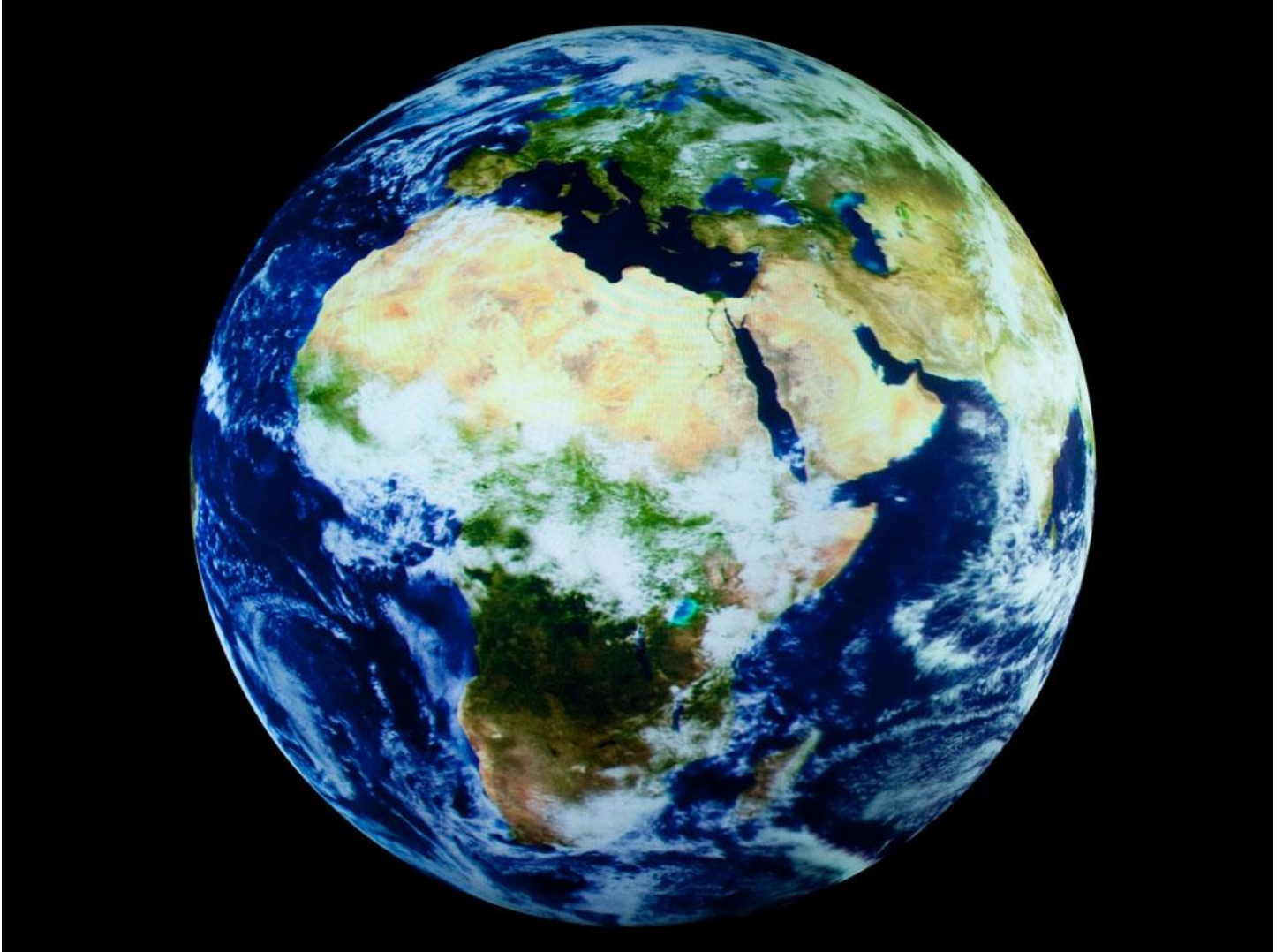


April 21, 2024 11:00 a.m.

