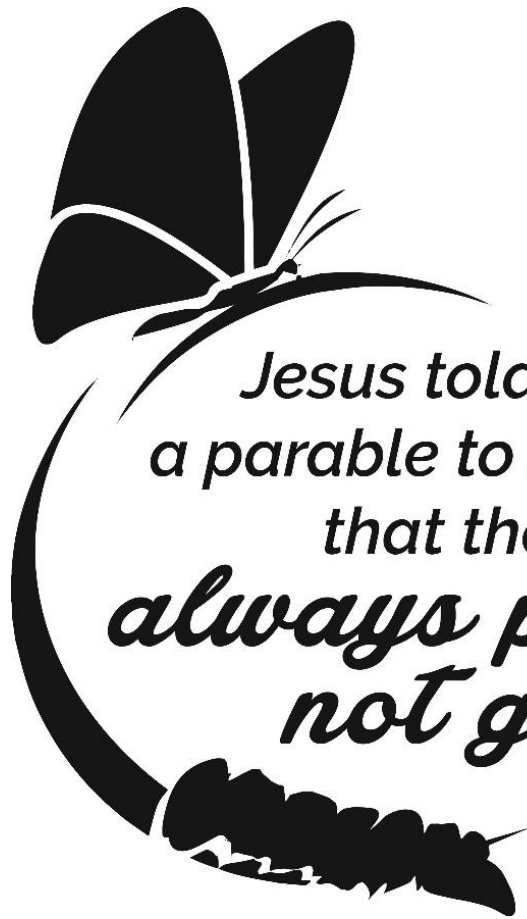


March 30, 2025 ~ 11:00 a.m.

# First Congregational UCC ~ Sarasota



*Jesus told his disciples  
a parable to show them  
that they should  
always pray and  
not give up.*

Luke 18:1, NIV

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

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

**March 30, 2025**

**11:00 a.m.**

Flowers given by: Gregg Matthews

*In honor of Women's History Month*

PRELUDE      *What a Friend We Have in Jesus*      C. Converse arr. Mark Hayes  
Deb Smith, piano

INVITATION to WORSHIP      by Rev. Dr. Denise Kingdom

One:      For she who went before,

Many:      **Blazing, praying, shining forth a divine light, even as we dismissed, ignored or silenced; Holy One, forgive us.**

One:      For she who stands before us now,

Many:      **Preaching, proclaiming, reaching, and naming, as we listen, receive, and embrace; Holy One, shape us with persistence.**

One:      For she who will come,

Many:      **Prophesying, leading, creating, and innovating, as we yearn, anticipate, and hope; Holy One, open us with curiosity.**

\*OPENING HYMN      *O For a World* (vs. 1, 4, and 5)      #575

**O for a world where everyone respects each other's ways, Where love is lived and all is done with justice and with praise.**

**The poor are rich, the weak are strong, the foolish ones are wise. Tell all who mourn: outcasts belong, who perishes will rise.**

**O for a world preparing for God's glorious reign of peace, Where time and tears will be no more, and all but love will cease.**

\*OPENING PRAYER ~ *taken from a hymn written in response to Southern Baptists excluding women as pastors*

**God of the women who answered your call, Trusting Your promises, giving their all,**

**Women like Sarah and Hannah and Ruth—Give us their courage to live in your truth.**

**God of the women who walked Jesus' Way, Giving their resources, learning to pray,**

**Mary, Joanna, Susanna, and more—May we give freely as they did before.**

**God of all voices still singing today, grant us courage to stand and stay, in Your unconditional holy ray, and continue to help us pray and play. Amen.**

**I need you every hour, O God of grace; the peace your voice affords, I now embrace. I need you, how I need you! Every hour I need you; O bless me now, my Savior; I come to you.**

**I need you every hour, in joy or pain; come quickly and abide or life is vain. I need you, how I need you! Every hour I need you; O bless me now, my Savior; I come to you.**

## ENGAGING SCRIPTURE

Luke 18:1-8, Inclusive Bible

Jesus told the disciples a parable on the necessity of praying always and not losing heart. “Once there was a judge in a certain city who feared no one – not even God. A woman in that city who had been widowed kept coming to the judge and saying, “Give me legal protection from my opponent.” For a time, the judge refused, but finally the judge thought, “I care little for God or people, but this woman won’t leave me alone. I’d better give her the protection she seeks, or she’ll keep coming and wear me out!” Jesus said, “Listen to what the correct judge is saying. Won’t God then do justice to the chosen who call out day and night? Will God delay long over them? I tell you, God will give them swift justice. But when the Promised One comes, will faith be found anywhere on earth?”

