

2022

ANNUAL REPORT

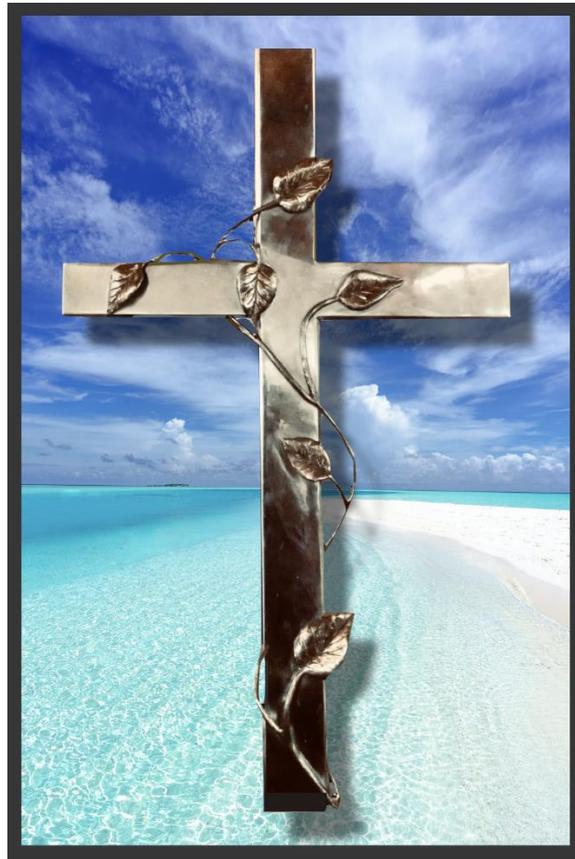


Photo by Carol Fields

First Congregational United Church of Christ of Sarasota

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First Congregational United Church of Christ – Sarasota

Annual Meeting: January 29, 2023 – 12:15 p.m. Sanctuary/YouTube/Facebook

Call to Order	Jim Butterworth, Moderator
Opening Prayer	Nancy Morris, Vice Moderator
Confirmation of a Quorum	Janet Tipton, Parliamentarian
2022 Annual Report	
Review & Approval of 2022 Annual Meeting Minutes	Lynne Woodman, Secretary
Approval of Team Annual Reports & Membership Report	Jim Butterworth
Nominations Committee Report	Jim Butterworth
· Nomination & Election of Team Members · Nomination & Election of Officers	
Financial Reports	
· Endowment Fund	Rick McDaniel, Chair, Endowment
· 2022 Balance Sheet	Robin Reich & Dale Woodling, Treasurers
· 2023 Budget	Finance, Budget, & Stewardship Team
Approval of By-Law Revisions	Jim Butterworth
Recognition of Immediate Past Moderator, Carol Fields	Jim Butterworth & Nancy Morris
Passing of Gavel	Jim Butterworth & Nancy Morris
Motion to Adjourn	Nancy Morris
Closing Prayer	Pastor Wes

**Minutes of the 2022 Annual Meeting
First Congregational UCC of Sarasota
Annual Meeting
January 30, 2022**

Moderator Carol Fields called the meeting to order at 11:50 AM. Jim Butterworth offered the opening prayer.

Forty paper ballots had been submitted from people who could not attend in person.

The minutes of the 2021 annual meeting were approved.

Warren Bacon made and Toska Strong seconded a motion to accept our new moderator team of past moderator Carol Fields, new moderator Jim Butterworth, and vice-moderator Nancy Morris. The motion passed.

The financial report stated that the church had raised 109% of the \$686,000 budget for the coming year. Assets are being moved to PNC, a bank that shares our church values of being open and affirming. Monies are earmarked for staff bonuses, funds for each of our three covenants (Inclusion Justice and Creation Justice, with Racial Justice to be voted on at this meeting), and anticipated major expenses.

Staffing is 55% of the budget; operations are 27%; and programming is 18%.

Jerry Long made and Susan Fields seconded a motion to accept the report. The motion passed.

Warren Bacon and Ellen Marsey, co-chairs of the Racial Justice Mission Group (RJMG), provided background on the development of the Racial Justice covenant. They also explained the move from a racial justice statement to a covenant.

The motion to accept the racial justice covenant passed unanimously in the room and in the paper ballots.

The meeting adjourned at 1:00 PM.

