

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



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

Flowers given by: Page & Carol McCloud

PRELUDE *What Wondrous Love* *arr. by Craig Phillips*

CELEBRATION of NEW MEMBERS: Kathy Cassoday; Peter Cohoon; Sharon Cohoon; Betty Dimmick; Lynne Kirchhoff; Joan Leonard; Roger Miller; Pat Owen; Francesca Simon

WELCOME HYMN *For the Weaving of Our Lives* *see insert*

For the weaving of our lives on the loom of joy and grace, warp of love that holds our hearts, weft of faith we add each day: All creation hears our song. We are woven kind and strong.

For the thread that each of us offers to the world's design, fabric of a thousand hues, heart and hands and soul and mind: All creation hears our prayer as we weave a world of care.

For the web that binds us all gently in the tangled skein, baby's cry and prophet's call, strands of peace and strands of pain: Dear creation may that we yet repair your tapestry.

ENGAGING and ENTERING SCRIPTURE:

Voice 1: Hear now these words to center our hearts and souls on this day. Jesus came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

Voice 2: Where is your well running dry this morning? *Pause*

HYMN: *Of Women, and of Women's Hopes We Sing* (vs. 1) *see insert*

Of women, and of women's hopes we sing: of sharing in creation's nurturing, of bearing and of birthing new belief, of passion for the promises of life.

Voice 1: A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her,

Voice 3: "Give me a drink."

Voice 1: (His disciples had gone to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said,

Voice 4: "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?"

Voice 1: (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her,

Voice 3: "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

Voice 4: "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?"

Voice 3: "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water

that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”

Voice 4: “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”

Voice 2: Where are you thirsty this morning: physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, relationally? *Pause*

HYMN: *Of Women, and of Women’s Hopes We Sing* (vs. 2) *see insert*

**We praise God whose image is our own, the mystery within our flesh and bone,
the woman-spirit moving through all time in prophecy, Magnificat and dream.**

Voice 3: “Go, call your husband, and come back.”

Voice 4: “I have no husband.” (said with dignity)

Voice 3: “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband,’ for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!”

Voice 4: “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.”

Voice 3: “Daughter of God, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship God neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, is now here, when the true worshipers will worship God in spirit and truth, for God is the Spirit and Truth.

Voice 4: “I know that Messiah is coming. When she comes, she will proclaim all things to us.”

Voice 3: “I am, the one who is speaking to you.”

Voice 2: Listen now for our still speaking God in silence.

HYMN: *Of Women, and of Women’s Hopes We Sing* (vs. 3) *see insert*

**We labor for the commonwealth of God, and equal as disciples, walk the road,
in work and status, asking what is just, for sisters of the family of Christ.**

Voice 1: Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you want?” or “Why are you speaking *with her?*” Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people,

Voice 4: “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, *can he?*”

Voice 1: Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, “Rabbi, eat something.” But he said to them,

Voice 3: “I have food to eat that you do not know about.”

Voice 1: So the disciples said to one another, “Surely no one has brought him something to eat?”

Voice 3: “My food is to do the will of God who sent me.

Voice 1: Many Samaritans from that city believed in him *because of the woman’s testimony,*

Voice 4: “He told me everything I have ever done.”

Voice 1: So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days.

HYMN: *Of Women, and of Women’s Hopes We Sing* (vs. 4) *see insert*

Forgiving what is past, we seek the new: a finer justice, and a peace more true, the promise of empowering for our day when men and women roll the stone away.

SERMON *Back to the Bucket*

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE and SUNG 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 *As a Hart Longs* *Emma Lou Diemer*

*DOXOLOGY/PRAYER OF DEDICATION *New Gloria*

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 *You Are Called to Tell the Story* #357 Tune Regent Square

**You are called to tell the story, passing words of life along,
then to blend your voice with others as you sing the sacred song.
Christ be known in all our singing, filling all with songs of love.**

**You are called to teach the rhythm of the dance that never ends,
then to move with in the circle, hand in hand with strangers, friends.
Christ be known in all our dancing, touching all with hands of love.**

**You are called to set the table, blessing bread as Jesus blest,
then to come with thirst and hunger, needing care like all the rest.
Christ be known in all our sharing, feeding all with signs of love.**

**May the One whose love is broader than the measure of all space
give us words to sing the story, move among us in this place.
Christ be known in all our living, filling all with gifts of love.**

*BENEDICTION

ANNOUNCEMENTS ~ March 23, 2025

Today is Endowment Sunday! We are grateful to our saints, who continue to share their light and love with our church through financial gifts. Endowment Committee will be available during Fellowship Time to answer your questions. Our Endowments help to fund the Artist-in-Residence (Dr. Kevin Fenton) in February, guest musicians at Thanksgiving/Christmas/Easter, scholarships for our students, Covenant activities and outreach, and our Oasis Ministry. In addition to your financial gifts, our Endowments help keep our ministry vital and vibrant!!

Sacred Conversations on Race ~ On March 26th: "What About Those?" - a poem by Gloudis Whiteside. **On April 9th:** "Don't Take the Exit on People" - TED Talk by Justin Jones-Fosu. **On April 23rd:** "Police Brutality and the Less Conspicuous Ways Racism Kills" - TED Talk by Oscar Holmes IV.

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. Any questions, contact Nancy McElroy at nancymc2000@gmail.com. ECHO Global Farm researches and teaches sustainable farming.