First Congregational UCC ~ Sarasota



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

www.uccsarasota.com

Flowers given by: **Ellen Marsey**, in celebration of Jim's birthday

As long as the earth can make a spring every year. I can. As long as the earth can flower and produce nurturing fruit I can, because I am the earth. I won't give up until the earth gives up.

Alice Walker

PRELUDE

Intermezzo in A major op. 118 no. 2

Brahms

Stephen Fancher, Organist/Pianist/Guest Choir Director

INVITATION to WORSHIP

Remember

by Joy Harjo

*OPENING HYMN

Praise to the Living God

#8

Praise to the living God, the God of love and light, Whose word brought forth the myriad suns and set the worlds in flight; Whose infinite design, which we but dimly see, Pervades all nature, making all a cosmic unity.

Praise to the living God, from whom all things derive, Whose Spirit formed upon this sphere the first faint seeds of life; Who caused them to evolve, unwitting, toward God's goal, Till humankind stood on earth, as living, thinking souls.

Praise to the living God, who knows our joy and pain, Who shares with us our common life, the sacred and profane. God toils where'er we toil, in home and mart and mill; And deep within the human heart God leads us forward still.

Praise to the living God, around, within, above, Beyond the grasp of human mind, but whom we know as love. In these tumultuous days, so full of hope and strife, May we bear witness to the Way, O Source and Goal of life.

*OPENING PRAYER

Written by Lucy Tobias

We need to get back outdoors, to turn off the computers and look at the night sky; walk in the forests, feed the birds, watch the sunrise, study the rivers and streams.

We came from the Earth. We have to get back, to re-establish connections, to understand that preserving resources is an act of grace, a connection with the future that must be done today; a gesture of respect that may save us."

LITANY for EARTH DAY

Lord, we pray for this world you have crafted and continue to create. As You formed, fashioned, and breathed the breath of life into all that is, continue to let Your Spirit sing to our interconnectedness with all that is.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord, we pray for the all living creatures. Help us learn from snails that slowly slide across the soil, trees that receive our carbon dioxide transforming that which is harmful into oxygen that is life-sustaining.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord, we pray for our human family. You named us collaborators with all the Earth, to tend and care. Challenge us in these days to live in harmony together, so we can let all parts of Creation be fully alive.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

When we get caught in cycles of treating Creation as a means to an end, when we continue to perpetuate single use plastics, when we travel to exotic places and miss the wonder of a greening leaf in our own backyard, help us wake up to the impact of our footprint and how we crush what You have called, “Holy”.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

As a Creation Justice Church, we pray that our covenant would ground and guide our living individually and collectively. Help us embrace and embody a way that respects and holds with reverence Your first testament of truth which is the evolving and expanding universe.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord, You have called us to be stewards of this wonderful Earth. Guide our efforts to heal the soil, air, and all that is part of this web of life. Teach us to care for your Earth, as You care for us. We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

ANTHEM

There Is No Creation

Carol Dyck

ENGAGING SCRIPTURE

Psalm 104:24-35, *selected verses*

O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. There is the sea, great and wide; creeping things innumerable are there, living things both small and great. There go the ships and Leviathan that you formed to sport in it. These all look to you to give them their food in due season; when you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed; when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust. When you send forth your spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground. May the glory of the Lord endure forever; may the Lord rejoice in his works— who looks on the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke. I will sing to the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have being. May my meditation be pleasing to him, for I rejoice in the Lord. Bless the Lord, O my soul! Praise the Lord!

SERMON

Creating and Renewing

Rev. Dr. Sarah Melcher

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

We Sing the Mighty Power of God

arr. Hal Hopson

*DOXOLOGY/PRAYER OF DEDICATION

**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**

*CLOSING HYMN

O How Glorious, Full of Wonder

#558

O how glorious, full of wonder is your name o'er all the earth, God, who wrought creation's splendor, bringing suns and stars to birth! Rapt in reverence we adore you, marveling at your mystic ways. Humbly now we bow before you, lifting up our hearts in praise.

When we see your lights of heaven, moon and stars, your power displayed, Who are we that you should love us, creatures that your hand has made? Born of earth, yet full of yearning, mixture strange of good and ill, From your ways so often turning, yet your love does seek us still.

