

October 22, 2023~ 11:00 a.m.  
*First Congregational UCC ~ Sarasota*



ELIJAH PRAYS FOR RAIN

**October 22, 2023**

**11 a.m.**

Flowers given by: **Chuck Jarman**, in memory of Joe Heckman, **Gib & Jeannie Mitchell**, in memory of Gib's brother, Larry Mitchell & **Lisa MacBlane**, in honor of Wes Curry's 85<sup>th</sup> birthday.

PRELUDE

*Andante, from Sonata VI*

Felix Mendelssohn

INVITATION to WORSHIP (based on Psalm 95)

One: Let us sing out to God.

Many: **Sing out to the One who restores and renews us.**

One: Let us dance in God's presence, overflowing this place with praise.

Many: **In this place we encounter the Holy One who is hope, peace, joy, justice, and love.**

One: Immersed in the Infinite, we awaken to the deep truths of life.

Many: **We join in the unending song that began before any of us were born and will continue for years to come. Alleluia and Amen.**

\*OPENING HYMN

*We Worship You, God*

#26

**We worship You, God; Your power and Your love are blazoned abroad, around, and above; Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days, pavilioned in splendor, and girded with praise.**

**We tell of Your might, we sing of Your grace, whose robe is the light, whose canopy space; Your chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form, and broad is Your path on the wings of the storm.**

**The earth, with its store of wonders untold, Almighty, Your power has founded of old, Established it fast by a changeless decree, and round it You cast, like a mantle, the sea.**

**Your bountiful care, what tongue can recite? It breathes in the air, it shines in the light; It streams from the hills, it descends to the plain, and sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.**

**Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail, in You do we trust, nor find You to fail; Your mercies how tender, how firm to the end, our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend!**

\*OPENING PRAYER

**Gracious God when the obstacles loom large and we feel all alone, let Your Spirit wash over us. When we wonder if we can keep on keeping on, let Your strength saturate us. Holy God, we know what it is like to be Elijah facing down four hundred fifty prophets on that mountain top centuries ago. There are moments when the odds are not in our favor, and we want to wave the white flag of defeat. We can slip into cynicism or criticize anything and anyone that sounds hopeful. We confess our muscles of hope, peace, joy, and love have atrophied in these days. We don't always have the courage to face challenges. Yet, O God, as You did with Elijah, awaken us to the promise of Your presence and possibility in these days. In the name of the One we follow, Jesus the Christ. Amen.**

**O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come,  
our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home.**

**Before the hills in order stood, or earth received its frame,  
from everlasting you are God, to endless years the same.**

ENGAGING SCRIPTURE

1 Kings 18, *selected verses*

One: After many days the word of the Lord came to Elijah, in the third year of the drought, saying,

**Many: “Go, present yourself to Ahab; I will send rain on the earth.”**

One: When Ahab saw Elijah, Ahab said to him,

**Men: “Is it you, you troubler of Israel?”**

**Women: *He answered, “I have not troubled Israel, but you have, and your father’s house, because you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and followed Baal. Now therefore have all Israel assemble for me at Mount Carmel, with all four hundred fifty prophets of Baal.”***

One: So Ahab sent to all the Israelites and assembled the prophets at Mount Carmel. Elijah then came near to all the people and said,

**Women: “How long will you go limping with two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him, but if Baal, then follow him.”**

One: The people did not answer him a word. <sup>22</sup> Then Elijah said to the people,

**Women: “I, even I only, am left a prophet of the Lord, but Baal’s prophets number four hundred fifty.**

One: Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal,

**Women: “Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many; then call on the name of your god to bring down fire.”**

One: The priests of Baal called on the name of their god from morning until noon, crying, “O Baal, answer us!” But there was no voice and no answer. They limped about the altar that they had made. At noon Elijah mocked them, saying,

**Women: “Cry aloud! Surely he is a god; either he is meditating, or he has wandered away, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened.”**

One: Then they cried aloud, and, as was their custom, they cut themselves with swords and lances until the blood gushed out over them. Then Elijah said to all the people,

