

April 27, 2025 ~ 9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.  
First Congregational UCC ~ Sarasota



1031 S. Euclid Ave. Sarasota, FL 34237 ~ (941) 953-7044

[www.uccsarasota.com](http://www.uccsarasota.com)

Flowers given by:

PRELUDE

READING          Excerpts from the poem, "Sometimes" by Mary Oliver          Lucy Tobias  
*Instructions for life: pay attention; be astonished, tell about it.*

CALL to WORSHIP

One:              Who has measured the waters of the sea in the hollow of his hand

Many:          **And marked off the heavens with a span,**

One:              Enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure

Many:          **And weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?**

One:              Our God is extraordinary and powerful,

Many:          **And has created the world with forethought and care. May we treat God's world with respect and love.**

\*HYMN                                      *All Things Bright and Beautiful*                                      #31

*Refrain:*                      **All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small.  
All things wise and wonderful, our dear God made the all.**

**Each little flower that opens, each little bird that sings, God made their glowing colors,  
and made their tiny wings.** *Refrain*

**The purple-headed mountain, the river running by, the sunset and the morning that  
brightens up the sky.** *Refrain*

**The cold wind in the winter, the pleasant summer sun, the ripe fruits in the garden, God  
made them everyone.** *Refrain*

\*OPENING PRAYER

**Our generous God, full of abundant grace, we thank you for the beautiful world in which  
you have placed us. Help us to recognize the wonderful animals and features of nature  
who are our kin. May we value all of God's Creation as part of our larger family. Give us  
insight so that we can hear nature communicating with us. May we see your hand in the  
wonders around us. Amen.**

\*RESPONSE                                      *From All That Dwell below the Skies*                                      #27

**From all that dwell below the skies let the Creator's praise arise; Alleluia! Alleluia! Let  
the Redeemer's name be sung through every land, by every tongue. Alleluia, Alleluia,  
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!**

**Eternal are your mercies God; your truth stands ever high and broad; Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Your praise shall sound from shore to shore till suns shall rise and set no more. Alleluia,  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!**

ENGAGING SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 40:12-14, NRSV

Who has measured the waters of the sea in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Who has directed the spirit of the Lord or as his counselor has instructed him? Whom did he consult for his enlightenment, and who taught him the path of justice? Who taught him knowledge and showed him the way of understanding? Even the nations are like a drop from a bucket and are accounted as dust on the scales; see, he takes up the isles like fine dust. Lebanon would not provide fuel enough, nor are its animals enough for a burnt offering. All the nations are as nothing before him; they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness. To whom, then, will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him? An idol? A workman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for it silver chains. As a gift one chooses mulberry wood—wood that will not rot— then seeks out a skilled artisan to set up an image that will not topple. Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them like a tent to live in, who brings princes to naught and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing. Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

SERMON

*Hope and God's Perspective*

Rev. Dr. Sarah J. Melcher

PASTORAL PRAYER and THE New Zealand LORD'S PRAYER

**Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain bearer, Life-giver, Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven: The hallowing of your name echo through the universe; The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world; Your heavenly will be done by all created beings; Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and test, strengthen us. From trial too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. Amen.**

OFFERING/ANTHEM

\*DOXOLOGY/PRAAYER OF DEDICATION

**Glory be the source of all things. To Jesus the Christ. To the Great Spirit. From our beginnings to the time beyond our life may the light and love never end. Amen.**

\*CLOSING HYMN

*O How Glorious, Full of Wonder*

#558

**O how glorious, full of wonder is your name o'er all the earth. God, who wrought creation's splendor, bringing suns and stars to birth! Rapt in reverence we adore you, marveling at your mystic ways. Humbly now we bow before you, lifting up our hearts in praise.**

**When we see your lights of heaven, moon and stars, your power displayed, Who are we that you should love us, creatures that your hand has made? Born of earth, yet full of yearning, mixture strange of good and ill, From your ways so often turning, yet your love does seek us still.**