## MUSICAL REFLECTION

*Here’s One*

trad. Spiritual

Deb Smith, piano &amp; Don Smith, trumpet

## SERMON

More than a Mystery

## 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

*All Things New*

Elaine Hagenberg

\*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      *Persistent Love, Enduring Hope*      tune: *Amazing Grace*

**Persistent love, enduring hope, restorer of our hearts,  
We now take up your sacred call, prepared to do our parts.**

**The road is long. The path is hard, yet still each day we strive  
To welcome all, to freely give that all might live and thrive.**

**When we are filled with pain and rage or faced with doubt and fear,  
We keep your Kingdom goal in sight and gladly persevere.**

**We seek to share your daring dream, to make your vision known  
As we press on in faith and trust, assured we are your own.**

**Persistent love, may we persist in all that we've begun.  
Enduring hope, may we endure until your will is done.**

\*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE                      *When the Saints Go Marching In*                      arr. A. Zhulyev  
Deb Smith, piano; Gary Dowty & Don Smith, trumpet

*Liturgists:                      Evelyn Crooks*

*Greeters/Ushers: Maggie Revere, Gregg Matthews, Jerry Oliver, Sara Little,  
Barbara Shaver, Gerry Poisson*

*Bus Driver:                      Len Murray*

*Emergency:                      Joan Faucher*

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS ~ March 30, 2025**

**We warmly welcome our Jazz Trio of Don & Deb Smith and Gary Dowty,** playing during 11 a.m. worship service. After worship, please join us for the **3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Chili Cook Off!** You will be encouraged to vote on your favorite. The winner will receive a **modest** prize and lots of praise!

**Please see your bulletin for an Easter Lily form** to help decorate our chancel on Easter Sunday. You can also call Zoey in the church office. The cost is \$15 per plant, order forms are due by April 10<sup>th</sup>.

**TOMORROW: Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity (SURE) ~** Please join us for the **Nehemiah Action on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 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.

**UCC Women Lunch ~ Tuesday, April 1<sup>st</sup>. PLEASE bring new towels for Mothers-helping-Mothers** (hand towel, beach towel, bath towel). 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 the program. Sign up in the Narthex. Lunch cost: \$15.00.

**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 2<sup>nd</sup>**, 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 begin loading the bus 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.

**NEXT SUNDAY ~ A brief congregational meeting will be held following worship.** The purpose of the meeting is to approve a minor modification to ARTICLE VI – SERVICES AND MEETINGS, section 1. ANNUAL MEETING of the Bylaws 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 Bylaws, 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 Bylaw 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....”**

**Please join Pastor Wes for a time of prayer and the opening of our hearts to God on Monday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, at 4 p.m., either in the Oasis Center or Zoom.** As we inch closer to our Holiest Week, join in a time of sharing grief, pain, lament, and all that we are carrying in our lives right now.

**Sacred Conversations on Race ~ On April 9<sup>th</sup>:** "Don't Take the Exit on People" - TED Talk by Justin Jones-Fosu. **On April 23<sup>rd</sup>:** "Police Brutality and the Less Conspicuous Ways Racism Kills" - TED Talk by Oscar Holmes IV.

**Scholarship applications are now being accepted.** Visit [www.uccsarasota.com](http://www.uccsarasota.com) to view the new look and/or apply. The deadline for completed applications is **April 15<sup>th</sup>.**

Choral Artists will be doing an encore performance of **Considering Matthew Shepard** in our Sanctuary on **Saturday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, at 4 p.m.** Tickets can be 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 10<sup>th</sup>, at 4 p.m.** Tickets can be purchased on the Key Choral website.

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

### **HOLY WEEK 2025**

**Palm Sunday, April 13<sup>th</sup>, 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 17<sup>th</sup>, 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.

**Good Friday, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 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 20<sup>th</sup>, 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.

**Book Release Celebration ~ April 15<sup>th</sup> 4-5 p.m.** Join **Pat Williams Owen** for a book release celebration of her most recent book of poetry. The event is free and open to all. Pat Williams Owen is the author of four poetry books, including *The Crossroad* (Shadeland House Modern Press, 2025), *Bardo of Becoming* (Accents Publishing, 2022), *Orion's Belt at the End of the Drive* (Accents Publishing, 2019), and *Crossing the Sky Bridge* (Larkspur Press, 2016). Her work has appeared in *Gulf Stream Magazine*, *Highland Park Poetry*, *The Hong Kong Review*, *The Louisville Review*, *Raven's Perch*, other print and online literary journals, and several anthologies.

**Glenn Priest** will offer a free concert on **Sunday, April 27<sup>th</sup> 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 shined his light! Stephen Fancher will be with us beginning Sunday, May 11<sup>th</sup> through June 8<sup>th</sup>.

### **THIS WEEK**

#### **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**

#### **Monday, March 31**

SURE Nehemiah Action, 6:30 p.m., Faith Lutheran Church

#### **Tuesday, April 1**

First UCC Women's Board meeting, 10:30 a.m., Syster Hall

First UCC Women's Lunch, 11:30 a.m.

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

**Wednesday, April 2**

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

Embracing our Difference Tour, 1:00 p.m., Bayside Park

Choir Rehearsal, 7 p.m., Chapel

**Sunday, April 6 ~ Glenn Priest, Organist ~ Communion Sunday**

9 a.m. ~ Morning Service, Chapel

11 a.m. ~ Worship, Sanctuary and Online

Noon ~ Congregational Meeting on Bylaw change

12:15 p.m. ~ Birthday Sunday, Syster Hall

Collection day for All Faiths Food Bank

**REMEMBER SURE Nehemiah Action is Monday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, at 6:30 p.m.**