You have set us in communion with the wonders of your hand, Made us fly with eagle pinion, pilgrims over sea and land. Soaring spire and ruined city, these our hopes and failures show. Teach us more of human pity, that we in your image grow.

O how wonderful, O how glorious is your name in every land, God, whose purpose shines before us toward the goal that you have planned! Yours the will our hearts are seeking, conscious of our human need. Spirit in our spirit speaking, makes us yours, O God, indeed.

*BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

ANNOUNCEMENTS ~ April 21

We are delighted to welcome **Stephen Fancher** as our guest organist/pianist today and next Sunday, April 28 to lead our worship, hymns, and choir. Please welcome Stephen!

Today is our 2nd Annual Chili Cookoff! Come for the fellowship and fun, sample the chili prepared by 10 of our best chili chefs, and vote for your favorite. See you there.

A Search Team for our next Director of Music and Fine Arts has been selected. The Search Team consists of: Lori White (chair); Jane Hunder and Jeff Smith (Music and Fine Arts); Peggie Mezile (Worship); Linda Pursley (Staffing); Diane Miller and Gregg Matthews (members-at-large); Nancy Morris (past moderator); and Pastor Wes. We are inviting the congregation to **Feedback Focus Groups** on the following days: COLLAGE on **April 23rd at 11 a.m.**; SCOR on **April 24 at 3 p.m.**; *Zoom only* conversation on **April 28th at 1:30 p.m.**; 1st UCC Women on **May 7 at 11 a.m.** The Section Leaders and Choir will also have opportunities to share their feedback. If you have questions, please see Pastor Wes or Lori White.

Sacred Conversations on Race ~ gathers at 3 pm in the Oasis Center and on Zoom on the following dates: April 24th Focus Group ~ Director of Music.

Three Invitations to Reach Out with God's love:

1. **SURE Sarasota United for Responsibility and Equity** is currently accepting individual investments. If you would like to make a contribution to SURE ~ please make the check payable to SURE and put "1st Cong UCC" in the memo line.
2. Help Project 180 - Donate Backpack Essential Supplies! The Peace & Justice Team needs your help! On Sundays April 21st and 28th, we will collect items from the list below provided by Project 180. These items go into the backpacks supplied to newly released felons returning to Sarasota County with literally nothing. It's a small ask from us, and has a major impact in easing their transition to life after incarceration. Please consider adding a few of these to your shopping cart, then place in the labeled basket in the Narthex. Each backpack is filled with the following: Toothbrush, Toothpaste, Comb, Flashlight with Battery, Body Wash (medium size), Shampoo (travel size), Deodorant (regular size), Hand Towels(2/person), Wash Rags (2/person), Rain Poncho, Bike Lock, Bike Lights (front and back), Water Bottle, Razors and shaving gel (medium size gel or cream), Mylar emergency "space blanket," Sunscreen (medium size), and Bug Spray (medium size).
3. Nearly half of the students enrolled in Sarasota County schools participate in free and reduced-price meal programs. In DeSoto County, that number is 100%. So when school ends, hunger begins. If you would like to help feed children this summer, you still have time to donate to the campaign. The campaign runs through May 15 and donations will be doubled until they reach the goal of \$1 million matched. To donate before the 15th go to allfaithsfoodbank.org/campaignagainstsummerhunger/

Bread for the World Listening Session ~ Mark your calendars for **Monday, May 6, 4:00-5:30 p.m.** The Church will be hosting a Bread for the World Listening Session, "Nourish our Future." During this Listening Session, we will discuss the following platform Bread for the World has established to address food insecurity: Fully funding and modernizing WIC for all eligible participants; Expanding a Child Tax Credit that prioritizes cutting child poverty and ending hunger; Addressing college student hunger; Developing an international "Children's Jubilee". The Listening Session will take place at the Oasis Center. Also, a Zoom Link will be sent if requested.

Student Scholarship Applications ~ Due April 30th First Congregational UCC student scholarship applications are due April 30th. Applications are available through the church office via the Spiritual Education and Growth Team. All applications and supporting materials must be returned to the church office by April 30th for consideration. Email: admin@uccsarasota.com.