**You have set us in communion with the wonders of your hand, Made us fly with eagle pinion, pilgrims over sea and land. Soaring spire and ruined city, these our hopes and failures show. Teach us more of human pity, that we in your image grow.**

**O how wondrous, O how glorious is your name in every land, God, who purpose shines before us toward the goal that you have planned! Yours the will our hearts are seeking, conscious of our human need. Spirit in our spirit speaking, make us yours, O God, indeed.**

\*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS ~ April 27, 2025**

**Today**, we celebrate Earth Day, with our Green Team leading worship. Rev. Dr. Sarah Melcher will preach on Isaiah 40:12-14. This is a wonderful day to celebrate our Creation Justice Covenant.

**Glenn Priest** will offer a free concert, **THIS AFTERNOON, April 27<sup>th</sup>, at 4 p.m.**, in the Sanctuary, with a reception to follow. Glenn's last Sunday with us is May 4<sup>th</sup>. Please bring a card of gratitude for all the ways Glenn has shared and shone his light! Stephen Fancher will be with us, beginning Sunday, May 11<sup>th</sup> through June 8<sup>th</sup>.

**SURE (Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity) Celebration will be on Monday, April 28 at 6 p.m. at New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church (2504 Gillespie Ave).** You are invited to RSVP as there will be dinner served. This is the invitation to invest in SURE for the coming year. If you have questions please see Rev. Dr. Laurie Etter or Pastor Wes.

**Please join us for a Prayer Vigil on Wednesday, April 30<sup>th</sup> at noon in Payne Park.** We will stand in solidarity with those who are suffering right now. There will be music, reflections, and connections as a community.

Think teacups, think spring posies, tea sandwiches, and homemade cookies. The UCC Women invite one and all to A CELEBRATION OF MUSIC AND WORDS WITH TEA on **Tuesday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, at 11:30 a.m., in the Fellowship Hall.** Please bring your own teacup and be prepared to share a story about it around the table. We will enjoy readings by **Lucy Hedrick**, plus violin selections by **Zoocy Ibara**, our office manager. Zoocy moved to Sarasota, FL, to return to her musical roots and spread the healing power of music. Besides her passion for helping organizations stay organized, she also now serves as a trauma-informed Sound Meditation instructor and composer, facilitating public & private sound bath events, and teaching the art of inner journeying & mindfulness for emotional resilience. **The UCC Women collection this month is for Second**

**Heart Homes.** They would greatly appreciate gift cards accompanied by an inspirational or positive affirmation note. Preferred gift cards include those for **The Women's Exchange, Lowe's, HomeGoods, Amazon, or Uber.** They are also accepting new 2025 day planners. At this luncheon, they will also approve the nominations for the 2025-2026 Executive Committee of the UCC Women's Board: **President:** Jane Hunder; **First Vice President:** Terri Crawford; **Second Vice President:** Joy Kuhn; **Secretary:** Donna Blakey; **Corresponding Secretary:** RuthAnn Waid; **Treasurer:** Roxanne Schwoch. This end-of-season celebration will also be a chance for you to share what kinds of programs you'd like to see next year. The luncheon costs \$15. You can sign up after Sunday service, or by calling the church office at 941-953-7044.

**On May 10<sup>th</sup>,** Glenn Priest will be the featured pianist performing the Choral Fantasy of the Beethoven concert at the Opera House. This is a Key Chorale event. Tickets cost \$20-\$55 and are available at <https://keychorale.org/concerts/beethovens-ode-to-joy/>.

**Sacred Conversations on Race ~ May 14:** "Thriving in Turbulent Times" - an interview with Rev. Dr. Otis Moss, III. **May 28:** "Courage, Clarity & Community: Navigating Change and Uncertainty with Purpose and Heart" - excerpts from a program by Parker J. Palmer and Valerie Brown.

