



# First Congregational UCC

Within our lives, there are countless transitions that mark the end of one chapter and the beginning of another. In the month of May, the Bixby family has one such occasion to celebrate as our son, **Ethan**, graduates from Riverview High School on May 21.

This is a holy moment overflowing with so many emotions. There is delight in Ethan’s achievement & accomplishment. There is our love for Ethan that fills and floods our hearts. There are tears as he prepares for college in the fall, knowing that life is going to be different. There are questions about what life will look like, feel like, be like.

These are questions many of you have faced when you dropped your children off at college. Gina and I will live into these questions trusting that the holy work of parenting doesn’t end when we move Ethan into his dorm room at Florida State University, but our relationship will continue to evolve and expand as we enter this new territory. We know that the transition is for our whole family. Because this is a holy time, we want to share this with you.

## Celebrating our Graduate



**We invite our church family  
to join us on May 22<sup>nd</sup>  
12:15 – 2 p.m.  
in Syster Hall  
to celebrate and bless Ethan  
on his future endeavors.**

This church, each of you, has had such a positive impact on Ethan over the years. From the very beginning the members of the Search Team had a cake for Ethan when we were here interviewing to celebrate his 10<sup>th</sup> birthday. More recently Greg Chestnut and our amazing church

### Office Hours

**Pastor Wes:**

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

**Sherry Glover:**

*Mon.-Tues.: 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.*

*Wed-Thurs.: 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.*

**Mark:**

*Mon. – Fri.: 7 a.m. - 3 p.m.*

**Greg:**

*Tues. – Sat.: various hours*

## Worship

- **Worship ~ 9 a.m.** at the Oasis Center – inside and outside.
- **Worship ~ 10:55 a.m. in-person in the Sanctuary and livestream on Facebook, YouTube and our website.**
- **In-person, in-the-sanctuary with masks, social distancing. Our choir has returned and wearing masks to lead our singing/prayer/praise.**
- **Coffee Hour in Syster Hall on May 1 (May birthdays celebrated) and May 8<sup>th</sup> (Celebrating Mother's Day).**

choir ~ especially the bass section and fellow section leaders ~ have supported Ethan. From Sunday School teachers to people who helped him with school projects to your love and support on Sundays which has been a blessing for the last eight plus years. I hope you will be able to join us on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, we will also begin a series: “Stories that Shape Us: Parables for life.” Every single day we are telling ourselves stories. When you say, “This always happens to me,” after stubbing your toe, you are telling a story. When you tell someone about the project that you saved, you are telling a story. When you share your mistakes, successes, as well as the ordinariness of having cottage cheese and celery for lunch each day; those are all ways you are making sense of life. **You are a meaning-making; story-telling living being.** Stories matter and they shape us. On Sundays we will listen to the stories Jesus told.

On **Monday, May 16<sup>th</sup> and May 23<sup>rd</sup>** at 4 p.m., please join me as we discuss the book, “The Story of You” by Ian Morgan Cron. This wonderfully engaging book explores various types of stories people tell themselves to make sense of what is happening around them and within them. Cron helps us sort through how the editorial board in our mind and heart works. **I hope you will participate in this conversation either in-person in the Oasis Center or on Zoom.** If you have questions, let me know.

I look forward to this summer spending time sharing, listening, and deepening our connections to sacred stories that shape us every day.

*With great love ~ Wes*

**Every Sunday we worship at 9 a.m. at the Oasis Center inside and outside. You are welcome to bring a lawn chair and sit in the beauty of creation.**

**At 10:55 a.m. worship is in-person in the sanctuary, and livestreamed online (Facebook, YouTube, Website)**

**May 1** ~ We begin the month of May with a celebration of Confirmation at the 10:55 service. We will offer a blessing to **Dalton Burroughs; James Mayer; and Kaileigh Stephen** who have been meeting with Pastor Wes throughout Lent. Please join in this holy service. We will come to Christ’s table to celebrate communion. The focus passage is John 20:19-29.

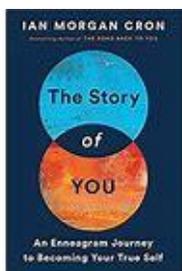
**May 8** ~ On **Mother’s Day Sunday**, we will worship at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. celebrating women who have shaped our faith from biological mothers to family and friends whose presence has left fingerprints upon our hearts. The focus passage is John 21:1-14.

