

February 23, 2025 ~ 11:00 a.m.
First Congregational UCC ~ Sarasota



*Firm
Foundations*

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

Flowers given by: Page & Carol McCloud

PRELUDE

Abide with Me

arr. Diane Bish

POEM

written by Dr. Barbara Holmes

*OPENING HYMN

My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less

#403

My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' love and righteousness; I dare not trust this earthly frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand.

When shadows veil my Savior's face, I rest upon unchanging grace; In every high and stormy gale, my anchor holds within the veil. On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand.

Christ's oath and covenant and blood support me in the rising flood; When all around my soul gives way, Christ then is all my hope and stay. On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand.

When Christ shall come with trumpet sound, oh, may I then in Love be found, Dressed in God's righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne. On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand, all other ground is sinking sand.

* OPENING PRAYER

written and led by John Ristow for Seminary Sunday

Holy Creator, we share our gratitude for every dawn that welcomes us. Moment by moment, You graciously shape us into vessels of love and hope. Eternal Savior, forgive us for not noticing the logs in our perspectives or opinions judging others. We surrender our prideful thoughts and selfish actions. Thank you for giving us strength-filled hearts to build our lives on solid rock in our chaos-filled world. Enable our hands to act with mercy and our feet to carry us along the paths of compassion and grace. Strengthen our spirits to mirror Your divine light so we may see Your boundless love. With hearts filled with gratitude, we praise Your eternal presence in our lives, now and forever more. Amen.

*RESPONSE

There is a Balm in Gilead (vs. 1 & 3)

#553

Refrain: There is a balm in Gilead, to make the wounded whole, there is a balm in Gilead, to heal the sin-sick soul.

Sometimes I feel discouraged, and think my work's in vain, But then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again. Refrain.

If you cannot preach like Petter, if you cannot pray like Paul, you can tell the love of Jesus, who died to save us all. Refrain.

ENGAGING SCRIPTURE

Matthew 7, *selected verse*

“Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For the judgment you give will be the judgment you get, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while the log is in your own eye? In everything do to others as you would have them do to you, for this is the Law and the Prophets. Everyone, then, who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!” Now when Jesus had finished saying these words, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as their scribes.

SERMON

Firm Foundations

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE 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

Abide with Me

Moses Hogan

*DOXOLOGY/PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**To God, all glorious heavenly Light, To Christ revealed in earthly night,
To God the Spirit now we raise, Our joyful songs of thankful praise. Amen.**

*CLOSING HYMN

We Shall Overcome

#570

**We shall overcome, we shall overcome, we shall overcome some day:
Oh deep in my heart, I do believe, we shall overcome some day.**

**We’ll go hand in hand, we’ll go hand in hand, we’ll go hand in hand some day
Oh deep in my heart, I do believe, we’ll go hand in hand some day.**

**We are not afraid, we are not afraid, we are not afraid today;
Oh deep in my heart, I do believe, we are not afraid today.**

**Our God will see us through, our God will see us through,
Our God will see us through some day.**

Oh deep in my heart, I do believe, Our God will see us through some day.

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

My Tribute, by Andrae’ Crouch

arr. Dino

ANNOUNCEMENTS ~ February 23, 2025

Please stay after worship for an usher/greeter training in the sanctuary. All are welcome!

Sacred Conversations on Race ~ February 26th: "The Mission to Safeguard Black History in the US" - TED Talk by Julieanne L. Richardson. **March 12:** "Intersectionality: Feminism Wasn't Made for Black Women" - TED Talk by Ephrata Tesfaye; and Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman?" recited by Priscilla Crumel. **March 26th:** "What About Those?" - a poem by Gloudis Whiteside.

30th Annual Choir Festival March 2nd ~ 4 p.m. ~ Church of the Palms Sanctuary (3224 Bee Ridge Rd) "Praise God with Music" You are invited to the 30th Annual Choir Festival, Sunday, March 2nd at 4:00 p.m. at Church of the Palms. Singers from numerous churches throughout Sarasota and Manatee Counties will present inspirational music as a gift to our community. This **free** musical event is under the direction of our own Jane Hunder and Rev. Genevieve Beauchamp, Worship and Music Pastor at Church of the Palms. A love offering will be taken.

You are invited to our monthly UCC luncheon on Tuesday, March 4 at 11:30 a.m. Cost of the lunch is \$15. Our own Lynn Jones will present a program on "Women in the United Church of Christ...from Antoinette Brown to today". Antoinette Brown was the first woman ordained in the Congregational Church in 1853. This will be a great presentation about the beginnings of UCC Women to today. We will also welcome Rachel Parker McClendon from Tallahassee who will provide information about FL UCC Women's Council and her perspective on our denomination.

Drumming as a Spiritual Practice ~ March 4th and March 18th at 3 p.m. ~ Chapel. Drums provided. New drummers welcome. Contact Lindsey Huddleston (630-338-9294).

Ash Wednesday Service is March 5th at noon in the chapel (*in person only for this service*). Ashes will be available for those who wish. You are invited to center your heart/soul/life during the 40 days before Easter. **There will be an online prayer service at 6 p.m.** on Ash Wednesday as well. If you'd like the Zoom link for the 6 p.m. prayer service, please let Pastor Wes know.

