

**CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF  
CHRIST  
OF PUNTA GORDA**  
*An Open and Affirming Congregation*



**JUNE 2019**

**FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK**

**Rev. Mike Ford**

**How Will They Know?**

"We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord  
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord  
And we pray that our unity will one day be restored  
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love  
Yeah they'll know we are Christians by our love."

These song lyrics, written by Fr. Peter Scholtes, in the late 1960s, have been running through my head for several weeks. They are part of a theological underpinning of my faith. Very plainly, it tells me that there is one defining factor of this life of faith, and being a disciple of Christ, that inform others of my values, love.

The word love, Agape, occurs one hundred fifty-seven times in the New Testament, or the Christian texts. It is used nineteen times in the Gospel of John and 4 times in chapter fourteen. That may seem like a relatively small number, but considering my NT has one hundred fifty-six pages, it means love is mentioned an average on once every page. In my mind, it must mean that love is a pretty important topic in the NT, the church's Testament of Jesus' life and ministry.

In the fourteenth chapter of the Gospel of John, we have what is called a part of the Farewell Discourse of Jesus to his disciples. In this chapter, another important topic arises, how will the disciples function after Jesus is gone. Twice in this chapter Jesus mentions that God will send another Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to them which will keep them connected to Jesus and to God in a

tangible way. He even goes on to proclaim that they should rejoice at his departure as that will prompt God to send this Advocate to them.

Prior to that revelation, Judas had asked Jesus how he will be revealed to them and not to the world. Jesus responds, "Jesus answered him, "Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine but is from the Father who sent me." Following on the heels of this statement Jesus promises the gift of the Holy Spirit, sent by God, when Jesus departs.

In my mind, this is an important connection. Jesus has said that the disciples will know he and God is with them, if out of love, they follow his teachings. In that, God and Jesus will know their love for them and they will make their home together. Since the Holy Spirit is immediately spoken of as the connection between God and humanity, it makes me wonder why.

I was told a number of years ago that the proof of the indwelling HS is speaking in tongues. I found that odd, as scripture also states that speaking in tongues must be accompanied by interpretation for it to be valid. For the community I was part of, proof of authentic faith was by speaking in tongues. The elder would lay hands on you and pray that God's Spirit would come to dwell in you and proof that it worked was the person's ability to speak in tongues on demand. As one who didn't (not couldn't), I was set aside as a non-believer and turned away from in an otherwise loving and caring church. That experience had a great impact on me emotionally. It made me question my faith.

In the years of study and in ministry, I have come to see a different way of looking at this fourteenth chapter of John. What if, the evidence of the HS connecting me to God and Jesus in a tangible way is by the love I show others? What if the connection in scripture is to teach me that when I show love, that comes through the HS and my relationship with God in Christ Jesus? What if all those tongues talking, non-loving people had it wrong those many years ago?

This leads me to why this old traditional song keeps coming into my head. It IS about the language I speak, but not some unknown tongue that only God understands. Rather, it is the language of love spoken that is enabled and blessed by God's own Spirit. In one moment, I go from isolation to community. I firmly believe that the evidence of God's Spirit in my life is the love I offer to others.

I look around at our world today and see so many examples of actions proving the content of our faith. I see war, kidnaping, hate, oppression, division, racial discrimination, demonizing of those "not like us" specifically if they speak a different language of worship in a different way. I look around and say to myself "does this show what kind of god they serve if they will treat others this way and how am I to be different?"

I come back to the lyrics of "We Are One In The Spirit";

"We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord

And we pray that our unity will one day be restored

**And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love**

**Yeah they'll know we are Christians by our love.”**

This is all the proof I need!

### ***FROM YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM***



### ***MODERATOR'S REPORT- Bill Colson***

#### **LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING**

Bob Miller of Boyette-Miller Construction presented their proposal for repairs, replacement etc., of the building fascia, siding and gutters. Previously, the LT had voted to have Boyett-Miller's roofing company (CFS Roofing) inspect and repair damaged areas and protect the interface of stucco with the roof. The stucco and roofing repairs are now complete, with painting for repaired areas to be done when the fascia and siding are repaired/replaced.