**May 15** ~ We wrap up and wind down our journey through the Gospel of John, ending with John 21:15-19. Listen to the echoing invitation of Jesus who calls us to “Follow” even to this day.

**May 22** ~ We kick off a sermon series on, “Stories that Shape Us: Parables for life.” We will begin this series with Matthew 13:1-9 and Pastor Wes will preach, “Bad Farming Practices, Part 1”

**May 29** ~ On Memorial Day Weekend, we continue to explore and examine the parables, Matthew 13:24-30. Pastor Wes will preach, “Bad Farming Practices, Part 2”. We will honor those who have served our country in countless ways.

## Stories that Shape Us



You are invited on **Monday, May 16<sup>th</sup> and May 23<sup>rd</sup>** at 4 p.m. for a book discussion on Ian Morgan Cron, "The Story of You" in the **Oasis Center and on Zoom.**

This is a wonderful book to explore how YOU might live the Easter promises of new life during the Spring of 2022. All are welcome to participate and be part of this conversation.

## Thank You

Thank you to everyone who participated in the dedication of the new Lending Library on the church campus. Thank you to **Nancy McElroy and Page & Carol McCloud** for making this a reality. The library faces Alta Vista so families can make use of this resource. We still are looking for people to help maintain the library. For more information contact Nancy McElroy.

Thank you to **EVERYONE who showed up to clean the church** on Saturday, April 10<sup>th</sup>. The sanctuary looks amazing. With gratitude to everyone!

Thank you to **Sarah Dousa** for all her continued hard work on our website throughout Lent. Take a moment to see the NEW "Feature of the Month" at the top of the website.

Thank you to **Bev Carrington and Ruth Olson** for making the palm crosses we gave out on Sunday!

Thank you to **Harry and Carolyn Hinrichs & Page and Carol McCloud** for painting the chapel last month. It looks amazing. We are so grateful for the lending of your talents and skills.

Thank you to our AMAZING Staff: Greg Chestnut, Mark Swain, Sue Fields, Sherry Glover, Douglas Kingsley, and Julian Bermudez all the ways each shine their light. We are blessed!!



## Church Bus Driver Needed

Please prayerfully consider how you can help us continue our connection with our Plymouth Harbor loved ones wishing to attend Sunday services.

We have three drivers, two of whom are seasonal. **NO SPECIAL LICENSE NEEDED.**

You may speak with Jerry Oliver or Pastor Wes with any questions.

**Thank you for considering this ministry.**

## Join the



**COLLAGE 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> 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.** ~ **HYBRID** 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.**

## CREATION JUSTICE COVENANT NEWS



### Composting: An easy two-way street way to have an impact on our environment!

A personal story from Sarah Melcher

When I first started to compost, it was for the benefit of my backyard vegetable garden in Cincinnati, to enrich the soil. Later, I learned composting cut down on food waste, which is a significant environmental problem. After leaving Ohio and moving to Sarasota, my spouse and I found a way to compost, even though we live in a condo association. Through [sunshinecommunitycompost.org](http://sunshinecommunitycompost.org), we got into a program where they supply you with a container with instructions. It tells you what kind of vegetable, fruit, and grain scraps can be included. It also tells you what NOT to put in! When the container is full, we take it to a designated compost collection site, where there are directions for emptying your bucket and covering it with leaves and twigs (browns) provided there. The prize for us is that twice a year we receive cured compost, beautiful rich soil that we use to add nutrients to our gardens.

We feel good about cutting back on food waste and we love getting natural nutrients into our soil. For more information on composting and its environmental benefits, go to the National Resources Defense Council at <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/composting-101>.

## OPEN AND AFFIRMING COVENANT NEWS



### COLLAGE (LGBTQ+ people and allies)

~ Mark Your Calendars:

**May 15:** In-person luncheon after the 11:00 service.  
Please RSVP your \$10 box luncheon choice (salad or sandwich) to:  
[sarajlittle@me.com](mailto:sarajlittle@me.com) or sign up in the Narthex by **May 1**.

