

June 16, 2024 8:45 a.m.

First Congregational UCC ~ Sarasota



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

www.uccsarasota.com

June 16, 2024

11 a.m.

Flowers given by: Donna Blakey in loving memory of **Bruce Blakey**; in celebration of **Priscilla and Jim Crumel**, 59 years on June 19 and **Drs. Marsha Kindall-Smith and Hugh Smith** 57 years on June 17

PRELUDE

Enigma Variations no. 10

Elgar

INVITATION to WORSHIP *Vision Renewed* by John Ristow Read by Lynne Woodman

In a world spun of threats, a voice, a breath,
Where darkness seeks to chain the light's pure sway,
A tale unfolds, where night meets radiant day,
And care, a beacon, guides the heart's true path.

Saul, with fury's fire, charted his course,
Towards Damascus, chains in hands, dreams in dust.
Yet, from the heavens, a light, bold and just,
Claimed his sight, and whispered wisdom to his heart.
"Why do you persecute me so?" it said,
A voice, both storm and solace, fierce and kind.
Blind not by darkness, but by sight refined,
He found his strength not in chains, but grace instead.

Ananias, with hesitant steps, approached,
To touch the foe, his hand a token of peace.
Through care, the scales of blindness found release,
And Saul rose, by new visions of kindness led.
Thus, transformed by care's unyielding might,
A persecutor's path was lost to sight.
In its stead, a disciple, baptized in light,
Stood forth, a witness to love's undying right.

In acts of care, we find our truest call,
For in its grace, we catch the fallen, heal the blind,
Teach the heart's eye, to see the love that binds.
In caring, we rise, and in rising, do not fall.

*OPENING HYMN

God of Grace and God of Glory

#436

**God of grace and God of glory, on Your people pour Your power;
crown Your ancient church's story; bring its bud to glorious flower.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the facing of this hour, for the facing of this hour.**

**From evils, that surround us and assail the Savior's ways,
from the fears that long have bound us-free our hearts for faith and praise.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, for the living of these days, for the living of these
days.**

**Cure your children's warring madness; bend our pride to Your control.
Shame our reckless, selfish gladness, rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, make our broken spirits whole, make our broken
spirits whole.**

**Set our feet on lofty places; gird our lives that they may be
armored with all Christ-like graces, in the fight to set us free.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, in the quest for liberty, in the quest for liberty.**

**Save us from weak resignation to the evils we deplore;
let the search for Your salvation be our glory ever more.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, serving You whom we adore, serving You whom we
adore.**

***OPENING PRAYER**

With the psalmist we ask this morning, what are humans that You, O God, are mindful of us? We can be cantankerous, cynical, and convinced of our own correctness. When the hurt or harm we might cause is pointed out to us, no matter how gently, we deflect, deny, and defend. What are humans, O God, that You are mindful of us? Have You looked on social media recently? Have You read the headlines? We prayerfully confess that we all have scales on our eyes like Saul. We all see the world, not as it is, but as we are. We are confined and contained in echo chambers and invisible algorithms that keep telling us more of the same. And while change sounds good, we usually point at others who should go first. God, we need Your grace and love to set us free from the fears that bind us. We need Your wisdom now more than ever. Open us to notice that we have worn Saul's sandals as recently as last week. May the good news of great joy that You did not give up on Saul, nor are you finished with us, be felt and lived in these days. In the name of the One who calls us back to who and whose we are. Amen.

***RESPONSE**

I Need You Every Hour (vs. 1-3)

#517

**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 faith or fear; temptations lose their power when you are near.
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

Acts 9:1-19

Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³Now as

he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" ⁵ He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶ But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." ⁷ The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was without sight and neither ate nor drank. ¹⁰ Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." ¹¹ The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, ¹² and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." ¹³ But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name." ¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; ¹⁶ I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." ¹⁷ So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, ¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

SERMON

Containers of Life

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

What Does the Lord Require

Eric Nelson

*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

Persistent Love, Enduring Hope

tune: Amazing Grace

By Amanda Udis-Kessler

**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

Organ Improvisation

ANNOUNCEMENTS ~ June 16th

We welcome back **Stephen Fancher** today to minister to us through music. Stephen was with us in April and we are blessed to have him back. He will also be here in August. Please welcome Stephen!

Today ~ Summer Salad Sing in Syster Hall on June 16th at noon. We will eat and sing and share together. Please note that **in July, we will explore our hymnal as a prayer book and theological textbook in our Sunday worship AND as part of our weekly Bible Study.** Join in the conversations on Tuesdays or Wednesdays in July. More information coming up.