Necrology 2022

Gloria Adams
Joan Byrd
Monica Geary
Don Helgeson
Melvin Kestner
Steven Moore
Kristen Papenhausen

Wally Beckstrom
Yvonne Clarke
Joyce Harmon
Elaine Heverdjs
Dona Knoch
Manny Neal
Harold Ralph

Fred Brockmann
Ray Fuller
Gwen Harris-Bos
Harry Hinrichs
Virginia McIntire
Rev. Robert Niemiller
Pat Wanta

2022 Membership Report

Membership beginning January 1, 2022	395
New members (full and associate)	35
Remove from rolls (full and associate)	32
Deceased Full/Associate	<u>21</u>
Total Removals	48
Total Membership year ending 2022	382

Nominating Committee Report 2023

Moderator:	Nancy Morris
Vice-Moderator:	Harold Mezile
Immediate Past Moderator:	Jim Butterworth
Secretary:	Lynne Woodman
Co-Treasurers:	Robin Reich & Dale Woodling
<u>Members at Large</u>	<i>~One representative from Creation Justice Covenant, Open & Affirming Covenant, Racial Justice Covenant, and Women's Fellowship</i>

Budget, Finance, & Stewardship

Ed Andersen
Bill Brackett
Sue Fields
Pauline Geary
Joy Kuhn
Gib Mitchell
Dale Woodling (ex-officio)
Robin Reich(ex-officio)

Worship

Evelyn Crooks
Elaine Hallice
Frank Hallice
Peggye Mezile
Jeannie Mitchell
Susan Moore
John Ristow

Facilities & Grounds

Dave Abel
Chris Cooper
Don Hoy
Carol Fields
David Kerrigan
Bill Plerhoples
Rich Rescigno
Bud Rives

Fellowship & Special Events

Sandy Smith (Chair)
Buck Greenlaw
Mary Kukainis
Nancy Morris
Barbara Ralph

Growing & Caring

Nancy Arnzen
Kathy Combs
Priscilla Crumel
Carol Hagglund
Carol McCloud
Maggie Revere
Carol Seltzer

Music & Fine Arts Team

Ray Baker
Donna Booth
Lucy Hedrick
Jane Hunder
Jim Hunder
Frank Roxby
Jeff Smith
Greg Chestnut (ex-officio)

Peace & Justice Team

Lee Brockmann
Laurie Etter
Carol Hagglund
Sarah Melcher
Carol Rescigno
Barbara Smith-Bacon
Lucy Tobias

Staffing

Dennis Crooks
Dick Miller (Chair)
Linda Pursley
Clarence Rogers

Mission Team

Jan Andersen
Terri Crawford
Jan Kamm
Gretchen Friend Jones
Nancy Taylor

Spiritual Education & Growth

Jim Crumel
Julia Detoff
Erik Tredel
Lori White
Lynne Woodman
Cindy Woodling
Greg Chestnut (ex-officio)

Endowment

Steve Combs
Hal Kamm
David Mitchell
Gib Mitchell
Cindy Woodling
Nancy Morris (ex-officio)

Pastor's Annual Report 2022

In January 2014, I began as your Senior Pastor. Over the last nine years, I have sought faithfully, prayerfully, and (certainly) less-than-perfectly to be your pastor in such a time as this. Over nine years we have seen changes in staff, membership, church attendance with the advent/addition of online worship (which is here to stay), Christian Education, culturally, politically, economically, and (to top off the change sundae) a global pandemic. There have been changes in my family. I still remember enrolling Ethan and Olivia in elementary school; in 2023 both will be at Florida State University. There have been changes personally, in some ways I am not the same person the Search Team interviewed in October of 2013. What has stayed the same, the constant in the midst of the shifting sands is the Spirit of our church. I think of the hymn we sang at my installation, Called As Partners in Christ Service. Here is the first stanza:

*Called as partners in Christ's service, called to ministries of grace,
We respond with deep commitment fresh new lines of faith to trace.
May we learn the art of sharing, side by side and friend with friend,
Equal partners in our caring To fulfill God's chosen end.*

I realize and recognize more than ever that we are partners. Thank you to our amazing staff: Greg Chestnut, Susan Fields, our new bookkeeper ~ Pamela Gansch-Boythe, Sherry Glover, Douglas Kingsley, & Mark Swain. I am blessed by a caring, faithful, and loving group of leaders. Our moderators: Carol Fields, Jim Butterworth, Nancy Morris, and our new vice Moderator for 2023 – Harold Mezile. Robin Reich has faithfully served as treasurer. Thank you to Michael Johnston who began 2022 as Robin's co-treasurer. Mike needed to step away from the position and Dale Woodling graciously stepped in and will continue to serve as co-treasurer in 2023. When you see these folks at coffee hour, thank them! There are untold volunteer hours that go into making our church work. When you thank people, be sure to also share love with all who serve on Teams as well as those who lead our Covenants. The work of running the church is prayerfully discussed and decided month-by-month by those you sit next to and sing alongside on Sunday mornings. Speaking of singing, I am blessed with our choir! Every Sunday, our choir sings to the glory of God and laughs at my lame jokes (it is like having a laugh track!). Thank you to our choir, you embody the truth that to sing is to pray twice. I am blessed with now three Bible Study groups. One meets on Tuesday nights, one on Wednesday mornings, and now a group of people reading the Bible in a year. There is always space for YOU at the Bible Study table to listen, learn, and grow your faith. Most of all, I know every person who is reading this report loves and prays for me daily. With heartfelt, honest, gratitude, thank you. To quote another famous lyric, "Thank you for being a friend".