On Sunday, May 5th, Dale Moore will host a book signing after worship. Come and purchase his new book, *In the Chatroom with God* cost is \$12.

Think tea pots and china cups, think spring posies, tea sandwiches and petit fours. The UCC Women invite one and all to **A CELEBRATION OF MUSIC AND VERSE WITH TEA on Tuesday, May 7, at 11:30 am in Fellowship Hall.** We will enjoy readings by Lucy Tobias, Linda Butler, and Francesca Simon, along with musical selections performed by Marsha Kindall-Smith, Lynn Woodman, and Sarah Melcher. This end-of-season celebration will also be an opportunity to say what kinds of programs you would enjoy next year. 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. We ask each attendee to contribute towels for the clients for

Mother Helping Mothers. New or gently used towels of any kind—bath, kitchen, beach, etc.—are much needed. In addition, we will approve the nominations for the 2024-2026 Executive Committee of the UCC Women’s Board: President: Jane Hunder; First Vice President: Terri Crawford; Second Vice President: Joy Kuhn; Secretary: Donna Blakey; Corresponding Secretary: Ruth Ann Waid; Treasurer: Roxanne Schwoch

May 12 ~ Mother’s Day brunch sponsored by COLLAGE ~ bring a labeled photo of your mother or mother-like figure who has blessed your life. During the lunch we will share stories about the women who have left fingerprints upon our hearts and how each have shaped our lives. This will be a holy time. Thank you to COLLAGE for sponsoring this wonderful gathering.

The Racial Justice Mission Group thanks everyone who participated in signing and addressing post cards to ex-felons on March 24th. In partnership with the League of Women Voters and COLLAGE, this project produced 187 postcards which tell ex-felons how they can re-register to vote after they have completed their sentences. RJMG is planning to schedule another similar service opportunity in the future.

Brenda Robinson & Wojtek Sawa Art Exhibit continues @ SPAACE Galley 2051 Princeton St. Sarasota, FL 34237. Exhibition Dates: April 5th – April 27th | Gallery Hours | **Fri, Sat, 10:00 - 2:00 or by Appt.** Theme: Common Ground are twofold: To normalize mental health experiences and reduce stereotypes, and to empower individuals with lived experience to serve as educators and advocates for a positive change in our attitudes about mental health.

From Dr. April Glasco (Second Chance Last Opportunity) ~ I am so grateful for your generosity to Second Chance Last Opportunity. Lucy Hedrick arrived on the Monday after April 7’s Food Collection, her car overflowing with contributions to “Re-stock Our Shelves.” Thank you so much. I would like to invite all of your congregants to our **Food Distribution Center ribbon-cutting, 1933 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Way, at 11:30 on Monday, May 20.** Please come and admire the renovations that you and so many other churches and synagogues have helped us achieve. Thanks to this expansion, we will be able to serve many more people and families in need.

THIS WEEK

Sunday, April 21 ~ Earth Day

Early Worship, **8:45 a.m., Chapel**
Sunday Worship, 11 a.m., in Sanctuary and online
Chili Cookoff, noon, SH

Monday, April 22

Wayless Way Book Club, 4 p.m., Oasis Center and Zoom

Tuesday, April 23

COLLAGE Zoom, 11 a.m., Oasis Center and Zoom ~ Director of Music Conversation
Tuesday Night Bible Study, 6:30 p.m., Zoom Only

Wednesday, April 24

Bible Study, 11 a.m., Oasis Center and Zoom
SCOR, 3 p.m., Oasis Center and Zoom ~ Director of Music Conversation
Choir Practice, 6:30 p.m., Chapel

Thursday, April 18

Safety Team, 9:30 a.m., Oasis Center and Zoom

Handbell Choir, 6 p.m., Chapel

Sunday, April 28

Early Worship, **8:45 a.m., Chapel**

Sunday Worship, 11 a.m., in Sanctuary and online

Director of Music Conversation, 1:30 p.m., Zoom ONLY