The Leadership Team agreed to accept Boyette-Miller's proposal for the fascia, siding and gutters, and authorized the Moderator to sign a copy of the proposal as a contract. The signed contract was faxed to Bob Miller's office May 16<sup>th</sup>. The work is expected to commence the first week of June.

The Leadership Team agreed to allow Gulfshore Opera to use the Congregational UCC facilities to give a performance on December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019. This came from a proposal by Isaac James. More information to follow from the Music Director.

Other than approval of the previously submitted written Committee Reports, the remainder of the meeting was used for discussion of a Capital Campaign for ongoing repairs, replacements, and modifications to our facilities and grounds. A list of proposed ideas was prepared and circulated prior to the meeting, with each member asked to rank the ideas from most to least important, and to add additional ideas. The final list was tabulated to determine rankings. Over 25 items were considered. Near term planning, the top three items are already being addressed with contracts to repair the roof, fascia and siding, and stucco. Intermediate term plans must be developed to address

coming end of useful life issues for the entire roof and air conditioning systems. Longer term plans must be developed to support the remaining items that were identified from the ranking system. A proposal to establish a Capital Campaign Direction Committee was proposed and passed. The members are to be the Moderator; the Assistant Moderator; the Treasurer; the Stewardship Leader; and the Pastor.

The Committee's first order of business is a series of meetings to organize and determine how to conduct the Capital Campaign, and what items to include (and their projected costs).

Stay tuned Folks. More to come.

**The next regularly scheduled Leadership Team** meeting will be held Tuesday June 11<sup>th</sup>, in the Church Library, from 3:00-4:30 PM.

Remember: we (the Leadership Team AND the Congregation) are here to support our Pastor, our church's ministries/responsibilities, the church's general operations, and one another. We welcome your input.

Blessings and Peace,  
Bill Colson, Moderator

### ***ENDOWMENT TEAM – Bill Ringelstein, Chair***

The Endowment Team has recommended and the Leadership Team has approved distributions to two local entities.

A distribution of \$1,000 was approved for the Edgewater Methodist Church Bicycle Ministry that provides free bicycles to those needing transportation. This ministry, headed up by Tom & Elaine Ballard, provides refurbished bicycles to those in need so they will have transportation to work. This ministry has been an ongoing provider of transportation to the needy.

A distribution of \$1,500 was also made to the North Ft. Myers Academy for the Arts to support their live performances directed by Kathy Rivadeniera. Those of us privileged to see productions of Moana, Newsies and Refugee have experienced the talent of the students in the Drama Department.

Presentation to Edgewater Methodist Church Bicycle Ministry.





**TREASURER – Melissa Brown**

May 2019 Treasurer’s Report

| Financial Results          | Apr-19   | 2019 Y-T-D | Budget   |
|----------------------------|----------|------------|----------|
| Donations and Other Income | \$19,343 | \$58,841   | \$50,500 |
| Expenses                   | \$13,053 | 52,225     | \$53,855 |
| Net Income                 | \$6,289  | \$6,617    | -\$3,355 |

Although we are currently \$9,972 above budget (\$6,617 gain versus a budgeted loss of \$3,355), we are heading into the time of year when our expenses always exceed our collections. I want to thank those of you who have “paid ahead” on your pledges to help us get through the coming months. As always, we can use a few more Benjamins in our offering plates:



If you would like an easy and cost-free way to contribute to the church, you can set up an automatic payment through your bank by using electronic banking. Payments are mailed from your bank to the church. If you would like to pursue this form of payment, please be advised that the address that should be used for mailing the check is Congregational United Church of Christ, Punta Gorda, PO Box 510838, Punta Gorda, FL 33951-0838. Most banks do not charge for this service—not even for the postage to mail the payment.

**STEWARDSHIP – Elden Wick, Chair**

On Sunday, June 9<sup>th</sup>, we will be receiving the Strengthen the Church Offering which supports the expansion of ministry and growth of UCC local congregations. Your support of this offering will help the UCC fulfill its commitment to creating a just world for all by investing in new ministries and practices that meet the emerging needs of local communities. Please join in planting the seeds

needed to grow and sustain our denomination by making a gift to the Strengthen the Church offering. Envelopes will be available on Sunday, June 9<sup>th</sup>. You may include it with your pledge but be sure to indicate on your check how much is to go to this offering.



