day will also be celebrated) to dedicate the newly installed EcoJustice banner on campus, as well as our Creation Justice designation. Join us for photos under the banner, as well as with the Creation Justice banner supplied to us by the UCC.

Our Team continues to focus on education, awareness, advocacy and fostering a spiritual connection to God's Creation. We have done this through newsletter articles, field trips, reading suggestions, nature and labyrinth walks, and more. Sarah Melcher and Barbara Smith-Bacon have also participated in inaugural meetings to create a Florida UCC Creation Justice Ministry.

During the Creation Justice discernment process, we were repeatedly asked to provide more information on recycling. On February 17, 2022, we will host representatives of Sarasota and Manatee Counties, and Sunshine Community Compost, to discuss the basics of recycling and composting, as well as the efficacy and productiveness of the current single stream systems. Join us!

We remain a resource to all church Teams, and are delighted that a Finance committee is exploring solar power for the church.

Living Green for God and Creation ~ Barbara Smith-Bacon, Co-Chair; Sarah Melcher, Co-Chair; Bill Brackett; Alleyne Kess; Bill Lewis; Nancy McElroy; Ellen Marsey; Pamela Gore Meade; and Lucy Tobias

COLLAGE Report 2021

In January of 2021 COLLAGE asked to be a part of the Peace and Justice Network and to be represented by P&J at Church Council Meetings.

Collage has hosted a weekly Zoom Support Group since the beginning of the Covid-pandemic. Our First Zoom meeting was on April 14, 2020 and we have been meeting weekly ever since. Our average attendance is around 15 with both LGBTQ members and their allies.

COLLAGE Members participated in a seven part Open and Affirming (ONA) webinar series sponsored by the National UCC Church led by Rev Andrew Lang starting in Feb. 2021.

This served as the theological basis for our church progressing from an Open and Affirming Statement which has been a part of our church's bylaws for the past 20 years to turning the statement into a Covenant. This Open and Affirming Covenant was approved by our Church Council on March 16, 2021.

Our Open and Affirming Covenant and our INCLUSIVE Banner were dedicated June 6, 2021 as a part of our June Pride Celebration.

Also, as a part of our June Pride Month celebration each Sunday a COLLAGE member shared their personal testimony.

National Coming Out Day was celebrated as part of our Church Service on Oct, 10, 2021 with members from COLLAGE participating and one who shared a moving personal testimony.

COLLAGE sponsored an Elder Law and Estate Planning presentation by Dana Gerling in Nov. open to the entire congregation.

On December 5, a member of COLLAGE gave a statement recognizing World Aids Day.

Between the 8pm and the 11pm Christmas Eve Services COLLAGE hosted a Coffee Fellowship Time.

COLLAGE is continuing to work on developing a digital history of the ONA process and the creation and founding of COLLAGE a social support group for LGBTQ people and allies.

This very busy and successful year was made possible by the enthusiasm and commitment of the Advisory Team, LGBTQ+ Family and Allies of COLLAGE.

Pauline Geary and Jerry Oliver – Co-Facilitators

Lay Visitation Ministry 2021 Annual Report

It seems we live in a world in which the experience of truly being listened to is relatively rare. Distractions, short attention spans, and feeling that there's not enough time to simply listen to one another have brought us to a point in time in which listening is a gift that is deeply appreciated. The LVM team brings this gift to members and friends of our congregation. The Lay Visitation Ministry (LVM) Team is in its seventh year of ministry on behalf of the congregation. This is a *ministry of being truly present to another person and listening deeply to that person*. It is a ministry of pastoral care carried out on behalf of the congregation and in close consultation with Pastor Wes.

Pre-pandemic, the members of the LVM team made hundreds of visits to members and friends of the congregation who are confined to their home, in a nursing, rehabilitation, assisted living facilities or 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 were a *ministry of presence and deep listening* wherein we brought the love of God and the congregation to these individuals and/or their families. When the Covid 19 pandemic settled 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. Recently, some visits under strict protocols have been re-established.

Our team meets monthly for a two-hour time of education, support, and reflection. We have continued these gatherings monthly via Zoom. Our time together consists of an opening devotional, a discussion of any relevant issues that have arisen or might arise, a checking-in as to how each member is doing in these challenging times, and then Craig Collemer offers a time of reflection and inspiration. 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.

In partnership with the Growing and Caring Team, our members also help to deliver gifts at Christmas and Easter 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, Dick Miller, Barbara Shaver, and Cindy Woodling with Craig Collemer and Sara Little as the co-leaders. We are grateful for the support and encouragement of Pastor Wes at our monthly gatherings.

As we move into a new year, 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 2020 – June 2021

The First UCC Women meet in Syster Hall on the first Tuesday of each month from October to June at 11:30 for Fellowship, Luncheon and Program. Following the outbreak of Covid in March of 2020 our programs were canceled and it would be October 2021 before we would meet again. Our Circle of Friends which meets at Plymouth Harbor has not been able to resume currently.

We welcomed Pastor Wes as our guest speaker in October and he gave us a sneak preview of his devotional book. For November, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers scheduled speaker was unable to attend but the ready readers of the church led a discussion of the book “Tomatoland” by Barry Estabook. Many in attendance had read the book and we had a wonderful open dialogue on the impression the book left on them. The remaining programs for the year are set, so join us when you can.

Each year, First UCC Women through the generosity of its members, which is all women of the church, selects nonprofits as recipients of its mission work. This year’s recipients were: All Faiths Food Bank - \$500, Baby Basics - \$500, Coalition of Immokalee Workers - \$500, Echo Farms - \$500, Family Promise - \$500, Meals on Wheels - \$500, Project 180 - \$500, Second Chance, Last Opportunity - \$500, Selah Freedom - \$500 and SPARCC - \$500.

Nancy Morris, President