Drumming as a Spiritual Practice will meet on **June 18th at 3 p.m.** in the chapel. New drummers are always welcome. Thank you to **Lindsey Huddleston** and **Christine Hoffman** for faithfully leading this group!!

Next Sunday, June 23rd, join the Peace and Justice Team at a special Fellowship Hour in Syster Hall after the 11 AM service to learn about voting procedures for the upcoming SMH Board election in August, and the statistical impacts of potential hospital privatization on quality of care and cost. A light lunch will be served, and a free-will donation received.

Prayer Circle ~ In the pews you will find our **new Prayer Request Cards.** You will also find a link to our online Prayer Request Cards on our website. Thank you to **Jane Delgado-Semidei,** we have a committed group of members who will pray for you each day. Please make use of these prayer cards to share a prayer and place your prayers card in the offering plate. Please contact Sherry, our office administrator, if you wish more information.

Director of Music Search Team Update ~ The job description for Director of Music was unanimously approved at the May Council Meeting. The job description is now posted on our website as well as on the websites of: American Guild of Organists, UCC/Other Denominational Musician Networks, and Music Conservatories (*Eastman, IU, Oberlin*) We have reached out to Sarasota musicians to share through word-of-mouth as well as past Artists-in-residence. All candidates are required to submit a resume and repertoire for us to review. The Search Team will continue the prayerful work to find the candidate who is a good fit with our Covenants, Core Values, choir, congregation, and staff. ***Please remember that we are entering the confidential part of the search and are unable to discuss candidates or share names.*** We pray you

understand. Thank you to **Lori White, Jane Hunder, Jeff Smith, Peggys Mezile, Linda Pursley, Gregg Matthews, Diane Miller, Nancy Morris and Pastor Wes.**

Sacred Conversations on Race ~ gathers at 3 pm in the Oasis Center and on Zoom on the following date: **June 26 ~** We will be discussing Sho Baraka's Book, *He Saw that It Was Good*. **June 26th ~** Read Pages 81 – the end.

Please put on your calendar **Saturday, June 29 at 9 AM** - Join Project Pride for a vibrant celebration as we join in marching the Grand Flag over Ringling Bridge! Witness a stunning display of unity and pride as we light up the bridge with our colorful presence. Ringling Bridge 920 John Ringling Causeway Sarasota, FL 34236

Sunday July 21st ~ Postcards to Returning Citizens Project to help them have their voting rights restored. The Racial Justice Mission Group and our siblings of COLLAGE are inviting you to participate in the project sponsored by the League of Women Voters to help returning citizen have their voting rights restored. Immediately following the service on July 21st, please join us in Syster Hall. You may recall in March, we had a similar activity and many of our congregation members addressed almost **200 postcards** to returning citizens informing them of ways, they can have their voting rights restored. It was so successful; the League of Women Voters asked us to do it again. The postcards and addresses are being provided by the League, and the Racial Justice Mission Group will provide the postage stamps. The right to vote is critical and essential part of our Democracy and we should do all what we can to ensure every person has an opportunity to exercise that right. **In 2018, more than 64% of Florida citizens approved an Amendment to give persons with felony convictions the right to vote after they completed their sentences.** However, the Florida legislators added additional stipulations that made it virtually impossible for the Amendment to be enacted as it was intended. Please join us after service on July 21st for a few minutes to address some postcards for a worthwhile cause. Refreshments will be provided. Thank you!

Gathering of the Waters ~ As you travel this summer, please collect water from wherever you visit! Remember you can gather water from local Florida areas or wherever you find yourself in the coming months. On October 20th we will celebrate our annual Gathering of the Waters.

THIS WEEK

Sunday, June 16 ~ June 16 ~ Juneteenth, PRIDE Month, and Father's Day

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

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

Summer Salad Sing in Syster Hall, Noon, Syster Hall

Monday, June 17

Growing and Caring Team, noon, Oasis Center and Zoom

Tuesday, June 18

Drumming as a Spiritual Practice, 3 p.m., Chapel

Music Director Search Team, 3:30 p.m., Oasis Center and Zoom

Church Council Meeting, 6:30 p.m., Zoom

Wednesday, June 19

Wednesday Morning Bible Study, 11 am, Oasis Center and Zoom

Thursday, June 20

Green Team meeting, 10 a.m., Oasis Center and Zoom

Sunday, June 23

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

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

Peace and Justice conversation on SMH Board Election, noon, SH

Service for Samuel Bryant, 1:30 p.m., Chapel

A Service to Celebrate the life of Pat Myers will be **Thursday, June 27 at 10 a.m.** in the Chapel

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*