**May 10 & May 24th:** Collage Zoom Meeting, 11:00 – Noon.



### Mother's Day Fellowship ~ Sponsored by COLLAGE

Please join with our church family & friends for a time of cookies, coffee and tea after the 11 a.m. service on **Mother's Day, May 8**.

*We invite any church member or friend to bring a picture of their mother to be honored.  
Kindly label the picture with your name and that of your mom.*



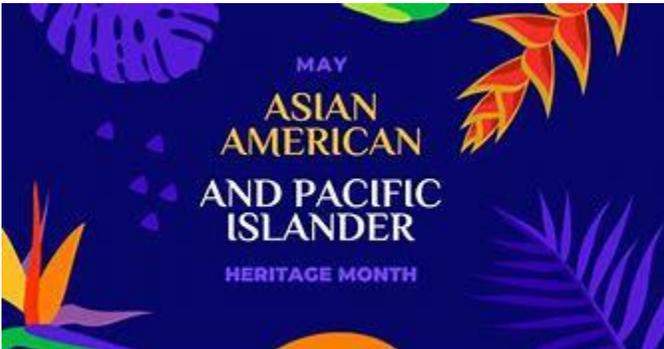
### A Special Thank You

Our premier showing of the FCUCC Open and Affirming History Film was well-attended where more than forty registered and attended the viewing. Special thanks to all who worked tirelessly on this project to record our history. We are indebted to **Doug Kingsley**, our producer extraordinaire!





## The All-Too Persistent Problem of Violence Against AAPI Women



May is Asian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, a time set aside for recognizing the contributions and influence of Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Americans to the history, culture, and achievements of the United States. America is indeed fortunate to include in its broad and diverse cultural tapestry the rich and vibrant background of Asians and Pacific Islanders. But recent events have brought to the forefront the long history in this country of violence against Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women. It is awareness of this problem that our church's Racial Justice Mission Group would like to highlight this month.

The history of Asian and Pacific Islanders in America explains, in part, the roots for discrimination against this population. As Dr. Connie Wue, executive director of AAPI Women Lead noted in a recent *The Atlantic* magazine article, "Asian and Pacific Islander communities writ large have experienced histories of colonization, of xenophobia, of racism, [and] of patriarchal violence." The stereotypes of AAPI women in American culture can be seen as far back as the 1875 Page Act, which essentially barred single Chinese women from entering the country on the assumption that they wanted to immigrate for the purposes of prostitution.

This view of AAPI women as willing sexual objects, as meek and submissive, makes AAPI women

vulnerable to harassment and violence and appear as any criminal's ideal target, notes Sung Yeon Choimorrow, executive director of the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum who was quoted on CNN and in the *Herald-Tribune*. "American culture has hypersexualized and objectified Asian women as long as we've lived here," she notes. A recent survey by her organization found that 74% of AAPI women say they experienced racism or discrimination in the previous 12 months, more than one-half identifying the perpetrator as a stranger, and 47% saying these instances happened in a public space. Racism against AAPI women has intensified with the recent COVID outbreak. Ms. Choimorrow recalls how early in the pandemic, while she was walking in her neighborhood with her daughter, a man chased her down yelling, "Go back home with your China virus."

The recent shootings of six AAPI spa workers in Atlanta, the deaths in New York City of Christina Yuna Lee, who was stabbed, and Michelle Go who was pushed onto the subway tracks, and the case of six men arrested in San Francisco last year for more than 100 incidents of theft, robbery and burglary specifically targeted at AAPI women are just some of the more well-publicized incidents that illustrate this much larger problem. Dr. Wue notes that violence against AAPI women is layered and systemic, and most of it cannot be seen on TV or social media. "For too long," says Ms. Choimorrow, "Asian American women have been all too visible in ways that dehumanize us but invisible in ways that make us human. Changing this will take slow steady work."

In our congregation, this work begins with our awareness not only of the unique history, vibrant culture, and significant contributions that Asians and Pacific Islanders bring to our community, but also of this all-too persistent problem of violence against AAPI women.

## Thank You All



Thank you so much Pastor Wes and the First Congregational, UCC Sarasota congregation for hosting the Sarasota Conference on Spirituality, Community and Social Change: The Thought and Spirituality of Howard Thurman. It was a wonderful event and your assistance and hospitality reflected true community.