**Women: “Come closer to me,”**

One: And all the people came closer to him. First he repaired the altar of the Lord taking twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, Next he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood. Then, he filled four jars with water and pour it on the wood. Again a second time. Again, a third time, so that the water ran all around the altar Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust and even licked up the water that was in the trench. <sup>39</sup> When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said,

**Many: “The Lord indeed is God; the Lord indeed is God.”**

SERMON

*The Challenge of Competition*

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.**

OFFERING/ANTHEM

*The Lord Hath Done It*

Hank Beebe

\*DOXOLOGY/PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God all creatures here below;  
Praise God above, ye heavenly host;  
Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost. Amen**

\*CLOSING HYMN

*Holy, Holy, Holy*

#277

**Holy, holy, holy, God the Almighty! Early in the morning we praise Your majesty. Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty! God in three persons, blessed Trinity!**

**Holy, holy, holy! Saints adore You truly, casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea; Cherubim and seraphim bow before You only, from the beginning, God eternally.**

**Holy, holy, holy! Though we know but dimly, though the eyes of humankind Your glory may not see, You alone are holy, You alone are worthy. Perfect in power, in love and purity.**

**Holy, holy, holy, God the Almighty! All Your works shall praise Your name in earth and sky and sea. Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty! God in three persons, blessed Trinity!**

\*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

*Trumpet Tune in D*

C.S. Lang

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS ~ SUNDAY, October 22, 2023**

**Sacred Conversations on Race** continues on **October 25**: "How to Deconstruct Racism One Headline at a Time" - TED Talk by Baratunde Thurston All are welcome! You can join either in person in the **Oasis Center** or on **Zoom**. Please see Jim Crumel for more information

The Facilities and Grounds team invites you to a workday trimming and weeding on **Saturday, October 28 starting at 8 am**. Please bring gloves, trimmers, and gardening tools. Many hands make light the work.

**Sunday, October 29<sup>th</sup> is GATHERING of the WATERS SUNDAY at both services!!** Please plan to bring water from a place you traveled this past year or from your faucet right here as we celebrate the ways God brings the streams of our lives together.

**Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity UPDATE** ~ if you did not have a chance to attend the amazing house meeting on Sunday after worship, there is still time to participate!! Pastor Wes and Carol Hagglund are setting up a conversation. Please see Pastor Wes. **Please plan to attend the Community Problems Assembly on October 30<sup>th</sup> at 6 pm at Greater Hurst AME** (2730 Links Ave.)

**BOOK STUDY ON CORE VALUES STARTS OCTOBER 30** ~ Our congregation is currently holding a yearlong conversation about its core values, mission and vision. As a part of this effort, Immediate Past Moderator Jim Butterworth will be facilitating a four-week discussion series this fall based on Christianity for the Rest of Us by Diana Butler-Bass which considers the shape of emerging Christianity and the renewal of mainline Protestant churches such as our UCC. Butler-Bass shares examples of inspiring work which congregations around the nation are doing in vital areas of church life such as hospitality, worship, justice, healing and diversity. **On four Monday afternoons from October 30 through November 20 at 4:00 pm in the Oasis Center and on Zoom**, participants will discuss a few of these “signposts of renewal” each week and consider how we are accomplishing God’s work in these key areas of our congregational life. Register with Sherry Glover in the church office at 941-953-7044 by October 23. New and used copies of the Butler-Bass book can easily be found online. Hope to see you there!

**CALLING ALL KNITTERS AND CROCHETERS** ~ The next gathering of the PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY GROUP will be on Tuesday, Oct 31st from 2-3:30pm at Florence Jackson’s house. Contact Florence for address and directions (faj5110@gmail.com). Contact Lindsey Huddleston (630-338-9294) or Carol Hagglund (813-767-3782) for more information. Refreshments will be served.

