

September 10, 2023~ 11:00 a.m.
First Congregational UCC ~ Sarasota



I am the true vine, and God is the vinegrower ~ John 15

September 10, 2023

11 a.m.

Flowers Given By: **Gib & Jeannie Mitchell**, in loving memory of our daughter,
Karyn Humphreys

PRELUDE

Arabesque No 1

Debussy

Cynthia Roberts-Greene, guest pianist & Choir Director

INVITATION to WORSHIP

One: Let us worship God who in the beginning sang creation into being.

Many: We celebrate God who continues to inspire our growth.

One: We celebrate our connections like the leaves of a vine.

Many: Just as no two leaves are the same, we honor each voice here.

One: We sing out in grateful praise with the snails and sloths and sparrows that join us
in worship.

Many: It is good to be here! Alleluia and Amen!

*OPENING HYMN *For the Beauty of the Earth*

**For the beauty of the earth, for the splendor of the skies, for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies, God of all, to you we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.**

**For the wonder of each hour of the day and of the night, hill and vale, and tree and flower,
sun and moon, and stars of the light, God of all, to you we raise this our hymn of grateful
praise.**

**For the joy of human love, brother, sister, parent, child, friends on earth, and friends
above, for all gentle thoughts and mild, God of all, to you we raise this our hymn of
grateful praise.**

**For the good that love inspires, for a world where none exclude, for a faith that never
tires, and for every heart renewed, God of all, to you we raise this our hymn of grateful
praise.**

*OPENING PRAYER

**Growing, gardening, generative, and generous God, thank you for the ways You nourish
our lives individually and collectively. Like our grandmothers who would sing to the
tomato and zucchini plants in the garden, You sing a love song that has spanned the
centuries. You tend our lives and carefully trim away the branches that bear no fruit.
You inspire and delight in the ways we grow. We honor that all creation is connected in
the web of life. Help these words awaken our sacred imagination, nurture our growth,
and help us stay grounded in You. In the name of the One who taught us that You are the
Gardener of our life, Jesus the Christ. Amen.**

*RESPONSE

Come to Tend God's Garden

**Come to tend God's garden, seeds of hope to sow, planting fields of justice, watching
mercy grow! In an arid wasteland, spread a verdant heath! In a land of tumult, cultivate**

**God's peace! Come to tend God's garden, seeds of hope to sow, planting fields of justice,
watching mercy grow!**

**As we tend God's garden, from its furrows rise stems of fresh beginnings, stretching
toward the skies! Graciousness, our meadow, joyfulness, our root, unity, our foliage,
righteousness, our fruit! As we tend God's garden, from its furrows rise stems of fresh
beginnings, stretching toward the skies!**

ENGAGING SCRIPTURE

John 15, selected verses

"I am the true vine, and God is the vinegrower. ² God removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. ⁴ Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. ⁹ As God has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my God's commandments and abide in God's love. ¹¹ I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing, but I have called you friends.

SERMON

Streams of Vines

ANTHEM

I Give to You a New Commandment

Peter Nardone

PASTORAL PRAYER and LORD'S PRAYER

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

Sent Forth by God's Blessing

Sent forth by God's blessing, our true faith confessing, the people of God from this dwelling take leave. The service is ended, O now be extended the fruits of our worship in all who believe. The seed of the teaching, receptive hearts reaching, shall blossom in action for God and for all. God's grace did invite us, and love shall unite us to work for God's realm and to answer the call.

With praise and thanksgiving to God ever living, the tasks of our everyday life we will face. Our faith ever sharing, in love ever caring, embracing God's children of each tribe and race. With your grace you feed us, with your light now lead us, unite us as one in this life that we share. Then may all the living with praise and thanksgiving give honor to Christ and that name which we bear.

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

To God Be the Glory
Cynthia Roberts-Greene, guest pianist & Choir Director

arr. Carter

ANNOUNCEMENTS ~ SUNDAY, September 10, 2023

We welcome **Cynthia Roberts-Greene** to the piano bench this morning while Greg is on vacation. We are grateful for her music ministry.

TODAY ~ COLLAGE visit from Tom Edwards, after worship Tom Edwards, LGBTQ+ Sarasota School Board member, he will share his thoughts on professional and personal experiences in the LGBTQ+ community. All church members are invited. Feel free to bring a friend. In lieu of a full luncheon, snacks will be available.

Sanctuary Re-deduction next Sunday, September 17 at both 8:45 am and 11 am.

Following the 11 am service, there is picnic featuring: fried chicken (ordered from Publix), drinks, and dessert will be provided. We invite you to provide a side dish (potato salad, macaroni salad, cole slaw, baked beans). Home-made and store bought are equally great.

Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity (SURE) ~ Monday, September 18th, at 6 p.m. at First Congregational United Church of Christ. We will hold our kickoff as well as a meet and greet with Mackenzie Grimes as the new lead organizer. First Congregational UCC will host our annual **House Meeting after both services on Sunday, October 15** in Syster Hall. Mackenzie is planning to participate with us this day.