**A special thank you as well to:** Nancy McElroy and all those who greeted and registered the attendees. Sandy Smith and those who organized and served the lunch on Saturday. Sue Fields and Robin Reich for all the recordkeeping and reports.

All these tasks involved a lot of work; we are appreciative of your grace-filled efforts. Our hope and prayer is that this event and your hospitality will be the seeds of more interfaith and multicultural partnerships.

With gratitude,  
*The Conference Planning Team*

## Sacred Conversations on Race



We continue our Sacred Conversations on Race on **Wednesdays at 3 p.m.** We are returning to our study of the **1619 Project** edited by **Nikole Hannah-Jones**.

There is **ALWAYS** space and place for you to join in this conversation. Truly, **ALL ARE WELCOME HERE!** If you have questions or need a **Zoom** link, let Pastor Wes know.

## Little Free Library Project

The Sacred Conversations on Race group is excited that our **Little Free Lending Library is installed and dedicated**. *Even more exciting, we had our first visitors!!!*

If you would like to know more, or want to help, please contact Nancy McElroy, who is spearheading this project, at [fnmcelroy@gmail.com](mailto:fnmcelroy@gmail.com) or 941-527-7257.

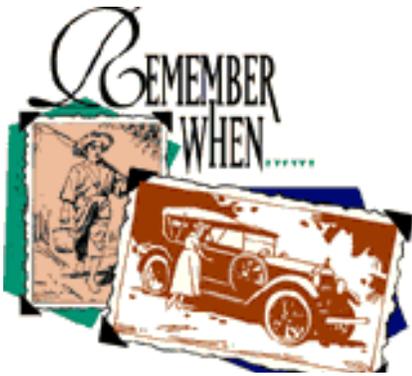


## Project 180 News

The re-entry project for select released incarcerated men has been busy with new projects and housing. You may wish to visit <http://www.project180entry.org> for more information. May 13 is the next lecture in the Strong Voices Lecture Series.

**DID YOU KNOW** our church has granted permission for the Florida Department of Corrections to hold monthly meetings on our campus for recent parolees and their families as they enter their period of supervision? This is a wonderful way to share our campus for meaningful work—living into our covenants.

**FIRST UCC Women's Luncheon ~ May 3rd @ 11:30 a.m.  
"Memory Road Show"**



Do you have a special photo that conjures happy memories? How about an ugly sweater that you wore when you held your first grandchild? Wish to share a souvenir from your trip through the Panama Canal?

The Women's Association is inviting everyone to lunch (\$12) and a "Memory Road Show" on Tuesday, May 3, at 11:30 a.m. in Syster Hall. Come prepared to tell a brief story about your "Show and Tell."

Please sign up after either service or call the church office to reserve your place.

**Kings And Queens Bridge**

Kings and Queens Bridge resumes **Monday, May 9, from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. in Room 9 of the Education Building.**

We welcome new players who are interested in playing contract bridge for fun.

Please contact Ethel Rudy at 941-727-0122 or email Ethel at [ethelhr@verizon.net](mailto:ethelhr@verizon.net) whether you are a new or returning player.

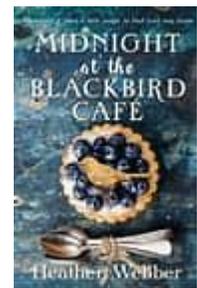


**Ready Readers**



Ready Readers is a book discussion group that meets on the second Thursday of every month at noon in the Oasis Center.

We welcome and encourage the participation and input of new members even if you are not able to attend every meeting. For more information and further updates, contact Sandy Smith at [sandysmithvi@gmail.com](mailto:sandysmithvi@gmail.com) or 340-227-5121.



Please join us **Thursday, May 12th, at noon in the Oasis Center.** We will be discussing **Midnight at the Blackbird Café** by Heather Webber. Heather Webber's **Midnight at the Blackbird Café** is a captivating blend of magical realism, heartwarming romance, and small-town Southern charm. Nestled in the mountain shadows of Alabama lies the little town of Wicklow. It is here that Anna Kate has returned to bury her beloved Granny Zee, owner of the Blackbird Café.



## Community Meal

We continue our monthly ministry of serving and providing a hot, nutritious and balanced community meal at St. Paul Lutheran Church. With Sandy Smith as our cook and your **homemade brownies**, there are sure to be many smiles.