### ***MUSIC DIRECTOR - Isaac James***

By now, most of you have made your way to your homes up north and left us year rounders to deal with the summer heat. I hope you are all safe and sound and excited to see you all return. I came across a few stories of hymns that I thought were quite interesting.

We sing a lot of hymns that all have an amazing story behind them. I might use this platform to showcase some of these. The following is a story about How Great Thou Art.

While recovering from a serious mining accident in Oklahoma, Vernon Spencer began playing music at a local bar called the Bucket of Blood. He enjoyed the work so much he hopped on a train to Hollywood in 1931, hoping to make it big. Tim Spencer became his stage name, and he joined Roy Rogers and the Sons of the Pioneers to become one of the most popular groups in America. Tim married a Christian woman named Velma, who prayed earnestly for him, especially while he was on the road. He needed all the prayer he could get, for his lifestyle was epitomized by the title of one of his hits: "Cigarettes, Whiskey, and Wild Wild Women." Then one day in a hotel in Hazelton, Pennsylvania, Tim opened a letter from his wife. Included was a verse of Scripture. Picking up a nearby Gideon Bible, Tim read the passage and realized he needed a change in his life. In prayer he yielded his life to the Lordship of Christ. Tim Spencer later established a Gospel Music publishing company, Manna Music, and a few years later his college-age son, Hal, brought him a song from a student missionary conference. Tim contacted the author of the words, Stuart Hine, and published the song. It became one of the most beloved hymns of the twentieth century. And that's how the author of "Cigarettes, Whiskey, and Wild Wild Women" became the publisher who helped introduce the world to "How Great Thou Art."

### ***DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY TEAM – Linda Greenfield and Linda Weaver, Chairs***

**Worship-** Looking for HELP!! No experience necessary...just a warm smile and welcome! We need a few people to volunteer to be Greeters over the summer (July and August) months. Please check the sign-up sheet at the back kiosk. "Many hands make light work!" --not a Scripture verse, a "Mom" verse.

#### **Communion Preparation:**

June 2-Ian & Sandra McLauchlan, Linda & Glenn Weaver

July 7-Jan Tulk & Mary Tulip

August 4-Stacy Scarrow & Bill & Hazel Klossner

**Mission-**Thanks to the Endowment Fund and Leadership Team for the donation to the Methodist bike ministry.

A huge thank you to all of you who contributed short sets back in March! We collected a total of 121 sets for the girls in the Head Start Program at Baker Street! Fantastic! Also, thanks to Sandy James-Nogaj and Neoma Remiger for organizing everything, Linda Greenfield, Sandy James-Nogaj and Linda Weaver for delivering the clothes and Linda Greenfield and Judy Minier for attending the luncheon and “fashion show” at the Women’s Club in Punta Gorda Next year, we will work directly with Nicky James in the Head Start program.

**Education-** Book highlight, *The Slave Next Door* by Kevin Bales and Ron Soodalter. Where is human trafficking occurring today in Florida?! How did CIW (Coalition of Immokalee Workers)-which we have supported- get started? How do we find slaves all around us, hidden in plain sight?! You can find answers to these questions when you read this book...on a hot summer day in your cool, comfy chair. (I was shocked when I read what is happening in places very close to Punta Gorda!) This book can be found on the Social Justice Bookshelf in our church library.

### **MINISTRY FELLOWSHIP TEAM - Jan Tulk**

Thanks to our May Fellowship Hosts:

May 5 Barb Schachtschneider and Vicki McDonald

May 12 Val Moran, Barb Smith, Debbie Grenzow, Dave Cramer, Jerry Oscarson, Lou and Lynn Stayner

May 19 Bill and Hazel Klossner

May 26 Kathy Frantish, Bill and Jean Ringelstein and Linda Greenfield



Our coffee hour is dwindling, with our snowbirds returning to their homes for the summer. The good news is, it is more manageable to provide food with fewer people. The flip side is, we “year rounders” have to take more turns in the summer months because we have fewer people. Please remember that as the summer progresses, and we need to sign up more than once. Thankfully you all step up each summer. ☺

### **ON THE MOVE**

With mixed emotions, we are saying farewell to Elaine Erickson. Elaine will be moving to Wisconsin June 8<sup>th</sup>. We are happy she will be closer to her family but sad for us as she will be very much missed here at UCC. Her new address is: Dickson Hollow, Apt 111, W156N4881 Pilgrim Road, Menomonee Falls, WI 53051.