***Our Racial Justice Mission Group invites you to a Native American Blanket Exercise Saturday, November 4<sup>th</sup> 12:00 Lunch\* 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. Free Workshop.*** After a free-will offering lunch, retired UCC pastor Rev. David Houseal and members of Windermere Union Church (Orlando) will offer an interactive history lesson on how Indigenous Nations lost their land over time through specific historic events. This program honors Indigenous Peoples' History and Culture; it inspires those who support Racial Justice and Environmental Justice efforts for our Native brothers and sisters. ***Florence Jackson will be in the Narthex today taking reservations for lunch.***

**Updates from Family Promise** ~ Our mother at Francis House had her baby boy, Jahsey Azari, on September 28th. Our church provided Saturday dinner to the family during the month of September. **A big thank you to Ruth Bieber, Carol Hagglund, Becky Rives and Alma Niemiller for providing the meals.** Our next opportunity to provide meals will be in the month of February. We are also looking to double the number of churches involved as well as adding more members to the board of trustees. If anyone is interested in serving on the Board of Trustees, please contact Ellen Marsey or Dotty Reed and we will get you in touch with the right

people. Current needs for Francis House: Size 5 diapers; Baby wipes; Riding toy for yard for 18-month-old Javel; Bubbles; Water table; Bouncy ball; Chapter books and art supplies for 8 year old Galia. If you have items to donate, please contact Mary Margaret Barbour (404-216-6208) information on where to drop off items. Gratefully ~ Ellen Marsey and Dotty Reed

**November 5 is All Saints Day** if you have a loved one who is in God's eternal embrace and would like the person's name read aloud, please contact Pastor Wes. November 5 is also food pantry Sunday. Last month in October, we donated 32 bags of food weighing 360 pounds, please consider bringing a gift for our food pantry on November 5<sup>th</sup>.

**New Member Class ~ November 5<sup>th</sup> after the 11 a.m. worship service in the Oasis Center.** We warmly welcome everyone who would like to learn what it means to be a member of First Congregational UCC. A light lunch will be served. You will have a chance to meet others and to ask any questions. Please call the church office to RSVP

Please join the UCC Women for their monthly lunch and program on Tuesday, Nov. 7, 2023, at 11:30 am in Fellowship Hall. We will hear from Donna Rae Smith about the charity she founded, SCHOOL ATTENDANCE SUPPORT, INC., or "S.A.S." Donna learned that children living in poverty are much more likely to stay home from school, especially girls who are menstruating but have no sanitary supplies, or it's raining so boys and girls stay home because don't have raincoats. Donna will explain how S.A.S. meets these basic needs. Luncheon costs \$12. Sign up after either Sunday service or call the church office at 941-953-7044. Questions? Call Lucy Hedrick, 203-561-9590, or [lucy@lucyhedrick.com](mailto:lucy@lucyhedrick.com). **Please bring a box or two of ultra-thin sanitary pads—any size. No maxi-pads or tampons.**

**The Angel Tree tags will be here soon!** Tags will be available for in-person pickup after the 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. services on November 12th. Should you not be present to get a tag, please contact Sandy Smith (941-260-8337, 340-227-5121 or [sandysmithvi@gmail.com](mailto:sandysmithvi@gmail.com))--she will see that you are included.

## **CALENDAR**

### **Sunday, October 22**

Sunday Worship, 9 am, **Sanctuary**

Sunday Worship, 11 am, in **Sanctuary** and online

**Budget Meeting after worship, Sanctuary and online**

### **Monday, October 23**

Growing and Caring meeting, noon, Oasis Center and Zoom

Hunger Group, 2 pm, Zoom

### **Tuesday, October 24**

Tuesday Night Bible Study, 6:30 pm, Zoom

**Wednesday, October 25**

Bible Study, 11 am, Oasis Center and Zoom  
Sacred Conversations on Race, 3 pm, Oasis Center and Zoom  
Church Choir, 7 pm, Chapel

**Thursday, October 26**

Green Team, 10 am, Oasis Center and Zoom

**Saturday, October 28**

Facilities and Grounds Outside Clean-up, 8 am

**Sunday, October 29 ~ Gathering of the Waters**

Sunday Worship, 9 am, **Sanctuary**  
Sunday Worship, 11 am, in **Sanctuary** and online  
**Safety Team Meeting during fellowship, noon, Syster Hall**  
Reading the Bible in a Year, 1 pm, Oasis Center and Zoom

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