We are partners in Christ's service, called to ministries of grace and love that are needed now more than ever in this world. I know we will respond to the challenges and changes this year with fresh faith and open hearts. It is my deepest prayer that we will continue to share with each other and with the wider-Sarasota/Bradenton area in creative and caring ways. As Congregationalist, you, every single one of YOU, are the ministers of this church. I am called to offer what I can, where I can.

As we begin our 10th year together, I commit and covenant with you to continue to grow, love, service, and be a partner/pilgrim/faith friend on this unknowable journey before us. It remains a privilege and joy to be your pastor in such a time as this. With great love and God's blessing for the coming year ~~ Pastor Wes

Moderator Report 2022

What a remarkable year! It has been a joy and a privilege for your moderators---Past Moderator Carol Fields, Vice Moderator Nancy Morris and me—to serve the congregation in 2022. During a year filled with challenge and opportunity, we have been blessed and inspired through our work with church ministers, staff, leadership teams and the congregation. Every day we felt God's spirit guiding our congregation as together we found ways to love Him and serve our neighbors.

Our worship experience was a spiritual joy all year. Pastor Wes's inspiring sermons and uplifting meditations filled us with spiritual nourishment. Greg and the choir brought us soaring sacred music every week. We must also thank Douglas Kingsley and the Technology Team for providing our amazing digital ministry. Great thanks also to the Worship, Music/Fine Arts and Facilities Teams for their contributions to our worship experience this year.

It was a wonderful year at the Oasis spiritual center as well. Pastor Wes provided many opportunities for us to grow in our faith with weekly Bible studies, the Mapping Your Life series and the yearlong "Reading the Bible in 52 Weeks" challenge. Under the guidance of the Spiritual Education and Growth Team, the Oasis Center offered programs such as sacred drumming, artful prayer and Sacred Conversations on Race.

The congregation adapted to changing COVID conditions throughout the year. Many programs were offered in a hybrid format, masking requirements were modified, and the Fellowship Team once again hosted coffee hour after church to meet our congregation's need to gather in community again after years of COVID isolation. There were other opportunities for connection. COLLAGE regularly sponsored Zoom sessions as well as monthly luncheons. The UCC Women hosted a monthly lunchtime speaker series and, after a three-year absence, the UCC Men have resumed their monthly breakfast meetings.

We cared for one another and for others in so many ways. The Growing and Caring Team actively connected with homebound parishioners and welcomed many new church members this year. Sunday bus service to Plymouth Harbor has resumed, Pastor Wes led a youth confirmation class and scholarships were awarded to our graduates. The Mission Team sponsored Easter Love and Christmas Love offerings to assist worthy non-profit organizations and the congregation responded enthusiastically. The church again supported Alta Vista elementary students and participated in the Angel Tree program at Christmas.

Our Peace and Justice Team and three Covenant groups worked for justice. The church library was refurbished, and resources related to racial justice, LBGTQ issues and environmental concerns were added. The Racial Justice covenant group sponsored storyteller Valerie Tutson,

led seminars about the work of theologian Howard Thurman and hosted a Bread for the World simulation experience on poverty. Our ONA group developed educational videos and represented the church at Gay Pride weekend. The Green Team investigated solar panels for the church and initiated a composting program. Other Peace and Justice Team concerns included working for gun safety, addressing local hunger and participating in the SURE ministry.

All of this amazing activity would not have been possible without the work of the Budget, Finance and Stewardship Team and our co-treasurers as they tracked church finances, developed and managed the budget and led our stewardship campaign. During 2022, the team refined its operations manual, oriented new business office staff and conducted a successful stewardship campaign which has resulted in a balanced budget funding all church program activities in 2023.

All our efforts were dependent upon the extraordinary work of our wonderful staff and the support they received from the Staffing Team. We are so grateful for the amazing service of our ministers, Senior Pastor Wes Bixby and Minister of Music Greg Chestnut. We are blessed beyond measure that these spiritual leaders are here to guide us. Thanks also to Campus Manager Mark Swain for his steadfast devotion to our campus, to Office Administrator Sherry Glover for her welcoming nature and organizational skill and to Business Manager Sue Fields for her dedication in managing changes in business operations this year. And we welcome Pam Gansch-Boyke as our new bookkeeper!

