

January 21, 2024 11:00 a.m.
First Congregational UCC ~ Sarasota



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

Flowers given by: Carol and Rich Rescigno, in honor of their new grandson born in January,
Rowan James Rescigno

PRELUDE

Prélude sur l'Introit de l'Epiphanie

Maurice Duruflé

INVITATION to WORSHIP

- One: The word wilderness can provoke and evoke a vast variety of places and spaces.
Many: **Wilderness can be a place of towering, tall trees. Wilderness can be a sea of sand that stretches in all directions for miles.**
One: Wilderness can describe and define not just the landscape around us but the soul-
scape within us.
Many: **Moments when we are tired, weak, and worn; moments when it feels like we are wandering in circles.**
One: Today, Jesus meets us in the wilderness amid the cacophony of voices clamoring for our attention, affiliation, and affirmation.
Many: **As Christ meets us in the wild-ness of our lives, may we sense that there is a wideness in God's mercy that leads us through the wilderness of today.**

*OPENING HYMN

Guide Me, O My Great Redeemer

#18

Guide me, O my great Redeemer, pilgrim through this barren land; I am weak, but you are mighty; hold me with Your powerful hand. Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more, feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain, where the healing waters flow. Let the fire and cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through. Strong deliverer, strong deliverer, ever be my strength and shield, ever be my strength and shield.

When I reach the River Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside. Death of death, and hell's destruction, land me safe on heaven's side. Song of praises, song of praises I will ever sing to you, I will ever sing to you.

*OPENING PRAYER

God of wilderness where we can be disoriented by trees that block our view of where to go and what is ahead, bring us to a wide-open space this morning. We lean in and listen today to the wilderness temptation of Jesus. We know what it is like to feel famished, even when our bellies are full because our souls feel drained and strained by what is around us. We know that it is like to be promised that the next book, program, workshop or zoom call will solve all our problems; but we need to act now, supplies are running out. We know what is like to cling so tight to our opinions because the commercial says we have a right to have it *our* way. We know what it is like to constantly compare our faith, vacations, volunteering, family gatherings, and life to others on social media that leaves us exhausted and exasperated. Help us, O God, amid the wilderness that is the middle of January. Guide us with Your wisdom, feed us with Your grace, and lead us with Your

love this hour and every hour this week. In the name of the One who knew the human-size temptations of life, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

*RESPONSE

Beautiful Jesus
vs. 1 only

#44

Beautiful Jesus, Head of all creation, God and the blessed Mary's child: I want to love you, praise and adore you, joy of my soul, so long desired.

ENGAGING SCRIPTURE

Luke 4:1-13

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tested by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" Then the devil led him to Jerusalem and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

SERMON

Wildness of Wilderness

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.

OFFERING/ANTHEM

On Eagles Wings

Michael Joncas

*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.**

*CLOSING HYMN

Lord, Dismiss us With Your Blessing

#77

Lord, dismiss us with your blessing; fill our hearts with joy and peace; Let us each your love possessing, triumph in redeeming grace: Oh, refresh us, oh, refresh us, traveling through this wilderness.

We give thanks and adoration for your gospel's joyful sound; May the fruits of your salvation in our hearts and lives abound: Ever faithful, ever faithful to the truth may we be found.

So that when your love shall call us, Savior, from the world away, Fear of death shall not appall us, glad your summons to obey: May we ever, may we ever live with you in endless day.

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

Fanfare

Jacques Lemmens

ANNOUNCEMENTS ~ SUNDAY, January 21, 2024

TODAY following worship is the Celebration of National Pie Day as well as our SURE (Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity) Network Meeting. Come for a delicious piece of pie and stay to hear updates on the work for justice on affordable housing, civil citation, and out of school suspensions.

The 2024 Altar flower chart is now available and waiting for you! If you have an anniversary, birthday, special occasion in the coming months, please call and reserve a Sunday today. Cost of bouquet is **\$40 each**. Thank you for bringing the beauty of creation into our worship on Sunday.

SO Low Brass Concert ~ January 28th ~ 7 p.m. ~ Chapel The principal low brass section of our Sarasota Orchestra will offer a concert on **Sunday evening, January 28, at 7:00 pm**. The concert will be held in the candlelight setting of our Reed Chapel and will feature a variety of music from the 16th century to present day jazz and pop standards. Tickets are \$10. available through the church office and on Sunday mornings. Seating is limited.

Sacred Conversations on Race continues: **January 24 at 3 p.m.** we will read and discuss Toni Morrison's *Recitatif*. Please note, if you read the Morrison book, you need to **skip** the introduction, read the story first between two women – one black and one white – which Morrison doesn't specify in the story the race of each woman. After you experience the story, you can read the introduction for Morrison's insights into race. Here are the SCOR topics for next month:

February 14: Belonging, A Critical Piece of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion - TED Talk by Carin Taylor. **February 28:** The Little Problem I Had Renting a House - TED Talk by James A White, SrAll are welcome! You can join either in person in the **Oasis Center or Zoom**. Please see Jim Crumel for more information.

