

Flowers Given By: **Kathie Stewart**, in honor of her two sons, **Graham** and **Ford**

PRELUDE

Just a Closer Walk with Thee
Don Smith, trumpet; Deborah Smith, piano

Traditional

INVITATION to WORSHIP

One: From the places we've walked and wandered this week, come and sing out with full voice to God.

Many: From moments of service, ministry, mission, coming alongside those who cross our path and reaching out with open hearts, we gather to worship.

One: In this very room, God's presence is here. We remember the truth that we are formed in God's image and "Beloved" is our first, middle, and last name.

Many: In the mystery of this hour, we come with praise and prayer embraced by God.

One: For God's goodness and love greets us here and awakens our song.

*OPENING HYMN

Blessed Assurance

#473

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! O what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of the Spirit, washed in Christ's blood. Refrain

Refrain **This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long; This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.**

Perfect submission, perfect delight! Visions of rapture now burst on my sight; Angels descending, bring from above, echoes of mercy, whispers of love. Refrain

Perfect submission, all is at rest, I in my Savior am happy and blessed; Watching and waiting, looking above, filled with God's goodness, lost in Christ's love. Refrain

RECEPTION of NEW MEMBERS

We warmly welcome: **Sylvia Abreu & Michael Keane; Scott Cooper; Lori & Kelly Daniel; Roger Hazard & Matthew Jacobs; Heather Spear; and Shelly Taylor.** We welcomed **Sheila Gossett & John Botti** last week.

LITANY for LENT

One: Because we'd rather fast-forward or forget the moments we said or did that less than brilliant thing,

Many: God meet us in our humanness this morning.

One: Because our deep desire for the quick fix, instant gratification, and the truth that we are finite creatures with infinite desires,

Many: God meet us in our humanness this morning.

One: Because our go to emotion is guilt rather than growth, because we feel ashamed more than an unfolding grace of gradual awakening,

Many: God meet us in our humanness this morning.

One: Because our need to be seen as witty and wise motivates what we do and say;

because we struggle to self-define and stay connected.

Many: God meet us in our humanness this morning.

One: Because life is not a project to complete or an assignment for a grade, because life is an unfinished symphony,

Many: God meet us in our humanness this morning.

SPECIAL MUSIC

Here's One

trad. Spiritual

ENGAGING SCRIPTURE

Matthew 15:21-28

²¹ Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²² Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." ²³ But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." ²⁴ He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵ But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." ²⁶ He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." ²⁷ She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸ Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed from that moment.

SERMON

Why is *This* in the Gospels??

We cannot always choose our wake-up calls. Often they appear in the unlikely guises of people we would rather not see or circumstances we would rather not face. Rose Mary Dougherty

OFFERING/ANTHEM:

Kyrie eleison, Lord Have Mercy on Us

Hans Leo Hassler

PASTORAL PRAYER and LORD'S PRAYER (SUNG)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

*CLOSING HYMN

Great Is Your Faithfulness

#423

Great is your faithfulness, O God, Creator, with you no shadow of turning we see, You do not change, your compassions they fail not; all of your goodness forever will be. *Refrain*

Refrain **Great is your faithfulness! Great is your faithfulness! Morning by morning new mercies I see; All I have needed your hand has provided, Great is your faithfulness, God, unto me!**

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest, sun, moon, and stars in their courses above, Join with all nature in manifold witness to your great faithfulness, mercy, and love.

Refrain

Pardon for sin and a peace so enduring, your own dear presence to cheer and to guide. Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow, blessings all mine and ten thousand beside. *Refrain*

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

arr. Budahl

Trumpets: Russ Bullis, Gary Dowty, and Don Smith; Piano: Deborah Smith

Announcements ~ Sunday, March 19, 2023

Last Chance to join us for FEAST (Friends Eating and Studying Together) this Thursday 10:30 am to noon on March 23. We begin in Syster Hall with refreshments at 10:30 am.

Artful Prayer ~ Looking for creative and fun ways to add to your prayer life? All supplies provided. **This offering is hybrid, please contact the church office for the link.**

Sacred Conversations on Race - “The difference between being “not racist” and antiracist” - TED Talk by Ibram Kendi. **This offering is hybrid, please contact the church office for the link.**

Finally! Coming up in March - the long postponed First Congregational UCC **Chili Cook-Off!** All are welcome **Sunday, March 26, at 12:15 in Syster Hall.** The congregation will vote on their favorite, and the winner will receive a modest prize and lots of praise!

Please put **Saturday, April 1st** on your calendar and help us prepare our sanctuary for Holy Week. We will Murphy Soap Oil the pews, vacuum the cushions, and clean our worship space. We will begin at **9 am** and many hands make light the work. Thank you!!

