

March 26, 2023

11 a.m.

Flowers given by **Barbara Ralph**, in memory of **Harold C. Ralph**. **Melanie Kalisak** in memory of her **dad's** birthday. In loving memory of **Carol Johnston** from the **Family**,

PRELUDE

Air, from Water Music Suite

G. F. Handel

CALL to WORSHIP

One: In these Lenten days, we ponder the ways the word, "Cross" falls from our lips.

Many: **We talk about doing the *crossword* or being at a *crossroad* or using the *crosswalk* or feeling caught in the *crosshairs* of the multitude of topics today.**

One: We can *crosscheck* something we heard.

Many: **We can physically cross our arms when we are uncomfortable and in pain.**

One: We celebrate the One who lived a cross-shaped life grounded on earth, reaching upward and outward, openly embracing the good and brokenness.

Many: **We open our ears, hearts, and sacred imaginations anew as we *cross* over into worship this morning.**

*OPENING HYMN

Jesus, Keep Me near the Cross

#197

**Jesus, keep me near the cross; there a precious fountain, free to all, a healing stream,
flows from Calvary's mountain. *Refrain***

*Refrain: In the cross, in the cross, be my glory ever, till my ransomed soul shall find rest
beyond the river.*

**Near the cross, a trembling soul, love and mercy found me; there the bright and morning
star sheds its beams around me. *Refrain***

**Near the cross! O Lamb of God, bring its scenes before me; help me live from day to day
with its shadow o'er me. *Refrain***

**Near the cross I'll watch and wait, hoping, trusting ever, till I reach the golden strand just
beyond the river. *Refrain***

*OPENING PRAYER

**God, we know the deep truth that our hymnals are theological textbooks, in the words we
sing we hear truths deeper than could ever be preached. Let all mortal flesh keep silence
for we are standing on holy ground and in this very room there is quite enough love for
one like me.**

Pause.

**O God, this is the day You have made, we will rejoice and be glad; we gather open to the
promise that as morning guilds the skies awakening our hearts to cry, "Let Jesus Christ
be praised!"**

Pause.

**There is a sweet, sweet Spirit in this place; so let Your Spirit of gentleness and restlessness
stirs us from complacency to get caught up in the melody of Your still singing voice.**

Pause.

Conducting and composing God, we are Your people and ours is the journey that You promise to always go before, beside, behind, and within. Help us lean into the promise of Your everlasting arms this day and every day. Amen.

*SUNG RESPONSE

Nearer, My God, to You

#606

Nearer, my God, to you, nearer to you. I'll bear the cross as Christ calls me to do and pray each day anew: Nearer my God, to you, nearer my God, to you, nearer to you.

ENGAGING SCRIPTURE

Matthew 16:24-28

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? ²⁷ "For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. ²⁸ Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

SERMON

A Cross Shaped Life

OFFERING INVITATION

ANTHEM

All Things New

Elaine Hagenberg

*Light after darkness, gain after loss, Strength after weakness, crown after cross;
Sweet after bitter, hope after fears, Home after wandering, praise after tears
Alpha and Omega, Beginning and the end, He is making all things new. Springs of living water
Shall wash away each tear, He is making all things new
Sight after mystery, sun after rain Joy after sorrow, peace after pain; Near after distant, gleam
after gloom, Love after wandering, life after tomb*

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

When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

#224

When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the Christ of glory died, My richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, then, that I should boast, save in the death of Christ, my God; All the vain things that charm me most I sacrifice them to Christ's blood.

From sacred head, from hands, and feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down! Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown?

**Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small; Love so amazing,
so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.**

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Solemn Melody

Walford Davies

Announcements ~ Sunday, March 26, 2023

Today, March 26th is the UCC Chili Cook-Off at 12:15 in Syster Hall!

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 help end hunger in the U.S and around the world.

Today ~ March 26, during the Chili Cook Off 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.

NEXT SUNDAY, April 2, after both services, there will be a 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.

Please put **this coming 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 begin at **9 am** and many hands make light the work. **Thank you!!**

Our COLLAGE (LGBTQ + Allies) group will meet on **Tuesday, March 28th on Zoom at 11 am.** This is a wonderful chance to connect and catch up! There will be NO COLLAGE luncheon in April due to Easter. Our COLLAGE group will zoom on **Tuesday, April 11 and 25 at 11 am.** Community events for the LGBTQ Community ~ **Resist & Strategize Suncoast ~ Monday, April 3, 7-8 pm** at UU Church (3975 Fruitville Rd) for a community gather bringing together LGBTQ and allies of Sarasota finding ways to collaborate and work together. **Diversity Voices of Sarasota Concert** at Holley Hall (709 N Tamiami Trail) ~ Saturday, April 22 at 3 pm, cost is \$20.00 in advance. **AND another** concert by Diversity Voices ~ 25th Anniversary Purple Tie Celebration at the Sarasota Art Museum (1001 S. Tamiami) ~ Friday May 5 at 6:30. Tickets for both concerts can be found at www.diversitysarasota.org

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 a **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 worship 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 Chapel (please note change in venue)**. 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.

Among the not-so-great realities of giving up driving, either voluntarily or required, is the inability to get where you want to go. Coming to First Congregational on Sunday has been a ritual for many of our members, yet they no longer have the means to get to church. We are looking for volunteers who might be willing, not necessarily every Sunday, to offer a welcoming ride to church. Some of you are already doing this and you know how much it means to both of you. If you believe this is something you are being called to do, please let the

church office know. We are hopeful we can match you with someone who lives nearby. As is sometimes said, the road to a friend's house is always on the way. *The Growing & Caring Team*

Calendar:

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

Service for Carol Jeanine Johnston at 12:30 pm, Memorial Garden

Tuesday, March 28

COLLAGE (LGBTQ + Allies), Zoom, 11 am

Tuesday Night Bible Study, Zoom, 6:30 pm

Wednesday, March 29

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

Worship Team rehearsal, 1 pm, sanctuary

Choir, 7 pm, Chapel

Saturday, April 1

Sanctuary clean-up, 9 am

Sunday, April 2 ~ Palm Sunday

Sunday Worship, 9 am, sanctuary

Fellowship with **Sandy Lindahl**, 10 am, Syster Hall

Sunday Worship, 11 am, in the sanctuary and online

Fellowship with **Sandy Lindahl**, noon, Syster Hall

We encourage you to subscribe to the weekly **Midweek Message via your email** to keep connected with activities in the church.