Sacred Conversations on Race Continues on **September 13:** "The Urgency of Intersectionality" - TED Talks by Kimberle' Crenshaw. **September 27:** "We Need to Talk about an Injustice" - TED Talks by Bryan Stevenson All are welcome! You can join either in person in the **Oasis Center or on Zoom.** Please see Jim Crumel for more information

You are invited to an evening reception at the Lexow Gallery at the Unitarian Universalist Church (3975 Fruitville Rd) featuring our very own, **Brenda Robinson!!** The evening reception is on **Friday, September 22nd from 5-7 pm.** The Art Show is entitled, "Our Stories are in our Scars". The show runs from September 17-October 12. Come and support Brenda!

The Manasota Interracial Book Club (MIBC) fall meeting is hosting a panel discussion on **Saturday, September 30.** The meeting will take place from **10:00 am to 12:00 pm** at **First Presbyterian Church, 2050 Oak Street.** The panel will reflect on the question: "*What are the long term consequences of ignoring diversity, equity and inclusion in our society?*" Panel includes: **David Wilkins,** Esq and President, Manasota branch of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH); **Jill Lewis Spector,** 2nd Vice President, League of Women Voters of Florida Chair, LWV-FL & LWV-SRQ Education Action Teams; **Sharon Preston-Folta, Sr.** Account Executive with **WUSF Public Media in Tampa and Volunteer Programmer at WSLR 96.5 FM;** and **Pastor Wes. Renée James Gilmore,** Producer & Host of Empowering Voices at ABC7-WWSB will serve as moderator of the panel.

Project 180 is hosting a speaker and luncheon on October 19 at Michael's on East. Doors open 11:00 and program 11:30 to 1:00. *A Look Behind the Scenes: The Realities of Prisoner Reentry.* Laura I. Appleman, JD, discusses the myriad ways in which criminal justice costs—fees, fines, court costs, probation payments, mandatory classes, and non-payment penalties—affect reentering citizens and how these costs can lead to years of indebtedness. Professor Appleman is a member of the faculty at the College of Law at Willamette University in Salem, Oregon where she is the Van Winkle Melton Professor of Law and a University Research Integrity Officer. **Go to Project 180 to purchase tickets, \$40 each and include lunch.**

LGBTQ+ Grief Support Group ~ A safe place to find strength and hope through the sharing and support of other grieving LGBTQ+ individuals. Not a therapy group, but an open discussion with others suffering the loss of someone close to them, whether a spouse, partner, friend, or family member. A twice monthly meeting to share, and to listen, and to find your voice. Meetings in the **Oasis Center** ~ **Contact Cas @ casbgroup1234@gmail.com**

Do you have a special occasion coming up this summer? Do you enjoy the **flower arrangements** in the sanctuary each Sunday? If so, we have **the following Sundays available October 15th and October 29th.** Please contact the church office to reserve a Sunday.

SAVE THE DATE ~ Summer 2023 may well be remembered for Dangerous Floods and Deadly Wildfires, not to mention extreme heat. The scientists are telling us that the fires spread very quickly because the grasses are **invasive plants** rather than native. Have you ever driven north on I. 75 and seen the vast growth of kudzu, “the weed that ate the south,” on both sides of the highway? Every tree and bush and flower are covered by this invasive plant. What is the antidote to this and other plants gobbling up our world? The First UCC Women and the Green Team have assembled an **Environmental Panel: Why we must plant native flora in our gardens and be wary of invasive plants that destroy ecologies.** Join us on Tuesday, October 3, 2023, 11:30 am in Fellowship Hall. Panelists: Miri Hardy, Executive Director of the Friends of Myakka; Tom Heitzman, Sweet Bay Nursery; Lee Amos, Land Stewardship Manager, Conservation Foundation of the Gulf Coast. After the program, members of our Green Team will show us the native plants on our campus. Luncheon costs \$12. Sign up after either Sunday service or call the church office at 941-953-7044.

CALENDAR

Sunday, September 10 ~ Welcome Cynthia Roberts-Greene

Sunday Worship, 8:45 am, Chapel
Sunday Worship, 11 am, in **Syster Hall** and online
COLLAGE speaker, Tom Edwards
Reading the Bible in a Year, 1 pm, Oasis Center and Zoom

Monday, September 11

Facilities and Grounds, 10 am, Oasis Center and Zoom
Racial Justice Mission Group, 11 am, Zoom
Reading the Bible in a Year, 1 pm, Oasis Center and Zoom

Tuesday, September 12

Spiritual Education and Growth, 2 pm, Oasis Center and Zoom
Tuesday evening Bible Study, 6:30 pm, Zoom

Wednesday, September 13

Wednesday Morning Bible Study, 11 am, Oasis Center and Zoom
Sacred Conversations on Race, 3 pm, Oasis Center and Zoom

Thursday, September 14

Finance Team Meeting, 3 pm, Zoom

Sunday, September 17 ~ Sanctuary Rededication Sunday!!

Sunday Worship, 8:45 am, **Sanctuary**
Sunday Worship, 11 am, in **Sanctuary** and online
Celebration Picnic, noon, Syster Hall

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