You are invited to join in a meaningful conversation with Amanda Udis-Kessler at 11 a.m. on March 6th and 13th in the Oasis Center. Amanda will be talking to us about the ways words create worlds and how our language matters and makes a difference. Words have as many meanings as ears that hear. We will gather in the Oasis Center at 10:30 a.m. for refreshments. Amanda will join us on Zoom at 11 a.m. for conversation and presentation. This is a wonderful blessing for us to ponder how language shapes us. All are welcome.

"Feeding the World Takes All of Us!" Rev. Eugene Cho, President and CEO Bread for the World March 6th ~ 6:30 p.m. Church of the Palms (3224 Bee Ridge Rd) Free Admission ~ Rev. Cho will address global food insecurity and the intersection of faith and politics.

Support Project 180 with sponsorship, or by attending the March 7th Strong Voices luncheon at Michael's on East. The luncheon features national workforce development and prison education expert, Dr. Craig Miller who promotes addressing our labor shortage through workforce development education among incarcerated and recently released returning citizens. According to the RAND Corporation, "incarcerated people who participate in education programs are 48 percent less likely to recidivate than those who do not." To purchase individual luncheon

tickets, go online to **Project180reentry.org** click on Lecture and Buy Tickets for “Constructing a New Workforce” on March 7, 2025, at 11 a.m. ~ Questions? Contact: Barbara Smith-Bacon

FREE Florida State University Singers Concert on March 8th at 7 p.m. in the sanctuary.

NEW MEMBER LUNCHEON March 9th, Noon ~ Oasis Center Are you considering joining our church? Please join us for a light lunch and conversation. All are welcome.

March is Women’s History Month. Lucy Hedrick will be chatting and signing copies of her debut novel, *Six Weeks in Reno*, on **Monday evening, March 10th**, at the Sarasota Bookstore, 117 S. Pineapple. Her book tells the story of the little-known “divorce colony” in Reno, NV in the 1930s. The event begins at 6:00 p.m.

The Wayless Way Offering ~ On March 10th and 17th in the Oasis Center and Zoom at 4 p.m., we will be discussing Brian McLaren’s book, *Faith After Doubt*. This is a wonderful book to help you explore your faithfulness and commitment to justice these days.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC MISSION FAIR *Hosted by Missions and Peace & Justice*
Sunday, March 16th after Worship in Syster Hall. COME and ENJOY food, drinks, and fellowship; ENGAGE with staff and volunteers from non-profit organizations; LEARN about their mission volunteer opportunities for ways to support their work. Come and learn how we can live out Matthew 25:40 ...*then Jesus will say, “I’m telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me.”*

You are also invited on March 19th at 2 p.m. to a Community Resilience conversation in our sanctuary. Leadership from SRQ Strong, Samaritan Counseling Center, ALSO Youth, ASALH, and congregations will come together to listen, learn, and love one another in this tumultuous time of transitions, grief, and trauma. Please plan to attend and bring a friend!!

Peace and Justice invite you to join us on a private tour of ECHO Global Farm on **March 28th at 10:30 a.m.** We will meet at the church to carpool to the farm in Fort Myers. The cost of the tour is \$12.50. You are invited to bring your lunch. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Nancy McElroy at nancymc2000@gamil.com by February 28th. ECHO global Farm researches and teaches small-scale, sustainable farming methods.

PASTOR WES IS TURNING 50 ON MARCH 3rd. To share your words of wisdom with Pastor Wes, we have provided shamrock cutouts in the Narthex, and will be collecting these through Sunday, March 2nd. On March 2nd, we will celebrate all with March birthdays. A PowerPoint of Wes’ first 50 years will be shown. When asked what he wanted for his 50th, **“Bread for the World letters to support efforts in ending hunger”!** Last year we collected 70 letters for our church’s 70th Anniversary. These letters, and those of other like-minded churches, were hand-delivered to our representatives. It’s a big task to meet last year’s goal and exceed it by 50. **We know we can do this!**

Singing our Prayers During Lent, March 20th ~ 4 p.m. ~ Chapel *Led by Greg Chestnut.*

Throughout the wilderness of Lent, you are invited to surrender to the wild leadings of the Spirit. Join us in singing our prayers, with moments of silence and reflection. Beautiful prose will allow us to wonder and wander into the wilderness to meet God's love.

Looking Ahead – Mark your calendars for March 30th, the date of our 3rd Annual Chili Cook Off! We are recruiting Chili Chefs to offer their best batch of chili on that Sunday, at 12:15 in Syster Hall. Let's have some new challengers to compete with our talented veteran chefs! The congregation will vote on their favorite, and the winner will receive a **modest** prize and lots of praise! If you would like to participate as a chef, please contact Sandy Smith, 340-227-5121.

THIS WEEK

Sunday, February 23 ~ Glenn Priest Organist

9 a.m. ~ Morning Service, Chapel

11 a.m. ~ Worship, Sanctuary and Online

Noon ~ Greeter and Usher Training, Sanctuary

Tuesday, February 25

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

Wednesday, February 26

Bible Study, 11 a.m., Oasis Center and Zoom

Sacred Conversations on Race, 3 p.m., Oasis Center and Zoom

Choir Rehearsal, 7 p.m., Chapel

Sunday, March 2 ~ Glenn Priest Organist, Communion and Food Pantry Sunday

9 a.m. ~ Morning Service, Chapel

11 a.m. ~ Worship, Sanctuary and Online

Noon ~ Birthday Sunday and **Bread for the World Letter Offering!**