Annual Meeting ~ January 28th The Annual Meeting for First Congregational UCC will be held on January 28th immediately following the worship service in the sanctuary. The meeting will be livestreamed on YouTube and Facebook. The Annual Report is now available online, please read the report online to save trees. Please note, we do not publish financial online. If you would like financial information for year ending 2023 and budget for 2024, please contact the church office.

If you are not able to attend in person, you can pick up a paper ballot to vote in the office. This year at our annual meeting we will vote on: Financial Reports 2023, Budget 2024 and Nominating Report. Celebrate all the ways we have shared God's love this year!!

Please join the UCC Women's Association for their monthly lunch and program on Tuesday, February 6, 2024, at 11:30 am in Fellowship Hall. We will hear from Lt. Col. Matthews about the **Sarasota branch of the Salvation Army**. She will explain the many life-changing programs of the Salvation Army of Sarasota County and how we can help. Our church boasts four individuals who serve on the Board of Advisors: Warren Bacon, Dale Woodling, Deborah Hayes, and Lynn Jones, all of whom will be on hand to share their experiences. Luncheon costs \$12. Sign up after either Sunday service or call the church office at 941-953-7044. Questions? Call Lucy Hedrick, 203-561-9590, or lucy@lucyhedrick.com. **For Baby Basics of Sarasota County, please bring new or gently used baby books for ages birth to three.**

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 session to session. In January, we will focus on *Build the Life You Want* by Arthur C. Brooks and Oprah Winfrey (January 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 Podcasts* by Brian McLaren (May 13). On each of the Mondays above, we will gather at 4 p.m. and finish by 5:15 p.m. For more information, specific reading plan, and to register for the conversation, please contact Pastor Wes. The event will be hybrid (Oasis & Zoom).

Sunday, February 4 at 12:30 p.m. in the Oasis Center, we will offer a time for prayer and healing. As Trevor Hudson writes, "We all sit by a pool of our own tears". If you need time and space to process pain, please join Pastor Wes for this opportunity.

Wednesday, February 14 ~ Ash Wednesday ~ beginning of Lent. At **noon**, we will offer a traditional Ash Wednesday service in the chapel. Pastor Wes will preach on Luke 9:12-22, *Who Do YOU Say Jesus Is?* Ashes will be available to anyone who wishes. At **5:30 p.m.**, we will offer a wonderful worship opportunity in Syster Hall, which is holy ground from our worship there this summer. We will enjoy a simple soup dinner. Then, around tables, we will begin the Lenten Theme of *Connecting Conversations*. There will be a few hymns mixed in and ashes available at the close of the service. Please note that the 5:30 p.m. is not the traditional experience, but will be worship nevertheless.

Sunday, February 18 ~ Our Church's 70th Anniversary Celebration, Greg's 35th Anniversary, and Pastor Wes' 10th Anniversary at both services. Following the 11 a.m. service there is an ALL-church potluck celebration. Please plan to attend!

During February, we welcome the return of **FEAST** (**F**riends **E**ating **A**nd **S**tudying **T**ogether). We will meet on Thursday mornings beginning **February 22** (as well as **February 29, March 7 and 14**) at **10:30 a.m.** for coffee, fruit, and goodies. This will be a holy time of conversations that connect us. Lent this year is a time to celebrate our relationships as a church, as well as welcome new folks to share parts of their life and faith. We live in a world where isolation is a problem, this gathering

will offer the holy experience of sharing stories and getting to know each other better. Please plan to attend and bring 10 friends!

CALENDAR

Sunday, January 21

Early Worship, 8:45 a.m., Chapel
Sunday Worship, 11 a.m., in Sanctuary and online
SURE Network Meeting & National Pie Day Celebration, noon, Syster Hall
Celebration of Life for **Chris Pickett at 3 pm** ~ Bayshore Care Facility

Monday, January 22

Covenants Meeting 11 a.m., Zoom

Tuesday, January 23

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

Wednesday, January 24

Wednesday Morning Bible Study, 11 a.m., Oasis Center and Zoom
Sacred Conversations on Race, 3 p.m., Oasis Center and Zoom

Sunday, January 28

Early Worship, 8:45 a.m., Chapel
Sunday Worship, 11 a.m., in Sanctuary and online
Annual Meeting, noon, in Sanctuary and online

90+ Wise Birthdays ~ January ~ Please help us shower with cards:

Donald Vance ~ 1/5
Alma Niemiller ~ 1/6
Mildred Huisman ~ 1/11
Cynthia Lichtenstein ~ 1/17
Betty Schattschneider ~ 1/23

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*