Moderators also wish to thank the Church Council for all its hard work this past year. Members had many important decisions to make including changes in our mask policy. The Council also commissioned committees on Communications (a survey was conducted and church banners selected), Security (procedures to deter potential intruders) and Bylaw Revisions (charges to be considered will be brought to the Annual Meeting).

For our congregation, 2022 was a year marked by spiritual growth, fellowship, outreach and love for our neighbors, near and far. I have especially valued the opportunity to serve with and learn from Past Moderator Carol Fields and I am excited that one of our church's "saints", Nancy Morris, will lead the congregation in the coming year. I also welcome Harold Mezile who brings a lifetime of leadership and wisdom to the role of Vice Moderator in 2023. I have been blessed to be able to serve as your Moderator this past year and I thank God and you, my church family, for the great privilege to learn, grow and serve in this way.

In fellowship ~~ Jim Butterworth

Worship Report 2022

The year began with decisions regarding some of the same major Covid concerns as we had in 2021. In concert with Council we voted to adapt our mask wearing policies to align with community threat levels. When Covid cases declined, we supported making masks

optional. However, we recommended reserving the side pews for those who are still uncomfortable being without masks and sitting with those who are not wearing masks. With the return to live church services, we discussed whether to continue live-streaming, which the team unanimously supported, and we evaluated live-streamed services for their strengths and weaknesses and made recommendations.

We worked with representatives of the three covenant teams, ONA, Creation Justice and Racial Justice, on incorporating key covenant themes in the worship services. This involved recognition of special days, such as Martin Luther King Day or months such as Pride month through prayers, poetry, music, testimonies, sermons, and guest speakers. We also supported National Gun Violence Awareness Day sponsored by the Peace and Justice Team.

Communion continues to be a concern of the team. We have investigated options other than passing communion plates. One was the cup containing a grape for the wine and a small piece of bread. Two others involve containers with juice and a wafer. When we see how the newest container works out, we will decide whether to continue offering two options or just one.

Impetus for a security committee came from the Worship Team, and two of our members serve on the committee. As the Security Committee compiled information, we realized that we needed to change our procedures for ushers. New guidelines have been established and a call for and training of ushers resulted in 25 individuals signing up. One of the requirements of the ushers is to remain in the narthex during the service. A speaker has been purchased so that ushers can listen to the service while in the narthex.

Other decisions made during the year included when to have outdoor services versus indoors at 9 o'clock, and the types of services during lent and the number and types of services Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. We also prepared a service during lent in which we adapted stories from the Action Bible book by David Cook entitled *Christmas 25 Stories about Jesus' Arrival*. The final decision was to purchase new furniture for the narthex which should help the flow of traffic and improve its appearance.

Facilities & Grounds Report 2022

The following projects were completed by the team:

Installation of new blinds and valances in the administrative area.

Chapel interior was painted.

Library was painted. New carpeting will be installed soon.

Soffit around chapel and administrative building was repaired.

Labyrinth and sidewalks were power washed.

Platform for camera stand in the sanctuary was completed.

New exterior doors were installed in Rooms 8 and 9.

Locks on doors in rooms 8 and 9 were repaired.

Broken window in Outreach Building was replaced.

Doorstops were installed in Oasis and Project 180.

Sink was repaired in Project 180.

Supervised the Boy Scout Project of revamping the garden along the side of the church which included total removal of existing overgrown shrubs and plants, cleanup of the grounds and installation of new plants, border and 2 trellises. Then, arrangement for the church irrigation system was extended to cover the new plantings.

Skimmer for irrigation was repaired.

Periodic trimming and weeding of the church grounds and removal of debris was done.

Entrance sign cap was rebuilt. New fence panels were ordered to display new banners reflecting the mission of First Congregational United Church of Christ.

Ice maker was repaired in Syster Hall. New coffee maker was installed for Syster. New stove and freezer were purchased and installed in Syster Hall.

New programmable thermostats were installed in Oasis and Syster. Many other miscellaneous jobs were accomplished.

Respectfully submitted by Chris Cooper.

Fellowship & Special Events Report 2022

The stated mission of the Fellowship and Special Events Team is to plan and support events that create opportunities for fellowship, enjoyment and social interaction within the congregation and a welcome to visitors and newcomers. Following Covid protocols and lingering concerns about social interaction limited our team's offerings and success this year. In the fall we were able to resume Coffee Hour Fellowship time after the 11am worship service on the first and third Sundays of the month. For now, this schedule will continue. Hopefully in 2023, we will have more teams participate in hosting a coffee hour, more frequent coffee hours, and occasional special events. Stay tuned!

I thank my team members for their help and participation along with the members of the congregation who donated food items and/or joined us for fellowship.