Scholarship applications are now being accepted. Visit www.uccsarasota.com to view the new look and/or apply. The deadline for completed applications is **April 15th**.

March 30th is BRING a FRIEND to Church Sunday. You are invited to bring a neighbor, family member, or friend with you on March 30th. As part of the service, we will honor our guests. We are blessed by a **Jazz Trio of Don & Deb Smith and Gary Dowty** playing during worship, as well as during the chili cookoff after 11 a.m. Thank you to **Liz Early and our Worship Team** for this fabulous idea.

3rd Annual Chili Cook Off, March 30th! We are recruiting Chili Chefs to offer their best batch of chili on that Sunday, at 12:15 p.m., 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.

Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity (SURE) ~ Please join us for the **Nehemiah Action on March 31st, at 6:30 p.m.**, at Faith Lutheran Church (7750 S. Beneva Rd). Please plan to attend as we seek to do justice, show loving-kindness, and walk humbly with God. You will hear updates on out-of-school suspensions and affordable housing, meet the new Lead Organizer, Michelle Jewel, and commit to making Sarasota more just.

Tour of Embracing Our Differences ~ Racial Justice Mission Group is sponsoring a free docent-guided tour of the 2025 Embracing Our Differences exhibit on **Wednesday, April 2nd**, at Bayfront Park. Our church is a co-sponsor of the art panel titled "DUMPYARD FOOTBALL." For those who wish to ride the church bus, we will board at the church at 12:45 p.m. and leave at

1 p.m., returning by 3 p.m. Pauline Geary will be our driver. Please text Sheila Gossett to make a bus reservation, as space is limited, or to tell her you will attend independently. Please tell Sheila if you can drive people from the church should we have an overflow on the bus. Eat lunch before you come, as we will not be eating lunch together. **Everyone will meet at the entry arch to the park at 1:20 p.m., as the tour begins at 1:30 p.m.** Questions? Call Lindsey Huddleston.

A brief congregational meeting will be held following worship on April 6th. The purpose of the meeting is to approve a minor modification to ARTICLE VI – SERVICES AND MEETINGS, section 1. ANNUAL MEETING of the By-laws of the church. The modification is requested by the Church Council and refers to the scheduling of the Annual Meeting. As currently stated in the By-laws, the Church Council, at its December meeting, is required to determine and set the Annual Meeting date in January. The Church Council has approved and is requesting a By-law change to add the words “or February.” **The restatement would read: “The Annual Meeting shall be held...in January or February, on a date to be set by the Church Council, at its December meeting....”**

Choral Artists will be doing an encore performance of **Considering Matthew Shepard** in our Sanctuary on **Saturday, April 5th, at 4 p.m.** Tickets purchased on the Choral Artists website. Also, our very own **Glenn Priest** will be the featured pianist on the Choral Fantasy of the Beethoven concert at the Sarasota Opera House on **May 10th, at 4 p.m.** Tickets can be purchased on the Key Choral website.

UCC Women Lunch ~ Tuesday, April 1st. We welcome **Megan Howell**, Executive Director of Second Heart Homes. Second Heart Homes is a non-profit providing permanent housing to those with mental illness, who have experienced or are at-risk of homelessness. Their goal is to provide long-term solutions that revive dignity and enhance quality of life through self-sufficiency. Arrive between 11:30 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. to sign in and enjoy fellowship. Lunch is served at noon, followed by that program. Sign up in the Narthex. Lunch cost: \$15.00.

HOLY WEEK 2025

Palm Sunday, April 13th, 2025 ~ BOTH Services in the sanctuary ~ Pastor Wes will preach on Mark 11:1-11 ~ we will raise our palm branches high, praying and praising God by singing, “*Hosanna*”!! We welcome horn player, Melvin Jackson, for special music.

Maundy Thursday, April 17th, 2025 ~ Maundy Thursday, at 6 p.m., in the Sanctuary ~ members of the Worship Team will share the story of the Last Supper, according to St. Matthew. Dr. Marsha Kindall-Smith will offer special music, and holy communion will be celebrated.

Friday, April 18th, 2025 ~ Good Friday, at noon, in the Sanctuary. Pastor Wes will preach on St. Matthew’s narrative of God’s vulnerable love suffering on the cross and the tears in things. We will conclude the service outside, beneath the cross of Jesus.

EASTER SUNDAY, April 20th, 2025 ~ Christ is risen; He is risen, indeed!! *Alleluia*!! **BOTH Services in the sanctuary.** We welcome special guest musicians ~ brass and percussion from the Sarasota Orchestra ~ along with our amazing choir to help us lift our voices high. Pastor Wes will preach on Matthew’s resurrection narrative.

Drumming as Spiritual Practice ~ April 1st and 15th at 3 p.m. ~ Chapel. Drums provided. New drummers welcome. Contact Lindsey Huddleston at (630) 338-9294.

THIS WEEK

Sunday, March 23 ~ Glenn Priest, Organist

9 a.m. ~ Morning Service, Chapel

11 a.m. ~ Worship, Sanctuary and Online

Noon ~ Endowment Sunday presentation

Tuesday, March 25

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

Wednesday, March 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 30 ~ BRING a FRIEND to Church ~ Glenn Priest, Organist

9 a.m. ~ Morning Service, Chapel

11 a.m. ~ Worship, Sanctuary and Online

Noon ~ Chili Cookoff, Syster Hall

REMEMBER SURE Nehemiah Action is Monday, March 31st, at 6:30 p.m.