**Summer with the Psalms** ~Exhausted, exasperated, exceedingly unsure of what will happen next ~ that summarizes the state of many people's souls recently. Beginning on May 12<sup>th</sup>, we will begin reading the Psalms as a way to ground ourselves in deep wisdom. There will be opportunities for Bible Study, small group conversations, daily meditations from Pastor Wes on his blog and Facebook. For more information, please see Pastor Wes and the May Newsletter. We pray this practice of engaging the Psalms will help you connect with our ancestors who have sung their prayers and praise to God over the centuries.

**Sunday, May 18<sup>th</sup> ~ Mental Health Awareness Day ~ Syster Hall (after the 11 a.m. service)**  
Many today are struggling with cognitive overload. It is both the amount and the pace of information that is dizzying and disorienting. Please join us in Syster Hall as we welcome folks from **SRQ Strong** to help us breathe and learn more about resiliency. This is a wonderful opportunity to check in with yourself mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. **All are welcome and bring a friend.**

Please join our own Lenny Hoffman for Arts and Minds: Celebration of NAMI Sarasota Manatee's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on Wednesday, May 21<sup>st</sup> from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$100, which include hors d'oeuvres and drinks, and live music by The Geniuses Jazz Trio, with five local artists showcasing work. Contact information to purchase tickets is in the Midweek Message.

### **THIS WEEK**

**Sunday, April 27 ~ Earth Day Celebration ~ Glenn Priest, Organist**

9 a.m. ~ Morning Service, Chapel ~ Rev. Dr. Sarah Melcher preaching

11 a.m. ~ Worship, Sanctuary & Online ~ Rev. Dr. Sarah Melcher preaching

4 p.m. ~ **Glenn Priest Concert in Sanctuary**

**Monday, April 28**

SURE Celebration, 6 p.m., New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church

**Tuesday, April 29**

Tuesday Night Bible Study, 6:30 p.m., Zoom

**Wednesday, April 30**

Wednesday morning Bible Study, **10 a.m.**, Oasis Center and Zoom

Prayer Vigil, **noon**, Payne Park

Choir Rehearsal, 7 p.m., Chapel

**Sunday, May 4 ~ Communion Celebration and Food Pantry ~ Glenn Priest, Organist**

9 a.m. ~ Morning Service, Chapel ~

11 a.m. ~ Worship, Sanctuary & Online ~

**Noon ~ Birthday Sunday**

**Pastor Wes will be away on vacation May 5<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>, Rev. Micki Robinson will preach on  
Mother's Day.**

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

*Phone: (941)953-7044 Our website: [www.uccsarasota.com](http://www.uccsarasota.com)*

*We are a **Creation Justice; Open & Affirming; and Racial Justice** Congregation of the United  
Church of Christ*

**MINISTERS: All the Members**

**STAFF:** Rev. Dr. Wes Bixby, **Pastor:** [wdbixby@yahoo.com](mailto:wdbixby@yahoo.com)  
Glenn Priest, **Organist & Choir Director**  
Zoey Ibarra, **Office Admin:** [admin@uccsarasota.com](mailto:admin@uccsarasota.com)  
Douglas Kingsley, **Livestream:** [mediaspecialist@uccsarasota.com](mailto:mediaspecialist@uccsarasota.com)  
Pam Gansch-Boythe, **Bookkeeper:** [finances@uccsarasota.com](mailto:finances@uccsarasota.com)  
Heidie Heath, **Financial Clerk:** [finances@uccsarasota.com](mailto:finances@uccsarasota.com)  
Pamela Sell-Snider, **Custodian**

Office Hours: Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**OFFICERS:** **Moderator:** Carol McCloud  
**Vice Moderator:** Ray Baker  
**Past Moderator:** Harold Mezile  
**Co-Treasurer:** Robin Reich  
**Co-Treasurer:** Roxanne Schwoch  
**Secretary:** Susan Moore

**Morning Meditations** posted every weekday: on Facebook &  
Pastor Wes' blog ~ **[www.gracetraces.blogspot.com](http://www.gracetraces.blogspot.com)**