

November 12, 2023 ~ 11:00 a.m.

First Congregational UCC ~ Sarasota

Stewardship
Sunday



Flowers given by: **Phil Swain**, in memory of the Swain/Craig Family & by the Shipman Family, in honor of **Chuck and Marilyn's 50th anniversary**

PRELUDE

Rhosymedre

Ralph Vaughn Williams

INVITATION to WORSHIP:

One: Come into the generative and generous presence of God whose giving knows no ending.

Many: **We celebrate today as the body of Christ offering our whole selves in praise.**

One: We celebrate that vast variety of ways the word, "Stewardship" can be embodied.

Many: **From growing in faith and learning, to tending the garden of God's creation, laughter, holding hands, working for justice, speaking out against discrimination, and sharing our resources for the healing of the world.**

One: We could be here all day listing the endless ways *stewardship* will expand and evolve.

Many: **We celebrate God's continual call to care for God's planet, God's people, and our connections to our Creator. It is good to be here. Alleluia and Amen.**

*OPENING HYMN

Take My Gifts

#562

Take my gifts and let me love you, God who first of all loved me, gave me light and food and shelter, gave me life and set me free, now because your love has touched me, I have love to give away, now the bread of love is rising, loaves of love to multiply!

Take the fruit that I have gathered from the tree your Spirit sowed, harvest of your own compassion, juice that makes the wine of God, spiced with humor, laced with laughter flavor of the Jesus life, tang of risk and new adventure, taste and zest beyond belief.

Take whatever I can offer gifts that I have yet to find, skills that I am slow to sharpen, talents of the hand and mind, things made beautiful for others in the place where I must be: take my gifts and let me love you, God who first of all loved me.

*OPENING PRAYER

Seamstress God, You weave us together, inspiring and infusing the living out of our lives. We pray You would continue to create and craft our lives in renewing ways. We pray the words we just sang, "Take whatever I can offer, gifts that I have *yet* to find. Skills that I am slow to sharpen, talents of my hands and mind. Things made beautiful for others in the place where I might be; take my gifts and let me love you, God who first of all loved me." May these be more than words sung in this sanctuary, let this be our vision, mission, and embodied values in these days. To You, O God, we dedicate our days and whole life. Amen.

*RESPONSE

Take My Life, God, Let It Be
(verses 1 & 4 only)

#448

Take my life, God, let it be consecrated faithfully. Take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my love and help it grow; let my loving overflow. Take me now, and help me be part of Christ's community.

ENGAGING SCRIPTURE

2 Kings 5, *selected verses*

Naaman, commander of a foreign army, was a great man and in high favor with his king. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from a skin disease. Now on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his skin disease." So Naaman told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. And the king said, "Go, then." He went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. Naaman came with his horses and chariots and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would *surely* come out and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God and would wave his hand over the spot and cure the skin disease! Are not the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage. But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?" So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

SERMON

I Am So Excited

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.

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Harold Mezile, Vice Moderator

ANTHEM

Create in Me a Clean Heart

Allen Pote

DOXOLOGY (*please stay seated*) Wes instruct

**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**

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Dance of Gratitude

Lindsey Huddleston

**God, whose giving knows no ending, from your rich and endless store, Nature's wonder,
Jesus' wisdom, costly cross, grave's shattered door: Gifted by you, we turn to you
offering up ourselves in praise; Thankful song shall rise forever, gracious donor of our
days.**

**Skills and time are ours for serving, that your will on earth be done: All at peace in health
and freedom, races joined, the Church made one. Now direct our daily labor, lest we
strive for self alone; born with talents, make us servants fit to answer at your throne.**

**Treasure, too, you have entrusted, gain through powers your grace conferred; Ours to use
for home and kindred, and to spread the gospel Word. Open wide our hands in sharing as
we heed Christ's ageless call, Healing, teaching, and reclaiming, honoring you by loving
all.**

**Lend your joy to all our giving, let it light our pilgrim way; From the night of anxious
keeping, loose us into generous day. Then when years on earth are over, and we've lived
our human span, God, fulfill beyond our dreaming, all our stewardship began.**

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Toccata Brevis

Daniel Gawthrop

ANNOUNCEMENTS ~ SUNDAY, November 12, 2023

Next Sunday, November 19th is Thanksgiving Sunday. We welcome special guest musicians ~ brass and percussion from the Sarasota Orchestra. Our amazing choir will sing at **both** services as we join our voices together in familiar hymns of praise and prayer to God. We will welcome **new members at 11 a.m.** Also, **next Sunday is Author's Sunday** ~ we will celebrate the **authors of our church.** If you have written a book, please contact Dale Moore. We are encouraging authors to bring copies of your books to sell ~ makes a GREAT Christmas present. We give thanks for all those who share their creativity with others.

COLLAGE lunch ~ November 12 ~ Speaker - Mike Keane Board Director ALSO YOUTH Topics -the meaning of the current Pride Flag -ALSO youth ambassador program. Lunch free will offering donation

TODAY ~ The Angel Tree tags are here! Please stop in Syster Hall after the 9am or 11am services to select a beloved child of God you can share the love of Christmas with this year.

