

January 7, 2024 11:00 a.m.

First Congregational UCC ~ Sarasota



EPIPHANY

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

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INVITATION to WORSHIP *A Blessing for Traveling the Road of the Year Ahead*

*OPENING HYMN

As with Gladness Those of Old

#159

As with gladness those of old did the guiding star behold; As with joy they hailed its light, leading onward, beaming bright; So, true Morning Star, may we evermore your splendor see.

As with joyful steps they sped to that lowly manger bed, There to bend the knee before One whom heaven and earth adore; So may we with willing feet ever seek your mercy seat.

As they offered gifts most rare at that manger plain and bare, So may we with holy joy, pure and free from sin's alloy, All our costliest treasures bring, Christ, to you from whom they spring.

Holy Jesus, every day keep us in the narrow way; And when mortal things are past, bring our ransomed souls at last Where they need no star to guide, where no clouds your glory hide.

*OPENING PRAYER

God of new days and a New Year, we gather for worship on this first Sunday of 2024, wondering what will unfold in the days and weeks to come? On this day, we join the ancient prayer of the psalmist that You, O God, would teach us to number our days to grow a heart of wisdom. There is so much out there that clamors chaotically for our attention, affirmation, and affiliation. We confess that we don't always know what wisdom sounds like in a noisy world. We confess that we can be quick to dismiss and discount that which challenges us or is outside our comfort zone. God, as the Wise Ones traveled from afar, so we know that the adventure of life this year will have moments of rollercoaster-like twists and turns. Help us stay curious about the stars above us and the stardust within us. Help us stay open to the fellow travelers with whom our paths cross. Help us be open to You, O God, for our hearts are restless until we find rest in You. All this we pray in the name of the One who is the light of the World, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

*RESPONSE

I Am the Light of the World

#584

Refrain **I am the light of the world! You people come and follow me! If you follow and love you'll learn the mystery of what you were meant to do and be.**

When the song of the angels is stilled, when the star in the sky is gone, When the sages and shepherds have found their way home, the work of Christmas is begun. *Refrain*

ENGAGING SCRIPTURE

Luke 3:1-14

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of another region, during the high

world! Your heavenly will be done by all created beings! Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us. In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us. In times of temptation and testing, strengthen us. From trials too great to endure, spare us. From the grip of all that is evil, free us. For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever.

*CLOSING HYMN

You Are Salt for the Earth, O People

#181

You are salt for the earth, O people: salt for the reign of God! Share the flavor of life, O people: life in the City of God! *Refrain*

Refrain **Bring forth the reign of mercy, bring forth the reign of peace; Bring forth the reign of justice, bring forth the City of God!**

You are the light on the hill, O people: light for the City of God! Shine so holy and bright, O people: shine for the City of God! *Refrain*

You are a seed of the Word, O people: bring forth the reign of God! Seeds of mercy and seeds of justice, grow in the City of God! *Refrain*

We are a blessed and a pilgrim people: bound for the reign of God! Love our journey and love our homeland: love is the City of God! *Refrain*

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE:

Toccata in Seven

John Rutter

ANNOUNCEMENTS ~ SUNDAY, January 7, 2024

Today is the collection of non-perishable foods for All Faith's Food Bank. The rule of thumb for donating is, "if you would enjoy having it, they would appreciate having it." Please be sure everything has an expiration date of mid 2025 or later. There will be a basket in the narthex labeled **ALL FAITH'S FOOD BANK**.

Our new Core Values are: Welcome, Worship, Caring, Belonging, Justice, and Faithfulness. After worship today in Syster Hall, as you are enjoying birthday cake, the moderators will lead a conversation on these Core Values. We encourage you to attend.

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 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 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).

Sacred Conversations on Race continues **January 10th at 3 p.m.:** we will watch a sermon by General Minister of the UCC, Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, given at the Florida Conference UCC Annual Meeting. On **January 24th** 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. All are welcome! You can join either in person in the **Oasis Center or Zoom**. Please see Jim Crumel for more information.

Artful Prayer ~ Thursday, January 11th at 2 p.m. – Oasis Center or Zoom

January is often seen as a time of transforming from our past into the new year and new beginnings. Water is often also used as a metaphor for transformation and will be the focus of this January 11th session led by **Brenda Robinson**, whose art is featured here. **No art experience required.** Supplies will be provided if you attend in person. Contact Pastor Wes if you need the Zoom link and watch weekly messages for the supply list in early January.

On **Friday, January 12**, in honor of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr weekend, we warmly welcome **Dr. Keith Hampton** to our church for a concert at **7 p.m.** in the sanctuary. On Saturday, Dr. Hampton will work with our choir. On Sunday, **January 14th at both the 8:45 am and 11 am service**, Dr. Hampton will help lead our prayer and praise of God! This is an amazing opportunity to welcome back Dr. Hampton who will bless us.

Friends of the Betty J. Johnson Library will host a M.L.K. Book Sale on **Saturday, January 20** from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 2801 Newtown Blvd. Please support our local library!

NEXT UCC MEN'S BREAKFAST ON JANUARY 20 ~ The UCC Men's breakfast series continues on **Saturday, January 20** 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. **Steve Horowitz** will present a short and informative program about "The Mysteries of Egypt" and chef Dale Moore plans an Egyptian (!) breakfast. You may register by Thursday, January 18 by calling Sherry at the church office at 941-953-7044.

On **January 21**, SURE (Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity) will host a Network Meeting for our church. This gathering in Syster Hall will offer us updates since our House Meeting in October on the work that is happening in Affordable Housing, Restorative Justice in the Schools, and Criminal Justice in our State. Please plan to attend as we look toward the **Nehemiah Action on March 18th at 6 p.m.** at our church!

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**. 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!! The Annual Report will be available on the website on **January 14, 2024**. Financials will be available either in church or via email from the church office. If you desire a paper copy, please contact the office. Questions? Please see Moderator Nancy Morris

CALENDAR

Sunday, January 7

Early Morning Worship, 8:45 a.m., Chapel
Sunday Worship, 11 a.m., in Sanctuary and online
Fellowship, noon, Syster Hall and Core Values Conversation

Monday, January 8

Facilities and Grounds Meeting, 10 a.m., Oasis Center and Zoom
Racial Justice Mission Group, 11 a.m., Zoom
Food and Hunger Group, Library, 1 p.m.
The Wayless Way Book Club, 4 p.m., Oasis Center and Zoom

Tuesday, January 9

Spiritual Education and Growth, 2 p.m., Oasis Center and Zoom
Peace and Justice, 3 p.m., Oasis Center
Tuesday Night Bible Study, 6:30 p.m., Zoom

Wednesday, January 10

Wednesday Morning Bible Study, 11 a.m., Oasis Center and Zoom
COLLAGE advisory, 2 p.m., Zoom
Sacred Conversations on Race, 3 p.m., Oasis Center and Zoom
Church Choir, 7 p.m., Chapel

Thursday, January 11

Safety Team Meeting, 9:30 a.m., Oasis Center and Zoom
Mission Team Meeting, 1 p.m., Oasis Center and Zoom
Artful Prayer, 2 p.m., Oasis Center and Zoom
Finance Meeting, 3 p.m., Zoom

Friday, January 12

Keith Hampton Concert, 7 p.m., Sanctuary

Sunday, January 14 ~ Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Weekend

Early Worship, 8:45 a.m., Chapel
Sunday Worship, 11 a.m., in Sanctuary and online
COLLAGE Luncheon, noon, Syster Hall

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

Upcoming Celebrations of Life:

Wes Curry ~ Saturday, January 20 at 2 pm ~ Sanctuary