Bread for the World ~~ Opportunities to Learn and Advocate

On February 21, Church Council agreed that First Congregational UCC would become members of Bread for the World, a Christian organization that believes “we can end hunger in our lifetime”. Bread works to make this a reality through educating and equipping people to advocate for policies and programs that can hale end hunger in the U.S and around the world. You will soon have two opportunities to learn more about Bread for the World and participate in a simple and important form of advocacy.

On March 26, during the Chili Cook Off at noon in Syster Hall, you can participate in the annual Offering of Letters. This year the Offering of Letters focuses on the Farm Bill which expires in September and needs to be reauthorized by congress. This bill is a vital piece of legislation that impacts farms, food systems and climate. You can encourage leaders to pass this bill by writing heartfelt letters to our representatives advocating renewal of the Farm Bill. Template letters will be provided to use in crafting your own letters or that you can fill out, sign and have mailed.

On April 2, after both services, there will be Meet and Greet with Sandy Lindahl who works with Bread for the World. She will talk about the intersection between, hunger, climate change and racial injustice. These gatherings will also be an opportunity to answer your questions. Please see Rev. Ellen Marsey, Jim Butterworth, Nancy Taylor or Carol Hagglund with questions.

Holy Week 2023:

Palm Sunday, April 2nd at 9 and 11 am ~ Join us for the triumphant entry into Jerusalem as we wave palm branches and sing out our Hosannas!! Our Chancel Choir will sing at both the 9 and 11 am services. Our 11 am service will be livestreamed. All are welcome and bring a friend!

Maundy Thursday, April 6th at 7 pm in the sanctuary ~ We gather around the table with the disciples on the last night of Jesus' life to experience and encounter the Bread of Life. Members of the Worship Team will help lead our service and we will celebrate Holy Communion. This service will be livestreamed.

Good Friday, April 7th at noon in the sanctuary ~ Beneath the cross of Jesus we gather to open our hearts to the One who meets us in our pain. Our Chancel Choir will sing and this service will be livestreamed so you can watch at any time.

Easter Sunday Celebration, April 9th at 9 and 11 am ~ We gather to sing and share the gospel truth, Christ is risen, he is risen indeed, Alleluia!! We welcome our brass quintet and choir at both services. 11 am will be livestreamed. All are welcome and bring a friend.

Come one, come all, to the UCC Women's lunch and program on **Tuesday, April 4, at 11:30 a.m. in Syster Hall**. We look forward to showcasing "Insights into Selby Gardens," presented by Wendy Deming, Chief Operating Officer of Marie Selby Botanical Gardens since July 2018. Wendy will speak about how Marie Selby chose Sarasota Bay for her home and tell us about her choice of trees and plants. She will also highlight their visions for the future. Luncheon costs \$12. Sign up after either Sunday service or call the church office at 941-953-7044.

There is room in our Easter faith when our Good Fridays persist!! We will be hosting a **grief group starting on Thursday, April 13th at 4 pm in the Oasis Center**. This is an opportunity to share together, support one another, and offer God's love. This group is open to all whose hearts are heavy because grief takes many forms and faces. Please sign up by calling the church office.

Artful Prayer, April 13th at 2 pm ~ Oasis Center or Zoom ~ Join in creating Artful Prayer Doodles (or "tangles"). No art experience required. All supplies will be provided for the in-person session. If joining via Zoom, you will need: heavy paper or card stock cut into 4 inch squares, black pens (preferably non-smear Art Pens), soft pencil, Q-tips, optional colored pencils. Contact the church office for the zoom link.

Calendar:

Sunday, March 19

Sunday Worship, 9 am, sanctuary

Sunday Worship, 11 am, in the sanctuary and online

Fellowship Time, noon, Syster Hall

Reading the Bible in the Year, 1 pm, Hybrid ~ Oasis and Zoom

Monday, March 20

Green Team, 10 am, Zoom

Covenant Groups Conversation, 1 pm, Zoom

Reading the Bible in a Year, 3 pm, Hybrid ~ Oasis and Zoom

Tuesday, March 21

COLLAGE Advisory group, 11 am

Drumming as a Spiritual Practice, 3 pm, Oasis Center

Church Council, 6:30 pm, Oasis Center

Wednesday, March 22

Bible Study, 11 am, Hybrid ~ Oasis Center and Zoom

Choir, 7 pm, Chapel

Thursday, March 23

FEAST, 10:30 am, Syster Hall and Oasis Center

Sunday, March 26

Sunday Worship, 9 am, sanctuary

Sunday Worship, 11 am, in the sanctuary and online

Chili Cookoff Celebration, noon, Syster Hall

Bread for the World Offering of letters, noon, Syster Hall