Respectfully yours ~ Sandy Smith, Fellowship Chair

Budget, Finance & Stewardship Report 2022

The team, consisting of Ed Andersen, Bill Brackett, Jerry Long, Gibson Mitchell, Steve Combs, Sue Fields, and with the hard work of the co-treasurers Mike Johnston, Robin Reich, and Dale Woodling. God has blessed First Congregational UCC! Our congregation stepped up to the plate and hit a home run in 2022, despite the economic downturn. 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 the unknown. 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 the Financial Guidelines and began its implementation
- 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 Zoomed A LOT.

Growing & Caring Report 2022

Being new to this team, we began the year describing the role our team plays in both “growing” our church family and in “caring” for each other. I am truly grateful for the insight, wisdom, love, and care this team provides so freely to many in our church. Following that initial team meeting, we instituted a “Care Team Report” that we share monthly with Pastor Wes to keep him in the know.

After limited opportunities to truly welcome new members due to Covid concerns, it was wonderful to welcome 35 new members during our February, June, and November sessions. An additional four new members met with us in November and will arrange to join when they are again in town in early 2023. Besides preparing a display of each new member with a brief bio, we have also included the information in our newsletters to assist everyone in recognizing and welcoming these new friends.

We have asked copies of our newsletter be made available in the Narthex for any visitors, and for a return of the pew pads to register attendance.

In April we hosted Easter fellowship time with an Ice Cream Social and invited Dr. Sara Little to attend our monthly meeting to discuss the “Telecare Team Concept” which led to an all-church survey to determine each persons preferred method of receiving communication—another effort to care and provide.

In June we invited Dr. Craig Collemer to speak to us on “Setting Boundaries” where he also shared information on “Listening”—both have been very helpful to our team.

We instituted the “90+ Wise Card Shower” which is mentioned in the Midweek Message and Newsletter to encourage ALL to send out cards to this special group.

With Brenda Robinson’s enthusiastic embrace, we provided our “Tree of Life” for All Saints Day remembrance and prepared angel saints for each person we lost. We plan to continue this new endeavor.

I am forever thankful for Sandi Armstrong, Nancy Arnzen, Kathy Combs, Priscilla Crumel, Carol Hagglund, Maggie Revere, Carol Seltzer, and Nancy Morris—our moderator representative that attends every meeting.

With gratefulness ~ Carol McCloud, chair

Missions Report 2022

The Mission Team continues to focus on our Christmas and Easter Love Offerings. This year we have involved our Covenant Teams in helping us to find appropriate organizations to include in these offerings. We raised 17,600 dollars for Easter Love in 2022, up from 13,500 in 2021. Our Christmas Love Offering was \$15,801 as of January 9, 2023; up(?) from 15,322 dollars in 2021. We continue to make use of the Flanzer Trust and the Heindl Funds to increase our giving. We again raised funds in August for Alta Vista Elementary School as a part of being a good neighbor and this year we received 5,030 dollars towards that. In December we made 24 centerpieces for Sarasota Point.

In addition to our ongoing projects this year we donated 2500 dollars of our savings to victims of Hurricane Ian and were able in a week with use of the midweek message to add 1545 dollars to that from congregational donations. We gave that money using the Patterson Fund who matched our 4045 dollars. We also donated 1000 dollars to the Crop Walk in February as they were doing the walk in honor of Reverend Paul Binder. We are working on a relationship with Sarasota Point and will send them information on the Women's Club inviting any residents who are able to attend.

We are looking forward to welcoming two new members to the team in 2023, Terri Crawford and Nancy Taylor. However we will miss our two members moving off the team, Kate Eaton and Joy Kuhn. They have been excellent team members always willing to help with any project and we are grateful for their hard work.

Music & Fine Arts Report 2022

The wonderful members of the Music & Fine Arts Team have continued to serve together in 2022 to ensure that music and fine arts remain strong at First UCC and we did so with commitment, and creativity. As chairperson I want to extend my deepest thanks for the opportunity to serve this wonderful team!

Although we were still wearing masks, it was a joy to begin choir rehearsals in September. Some of the musical contributions we have experienced were:
Artist in Residence Kathy Bullock, brought us new ways of creating music
Thanks to technology, the congregation has been able to enjoy our music and worship online as well as in person. Thank you, Douglas Kingsley.
Thanksgiving and Christmas the Sarasota Orchestra Brass Quintet joined us for joyous and inspirational music collaborations.
Our Chapel was ablaze in beautiful candlelight as Sorello Duo (Natalie and Rebecca Helm) returned for a Christmas Concert on November 28th.
Christmas Eve Services were beautifully crafted through word with music provided by Betsy and Fernando Traba, Natalie Helm, Meghan Jones, and Hannah Cope
Our Minister of Music, Greg Chestnut, has not as yet taken his sabbatical
The MFA Team looks forward to another year of sharing and creating experiences that will be inspiring to our Church Family and beyond.