Not only will our guests be served a delicious meal; they will appreciate the time of fellowship in a safe and welcoming space. It is food for the soul to witness helping those who count on this meal and to see them walk out with smiles and extra goodies. We are thankful for this ministry.

Volunteering with set-up/serving/clean-up functions at St. Paul's Fellowship Hall from **4:00 – 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 24th** is needed, rewarding and much appreciated. **Our number of guests is increasing, and we could use extra help to meet the increased need.**



We continue to wear masks to be safe. ~ Thank you, Carol Hagglund at [carol.hagglund@gmail.com](mailto:carol.hagglund@gmail.com).

## Artful Prayer

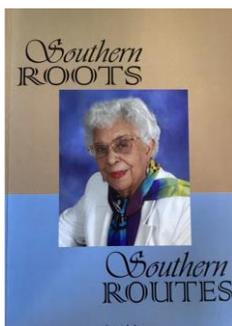


Greg Chestnut will lead us in a music oriented Artful Prayer session on **Thursday, May 12<sup>th</sup> at 2 p.m.**, on Zoom or in-person in the Oasis Center.

Contact the church office for the Zoom link early in the week of May 12<sup>th</sup>.

This will be the last Artful Prayer session before a summer break, so make sure to get this one on your calendars.

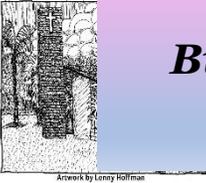
## Book Signing ~ Ms. Lovette W. Harper ~ May 1<sup>st</sup>



On **Sunday, May 1<sup>st</sup>**, Ms. Lovette W. Harper will be in **Syster Hall** signing copies of her book, "Southern Roots, Southern Routes: A Memoir" after the **11 a.m. service**. The cost of \$16 can be paid by cash or check.

This is a wonderful chance to read Ms. Harper's beautiful, inspiring and faithful life story. This would also make a wonderful Mother's Day gift for someone special in your life.

Our sincere congratulations to Ms. Harper—we are delighted to share this important accomplishment with you and **thank you for sharing your story!**



## **May Birthdays**



## **May Anniversaries**



- |                                    |  |                                   |
|------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| 5/1 Cheryl Beller                  | 5/16 Barbara Edelin                                  | 5/3 Kathy & Steve Combs           |
| 5/2 Charles Jarman<br>Sue Shiffrin | 5/20 Richard Sparrow                                 | 5/6 Drue & Len Murray             |
| 5/6 Wesley Horner<br>Blaine Pool   | 5/22 Debbie Hays<br>Carmen Landers<br>Robert Quarles | 5/7 Harold & Joy Kuhn             |
| 5/9 Gina Bixby                     | 5/26 Helaine Eckstein                                | 5/11 Rick & Jean-Marie Steele     |
| 5/10 Patricia Rolf                 | 5/27 David H. Kerrigan                               | 5/16 Craig Collemer & Gary LaParl |
| 5/11 Bettye Smith                  | 5/28 Virginia Cardozo<br>Taylor Steele               | 5/23 Donald & Dannie Vance        |
| 5/12 Elizabeth Early<br>Becky May  | 5/29 William Hansen                                  | 5/25 Jim & Max Althouse           |
| 5/13 Garvey Clarke<br>Sandy Smith  | 5/30 Ed Andersen<br>Gregory Chestnut                 | 5/28 Jeff & Sarah Sands           |
| 5/14 Harold Mezile                 | 5/31 Christine Millar                                | 5/30 Fernando & Betsy Traba       |
| 5/15 Gerald VanHoose               |  |                                   |

**In Loving  
Memory ...**



***Elaine Hevrdejs  
Hal Ralph***

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



**The 2022 Flower Chart is 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](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  
Campus Manager ..... Mark Swain  
Media Specialist ..... Douglas Kingsley  
Financial Administrator..... Julian Bermudez  
Financial Manager..... Susan Fields  
Office Administrator..... Sherry Glover

**OFFICERS AND VOLUNTEERS**

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

*We are an **Open & Affirming; Creation Justice; and Racial Justice** congregation of the United Church of Christ in the Florida Conference UCC.*

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