God Speed Elaine! We will miss you.

## **LADIES' LUNCH OUT – Neoma Remiger**

Our next ladies' luncheon will be at 12:00 noon on Friday, June 28<sup>th</sup> at La Fiorentina at 10361 Tamiami Trail, Punta Gorda. We would love to have you join us. A sign-up sheet is available at the kiosk in the back of the church.



## **LIBRARIAN – Sandy James-Nogaj**

Thanks to Joanne Arvid for co-hosting with me for the final Book Talk Tea of the season. Good food and discussion. Here are some recommendations: "Never Let Me Go" by Kazuo Ishiguro; "The Threat" by Andrew McCabe; "Long Road to Mercy" by David Balducci and "Note to Self" by Gail King.

The 2019-2020 Reading for Renewal list is now available in the church library. I have ordered 21 books from the list and they will be available soon.

Check out the Social Justice display in the library. Happy summer reading!!!!

## **SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY REPORT – M.E. Steele Pierce and Glenn Weaver**

Mother's Day Rally, May 12, 2019 at Homestead Child Detention Center, FL  
Sandy James-Nogaj and two friends went on an 8-hour round trip to participate in this rally of support for the incarcerated immigrant children who have been illegally taken from their parents. (So far, five children have died in these centers and legislators are not allowed in to inspect the conditions!) This is so wrong and immoral! Thank you, Sandy and friends, for representing our congregation and standing up for social justice for immigrant children and their families! Sandy's sign reads, "We love you!"



May 18,2019- Punta Gorda Emancipation Day Celebration at the Blanchard House- Glenn and Linda Weaver attended the annual reading of the Emancipation Proclamation-giving FREEDOM-to people of color in 1863. It was initially read in Washington, D.C. in January of that year but it took the horseman five months to reach Punta Gorda, FL to read and declare to the public! It is always an uplifting and hopeful celebration!

Pics of a soldier reading the proclamation



***FROM THE CHURCH SCRIBE – Joyce Schenk***



Look for another of Joyce's articles soon. We miss you Joyce!



**CHURCH OFFICE HOURS:** The office will be open Monday through Thursday from 8:30 am – 12:30 pm. We will be closed on Fridays. Phone # 941-637-8443.

### Updating Your Information

We are always trying to keep our information on members and visitors up-to-date. We need your help! If you have had a change of address, new email address, home phone or cell phone change, please let us know so we can keep our records current which will help us to keep good communication with all of you. If you are not receiving emails or the Beacon newsletter, please let us also know that. Thank you so much. Your help is very much appreciated.

**SEND CHANGES TO:** [office@puntagorda-ucc.com](mailto:office@puntagorda-ucc.com) OR you can drop them off in the church office.

**Name Tags:** Just a reminder, if you would like a magnet on the back of your name tag instead of the pin, just leave your name tag in the blue bin on the name tag rack and it will be changed and ready for the next week.



### BIRTHDAYS

|         |                    |
|---------|--------------------|
| June 1  | Hazel Klossner     |
| June 2  | Marilyn Belseth    |
| June 3  | Linda Greenfield   |
| June 4  | Susann Luckenbach  |
| June 5  | Kevin Rivadeneira  |
| June 15 | Lucia Rivadeneira  |
| June 16 | Suzanne Cleveland  |
| June 17 | Nadine Sommerfield |
| June 18 | Glenn Garrett      |

June 20 Joanne Stoughton  
Linda Weaver  
June 25 Jean Ringelstein

### **ANNIVERSARIES**

June 14 Jerry & Lori Larson  
Clif & Cindy Trudeau  
June 16 Melissa & Steve Brown  
June 19 Joseph Lawson & Beverly Honkola  
June 22 Dick & Paula Michael  
June 25 Bob & Judy Wood  
June 29 Elden & Diane Wick

Did we miss a birthday or anniversary? Please email the office, and we will try to make sure it doesn't happen again: [office@puntagorda-ucc.com](mailto:office@puntagorda-ucc.com)