Peace & Justice Report 2022

The Peace and Justice Network has provided time at the beginning of each meeting for each of our three Covenants, Creation Justice, Open and Affirming, and Racial Justice to share their planning for new activities and their achievements for the month. Each Covenant has designed and commissioned a banner (unfortunately Hurricane Ian has caused the removal of these banners for now). Each team has a movable Book Cart to display their carefully selected literature at chosen times and events.

Covenant activities included but were not limited to the below:

Creation Justice:

- Hosted a Recycling & Composting Workshop on Feb. 17, 2022
- Set up a Compost Station on our church Campus
- Rev. Sarah Melcher gave a presentation at the Fl Conference Fall meeting and preached on the significance of Earth Day at FCUCC with Liturgy from the Team.
- Extensive research is being done on feasibility of Solar Energy alternatives on our campus.
- Helped celebrate World Hunger Sunday with the Breads of the World Service
- At the request of Brooks Berndt, Barbara Smith Bacon participated in a UCC webinar on how to become a creation justice Church, from working toward designation to coordinating with other congregations and engaging youth. Here is a link: <https://youtu.be/PxuDYU4YI0g>
- Successfully launched a composting pilot program in partnership with Sunshine Community Composting.
- Worked with Facilities & Grounds on new native plantings in the Butterfly Garden, and labeling the specimens in the Garden.

Racial Justice

- Congregation Approved the Racial Justice Covenant at the Annual Meeting on Jan. 30, 2022
- New Town Trolley tour of Newtown -March
- Sarasota Conference on Spirituality, “The Thoughts and Spirituality of Howard Thurman” in April.
- Wealth Gap Simulation - by Florence French from Bread For the World in November.
- Valerie Tutson, An African American storyteller presented in October.

COLLAGE/ONA

- With help from Douglas Kingsley COLLAGE was able to complete two Videos -
 1. How Our Church became an Open and Affirming (ONA) Church and
 2. The History of COLLAGE featuring interviews with our early founders.
- Participated in Web Seminar in June with other UCC congregation leaders facilitated by Neal Watkins, Minister of Congregational Life, Florida Conference UCC.
- The Outreach Coordinator of ALSO Youth, Christine Grossman, gave a presentation about the ALSO Youth organization at our Collage lunch in Sept and another presentation on New Gender Terms and Fluidity in November.
- A Trans Day of Remembrance Service was held in Nov. in our Memorial Garden.
- COLLAGE participated in Pride in the Park in Sarasota in Oct. At least 51 engaged with us at our table. We are delighted new visitors have been attending services.

The Peace and Justice Network Supported St Andrews UCC’s “Paul Binder Memorial CROP Hunger Walk along with our Mission team in March as a fund contributors and walkers. P&J Network updated their Church By-laws.

P & J Network Team continues to advocate for the following Justice teams in our church:

SURE: Rev. Dr. Laurie Etter

- SURE has a new Chief Executive, Dai Thao.
- Nehemiah Assembly at our church on 4/5/22 with over 240 people attending.
- Advocated for a new pre-arrest diversion program proposed by the State Attorney Ed Brodsky.
- The Adult Civil Citation initiative has now been implemented in Sarasota County.
- Affordable Housing/Rentals will be the new initiative for SURE in 2023.

PROJECT 180: Pamela Gore-Mead

- The 2022 Strong Voices season explored new research, the symptoms of the disease of addictions, life during active addiction, the transformative power of active recovery, and the efforts currently being made to take the disease of addiction into account to systemically reform our justice system.

-January 28, 2022. “Understanding Addiction: The Science Behind the Disease and Its Application in the Criminal Justice System.”

-May 13, 2022. “Before and After Recovery: From Despair to Hope.” Moderated by Alan Tobiason, Purpose House Transitional Homes, the panel discussion was about a person’s life during active addiction—the fall from mainstream life, life on the street, the misery and despair—and how one can regain stability through active recovery.

-September 23, 2022. “Lives in the Balance: How We Can Help.”

BRADY: Carol Rescigno

-Continues to hold BRADY Bayfront Rallies on Thursdays at 4 pm.

-Brady and our church both signed on to the Gun Violence Awareness Day Proclamation and Wore Orange for June 3 Gun Violence Awareness Day.

-Brady’s Season Celebration in May hosted Ryan Morales to speak on changes in gun registration

-A Vigil for Gun Violence Victims was held in our church in December with music from Jane Hunder’s chorus and was well attended by Church and Community advocates.