NEXT UCC MEN'S BREAKFAST ON NOVEMBER 18 ~ The UCC Men's breakfast series continues on Saturday, **November 18** and all the men of the congregation, new and longtime members, are invited to join for breakfast in Syster Hall then. Coffee will be on at 8 am and breakfast served at 8:30 am. After breakfast, Jim Butterworth will present a short and informative program about our neighbor, Alta Vista Elementary School. You may register by Thursday, November 16 by calling Sherry at the church office at 941-953-7044. We hope to see you there!

Sorella Duo, cello and piano ~ Candlelight Christmas Concert ~ Friday, November 24th @ 7 p.m. ~ Reed Chapel and Music Center at First Congregational UCC Limited Seating ~ Advanced tickets only ~ \$20.00 each. Tickets available on Sunday mornings and through the church office. Embracing their Italian heritage, *Sorella* (meaning sister), Natalie and Rebecca Helm have enjoyed performing together since they were young children. Both sisters are currently working as professional musicians. Natalie is the principal cellist for the Sarasota Orchestra and Founder of Upward Notes, Inc. Rebecca, pianist, is the Director and Founder of Go-Go Allegro Music School in Boston. This concert has become a tradition to launch your holidays in peace.

Wednesday, November 29 we will have a special guest at Bible Study, **Rev. Hovnan Demerjian** from St Hagop Armenian Church in Pinellas Park. Hovnan is a great friend of mine and I think you will find meaning in hearing how our Armenian siblings celebrate the season of Advent. All are welcome to attend or Zoom in for this conversation.

WOODSON AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM OF FLORIDA IN ST PETERSBURG ~ FRIDAY DECEMBER 1ST The Racial Justice Mission Group invites you on a day trip to visit the Dr. Carter G. Woodson African American Museum of Florida in St Pete on Friday Dec 1. You can read about the museum on its website. (<https://woodsonmuseum.org/>) The free church bus is available on a first come-first served basis. Others will carpool. Bus riders will meet at the church at 10:45am and leave at 11am. The bus will return to the church by 4:30pm. The group will meet for lunch in St Pete before the docent-led tour. The museum cost of \$10/person can be paid on arrival. To register for lunch and the museum tour, sign up for the bus, or for more information, text or call Lindsey Huddleston at 630-338-9294 by Monday Nov. 20.

The Wayless Way ~ Your Life as a Curriculum ~ NEW offering for 2024 ~ As we begin a New Year, we will launch twice monthly conversations centering around a book with Pastor Wes weaving insights from scripture and inspiration. You do not need to attend all the sessions, but there will be a thread that will run from sessions to session. In January, we will focus on *Build the Life You Want* by Arthur C. Brooks and Oprah Winfrey (January 8 and 29). In February, *Hope Leans Forward* by Valerie Brown (February 12 and 26). In March, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* by Henri Nouwen (March 11 and 25). In April, *No Cure for Being Human* by Kate Bowler (April 8 and 22). *The Seventh Story* by Brian McLaren (May 13). On each of the Mondays above, we will gather at 4 pm and finish by 5:15 pm. For more information, specific reading plan, and to register for the conversation, please contact Pastor Wes. The event will be hybrid (in the Oasis and Zoom)

SAVE THE DATE: Thursday, Dec 7 - @ 5:00 - 7:30pm - Kwanzaa community celebration at the Betty J. Johnson Library. RSVP to Lois (cellololoma2@gmail.com) with your plans to attend. A celebration of the principles of Kwanzaa, celebrating African American's through story, art, and wisdom, and community connections. All are welcome!!

December 10 ~ A Christmas Like None Other ~ A time of reflection, renewal, and resting in God's love. Whether you find yourself grieving, longing, hurting, or just not in the "spirit of the season", join Pastor Wes at 12:30 pm in the Oasis Center for a time of quietness and sharing outside of the hustle and bustle of the season.

Christmas Light Tour ~ back by popular demand ~ Len and Drue Murray will host the annual Christmas light bus tour on **Sunday, December 10** and **Tuesday, December 12**. More information and sign ups will begin soon.

CALENDAR

Sunday, November 12~ Stewardship Sunday

Sunday Worship, 9 am, **Sanctuary**
Sunday Worship, 11 am, in **Sanctuary** and online
COLLAGE Luncheon, noon, Syster Hall

Monday, November 13

Christianity for the Rest of Us book conversation, 4 pm, Oasis Center and Zoom
SURE Research Kickoff, 6 pm, **Vida de Reino (3005 S. Tuttle Ave. Sarasota, FL)**

Tuesday, November 14

Spiritual Education and Growth, 2 pm, Oasis and Zoom
Peace and Justice, 3 pm, Oasis Center
Church Council, 6:30 pm, Oasis Center Zoom

Wednesday, November 15

Bible Study, 11 am, Oasis Center and Zoom
Church Choir, 7 pm, Chapel

Thursday, November 16

Green Team, 10 am, Oasis Center and Zoom

Saturday, November 18

Celebration of Life for Bill Moore, 1 pm, Sanctuary and Livestream

Sunday, November 19 ~ Thanksgiving Sunday with Brass and Choir at both services

Sunday Worship, 9 am, **Sanctuary**
Sunday Worship, 11 am, in **Sanctuary** and online
Fellowship Time, noon, Syster Hall

Upcoming Celebrations of Life

Millie Small ~ Saturday, December 2 at 10:30 am ~ Chapel

Lorraine E. Matthews ~ Saturday, December 16 at 10 am ~ Sanctuary and online

First Congregational United Church of Christ

Phone: (941)953-7044 Our website: www.uccsarasota.com

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