COMMUNITY MEALS: Carol Hagglund Chair and Organizer

-Our Church continues to participate in preparing and serving meals at St. Paul’s Lutheran Church on the fourth Tuesday of each month. Attendance was down during COVID high months but is now steadily growing. Thanksgiving and Christmas were special meals of the season cooked by Sandy Smith.

Submitted by ~ Barbara Shaver & Sara Little

Spiritual Education & Growth Report 2022

The Spiritual Education and Group Team, along with the Oasis Team, had a very active year. We are continuing to live into our Oasis Center for Reflection and Renewal. This year we continued to support the weekly gatherings of Sacred Conversations on Race led by Jim Crumel and two Bible studies led by Pastor Wes. We continued to support the twice a month gathering for Drumming as a Spiritual Practice led by Greg Chestnut. We supported Artful Prayer Group’s monthly gatherings led by Cindy Woodling, along with Rev. Donna Papenhausen, Lindsey Huddleston, Brenda Robinson, Dawn Swain, Greg Chestnut and Pastor Wes. We hosted FEAST classes in March. We are grateful to Greg Chestnut, Lynne Woodman, and Marylou Lindsey for offering three amazing sessions.

We also planned several youth events to Tree-Umps, Pancakes on Ash Wednesday, and a movie night watching *Enchanto*.

With recent By-law changes, the Oasis working group has formally merged under the umbrella of Spiritual Education and Growth, we look forward to 2023 continuing to find ways we can grow our faith as a church.

Staffing Report 2022

At the beginning of the year, Clarence Rogers joined the existing Team of Linda Pursley, Dennis Crooks and Dick Miller.

The Team continues to work to keep pace with the continuing changes in the staffing needs of the Church as we emerge from the Pandemic. 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. Part-time positions are Media Specialist Doug Kingsley, as well as Office Administrator, Business Manager, Bookkeeper (formerly the Financial Administrator) and four Choir Section Leaders.

Throughout the year we have continued to update job descriptions. Special attention has been given to changes for staff working with the Treasurers and Finance Team. In doing so, we consulted with Kerkering Barbario to ensure we are in compliance with best standards of practice. Working with Greg, we also wrote new Conditions of Employment (which includes the job description) for the four Choir Section Leaders. We also completely rewrote the Staffing By-Laws to incorporate the many changes over the past three years.

We welcomed three new Staff members this year. Business Manager Sue Fields joined early in 2022, Office Administrator Sherry Glover in May and Bookkeeper Pam Gansch-Boythe in December to replace Julian Bermudez, who resigned in October. The Team looks forward to entering the new year with the church fully staffed.

Respectfully submitted ~~ Dick Miller

Endowment Committee Report 2022

In accordance with the church by laws, the endowment fund distributes 4% of the undesignated funds annually. A total of \$55,719 was distributed for 2022, \$20,633 of other designated. " The Undesignated Endowment Fund was beneficiary of \$1,600 from the Joan Beach estate and \$10,000 from the Melvin Kester estate. The designated fund received a donation of \$20,000 from the Richard Hayes estate."

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.

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

Warren Bacon & Barbara Smith-Bacon

Joan Beach *

Greg Chestnut

Craig Collemer

Phyllis Collins

Helaine Eckstein

Carol Hagglund

Lucy Hedrick

Lynn Jones

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

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
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

The statement of Endowment fund activity for First Congregational UCC ~ year ending December 31, 2022 can be found in the printed/paper budget financials. Please contact the church office to receive.

Annual Report ~ Racial Justice Mission Group

The Racial Justice Mission Group was established in 2021. Our goals were:

1. Establish a Racial Justice Covenant that reflects the rich history and tradition of our congregation.
2. Develop opportunities to help us increase our understanding of the biblical principles of justice and love of neighbor and the history and impact of racial injustice.
3. Partner with the Church's two other covenant groups: Creation Justice and Open and Affirming.

The Racial Justice Covenant was unanimously approved at the 2022 Annual Meeting and has served as a context for many constructive and ongoing conversations within our congregation as well as with the larger community.

The Covenant also served as a platform for expanded activities promoting racial justice among our congregation and with our community partners. This led to deeper understandings within the church and several successful events with strategic partners. All with the goal of promoting racial justice.

- ❖ Thurman Conference in April Friday and Saturday multi faith conference, Sunday worship led by members of the Racial Justice Mission Group.

- ❖ African American Storyteller Valarie Tutson weekend in October
 - Betty J. Johnson Library/Booker High School on Friday
 - A wonderful Saturday workshop and Sunday Sermon at 1st UCC (10/22 and 10/23 respectively). Members of our congregation were joined by our friends from Library and the Unitarian church
- ❖ Racial Wealth Gap Simulation
 - Saturday morning workshop where we were joined by members of the Unitarian Universalist Church and Church of the Palms, Presbyterian Church.
 - One of the most concise and on point workshops explaining why the racial wealth gap continues to haunt our country—how it happened, why it persists and how understanding the drivers of this issue can lead to effective solutions.
- ❖ Partnership with our other 2 covenant groups in our expanding Resource Center

The Racial Justice Mission Group sincerely thanks the congregation for the emotional, intellectual and monetary support for our efforts. As we move into 2023 we will continue to foster understanding, partnership and to paraphrase the later Senator John Lewis, promote “Good Actions”.

Annual Report 2002 – Creation Justice

The Creation Justice Team/Green Team was very busy in 2022. One goal was to supply books for their new Library cart, a cart which can be rolled to any location so that people will have access to reading materials focused on creation and environmental sustainability. They are planning a weekend program for Feb. 25-26, 2023. The keynote speaker and preacher will be Brooks Berndt, Minister for Environmental Justice for the United Church of Christ, the author of *Cathedral on Fire: A Church Handbook for the Climate Crisis*.

At the request of Brooks Berndt, Barbara Smith Bacon participated in a UCC webinar on how to become a creation justice Church, from working toward designation to coordinating with other congregations and engaging youth. Here is a link: <https://youtu.be/PxuDYU4YI0g> Sarah Melcher, in partnership with Rev. Dr. Robert Shore-Goss, presented a workshop at the Florida Conference’s Annual Gathering on “Green Preaching.”

The Green Team helped with planning for worship services integrating liturgy focused on Creation Justice.

The Green Team successfully launched a composting pilot program on campus in partnership with Sunshine Community Compost. Fifteen households are currently participating. The New York Times stated in a recent article that household food waste is one of the greatest contributors to air pollution, greater even than commercial air travel, so we see this as a very important issue.

We hosted a Recycling & Composting Workshop on Feb. 17, 2022.

The Green Team worked with Facilities & Grounds on new native plantings in the Butterfly Garden, and on labeling the specimens in the Garden.

Members of the Green Team have done extensive research on the feasibility of Solar Energy alternatives on our campus.

The Green Team helped celebrate World Hunger Sunday with breads from the world during the coffee hour.

Lay Visitation Ministry 2022 Annual Report

“Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply.”

— **Stephen R. Covey**, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*

Deep and compassionate listening does not come easily. Most of us were not taught to be effective listeners. We may have taken a course on being an effective speaker, but seldom do we have an opportunity to develop our skills as an effective listener. With practice, we can become compassionate and caring listeners of one another. That is the premise of the *ministry of presence* of the Lay Visitation Ministry Team. We seek to be truly present and listen deeply to the members of our congregation who we visit, telephone, and reach out to in a variety of other ways. Often these individuals long for someone to simply listen with compassion and a caring heart. Deep listening is a precious gift we can freely give one another.

The Lay Visitation Ministry Team continues to reach out to the members and friends of our church family who are confined to their home, in a nursing, rehabilitation, assisted living facility 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. Before Covid brought significant changes to our lives, we carried out our ministry primarily through our in-person visits. These 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 at that time. The LVM team immediately started extending the church’s outreach to those we were visiting primarily through telephone calls and sending cards. In the last half of 2022, some visits resumed, and telephone calls and cards being sent have continued.

Our team continued to meet monthly for a two-hour time of education, support, and reflection via Zoom. Our time together consists of an opening devotional, remembering church members who have passed from this life to their eternal life with God, 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 a time of spiritual 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 through whatever means seems most appropriate each month.

In partnership with the Growing and Caring Team, we have sought to reach the maximum number of our members and friends who are in hospitals, nursing homes, rehabilitation facilities, or in their homes as well as to those who have lost a loved one in the past year.

The members of the team are: Janet Baker, Pauline Geary, Alleyne Kess, Sherry Mange, Dick Miller, David Pitt, 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.

First Congregational UCC Women of Sarasota 2022 Annual Report

The First UCC Women is open to all members of the church. They meet in Syster Hall on the first Tuesday of the month from October to May for fellowship, luncheon, and a program. The programs presented were all well received with an average of 30-35 attending each month. One of the highlights is the December meeting where we fill and wrap shoeboxes for seniors.

Through the generosity of members, we were able to fill over 50 boxes which were delivered to Meals on Wheels for distribution to homebound seniors.

The Memorial Committee hosted several receptions following the Celebration of Life services held for departed members of the church. The famous memorial punch and desserts are provided by the committee.

As in the past, First UCC Women, through the generosity of its members were able to contribute over \$2600 to nonprofits for mission work. A new coffee pot for Syster Hall was purchased.

Respectfully submitted ~ Nancy Morris, President