

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



NOVEMBER 2019

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

The Annual Gathering

On October 11 & 12, I was in Orlando to attend the Annual Gathering of the Florida Conference of the UCC. I realized on the drive there, that this would be my 25th Annual Gathering. Now, I know that makes me a rookie compared to many of you. I must admit my admiration for those clergy and delegates who have been for several more decades of Annual Gatherings than I. It becomes challenging to take the time to prepare and attend when they tend to be really similar year after year.

Then we all arrive and are busy renewing contact with folks we only see once a year. We make plans for the time after the day's events are over. In my attempt to be honest, part of the allure of the Annual Gathering are the times of social contact. It is one of the few events where like-minded people, beyond the local church, can gather and let themselves be themselves. Being an introvert, it takes me a while to get into the swing of socializing, but I get there and renew old acquaintances and form new ones.

As for business, we had very little. We only had our slate of elections for Conference positions and the Annual Budget to contend with. The former is always a challenge from the local to the national settings. The slate was presented by the Chair of the Nominating Committee, with the usual several vacancies. There is a call from the rostrum for people who are interested in filling those vacancies to offer their names to the Chair before the next day's plenary. The budget was presented by the Chair of the Finance Committee, with the usual number crunching that is necessary. All in all, the finances of the Conference are healthy. The stock market has been fruitful for the past two years. The Chair asks for questions. There are none. The next day, both pass in less than a minute.

What fills the spaces between plenary sessions are workshops and worship. I was tasked to be a player in the presentation of the Parable of the Prodigal for our opening worship. Of course, I was chosen to portray the Older Son. I guess I looked grumpy enough to be that character. I got to scowl

and have a tantrum in the appropriate places. We ended that presentation of scripture with Table Fellowship and Communion. We were asked to consider which character we were in the drama and to explain why. Then we were served sweetbreads backed by a local congregation that day at 4:30am and driven from Pinellas Park to Orlando, still fresh. Then the stewards brought around the sparkling cider for the cup to share. It was good to break bread together and experience a different form of liturgy for the Communion Meal. We sang songs and shared conversations with one another. We offered ourselves in prayer. And we saw that it was good.

This brings me to one of the many highlights from the Annual Gathering. For decades I have wanted to do a table worship service. Frankly, In-Season it won't work for us, unless we find a lot more tables and move all of the chairs out of the sanctuary. But it turns out to be at once an intimate and a communal setting. We were asked to focus on the seven other people at the table, serve one another the bread and cup, then join communally for the partaking of the meal. That switching of focus served to remind us all that, though we may be individual churches, we still have a collective identity as the Body of Christ. The wheels are still turning for how we might be able to accomplish this experience in our own congregation.

Now the next highlight. I am simultaneously uninspired and in awe of the workshop experiences. One can never know what the content will be until we actually engage the topics. I chose for my morning experience the workshop on Becoming a Creation Justice Congregation. I chose this because our Living the Question study group are going to be engaging Creation Justice this Spring. I learned that it is a two-year process to apply for a CJ church designation. It takes a lot of questioning about what has already been done and projecting what still needs to be accomplished to become one. It is an all-congregation experience. We were told by the facilitators that it is a transformative experience as well. They came through the experience knowing they were committed to Creation Justice and not just trying to save money for the church.

My other workshop I attended was from the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. They talked about the progress that had been made in the last twenty years and how much more that needs to happen in farm worker rights in America and around the world. They unveiled a simple formula for why the CIW has been successful partnering with growers and corporate retailers to reform the industry. They showed us the formula. It is $C+C=C$. Simply put, Concern plus Commitment equal Change. They have been able to enlist growers and retailers in the Fair Food Alliance solely by raising the awareness of CONSUMERS of the conditions in the fields for the workers and then encouraging the consumers to engage the retailers to consider sourcing their produce from farms where fair labor practices are in place. Notably retailers such as Taco Bell (the first to sign on to the FFA), McDonalds, Whole Foods, Burger King, Chipotle, Aramark, Sodexo, and Walmart have joined the program. These are some of the largest purchasers of farm produce in America.

Also, notably, Publix and Wendy's have taken direct action against the FFA by intentionally sourcing tomatoes from farms that do not belong to the FFA. Work continues to create a dialogue with those companies. In the meantime, consumers are encouraged to boycott those companies. In the case of Publix, simply do not buy the tomatoes they sell. For Wendy's, do not shop there at all. I must admit that the companies who have joined the FFA are not angels in all of their business practices. Walmart continues to buy other goods from countries that openly engage in child labor and slavery. The CIW is asking for one simple change that will allow farm workers to be paid a living wage and to

not be sexually abused or beaten in the fields, 1c per pound more paid to the pickers for tomatoes.

One other topic came up during the Annual Gathering. There is a project to build affordable housing for the workers in Immokalee. Honestly, where the workers currently live you would not put your dog into. They are dumps without running water or bathrooms. They often hold two to three FAMILIES in a three-bedroom trailer. The project will build homes for family and singles. The land has had a deposit placed on it and a company has offered to donate the construction of the homes. The land will cost \$400,000 to purchase, \$200,000 has already been raised.

The Board of Directors of our Conference has set aside \$100,000 as a challenge to the Conference to match to finish the purchase of the land. Two churches stood up and pledged \$100 per member. Both of those churches have over 1000 members, but the challenge still needs to involve more. The families will need furniture and household goods to live in the new apartments. This is where any extra funds will go from this challenge. It is a worthwhile cause. Please consider what you might be able to do. I know this is a time when we are stretched thin by the Capital Campaign and our Annual Pledge Campaign, but we might be able to be creative to offer hope to the families who pick the food we put on out tables. Our Social Justice Team is looking at ways that our congregation can participate.

Anyway, I guess I did have a few things to bring home from the Annual Gathering after all. Next year, the Gathering will be in Coral Gables. I would love to take two delegates with me to have their own Annual Gathering experiences! Thanks for sending me to this one.

FROM YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM



MODERATOR'S REPORT- Bill Colson

Leadership Team Meeting (held October 8th, 2019)

Old Business

- Laity Sunday, to be held October 13th. The Leadership Team had signed-up for various of the Order of Worship. A short discussion was held to let the participants know when they would be expected to speak. The Leadership Team provided refreshment for the Fellowship time following

worship. Laity Sunday is a time for Pastor Mike to take a break from the Pulpit on Sunday. This particular Sunday, he had just returned from the annual meeting of the Florida Conference of the United Church of Christ, where he served on the planning committee. This was the culmination of a busy period of meetings and planning for the Annual Conference. We, the congregation, should let him know how much we appreciate all his efforts in behalf of the Conference and this congregation.

There were no delegates from this congregation in attendance to the Annual Conference. As a congregation, we should consider our participation, and, if possible, attend as an observer or as a voting delegate to the next Annual Conference. Please let Pastor Mike or myself know if you are willing to serve as a delegate to future meetings.

New Business

- Pastor Mike has been approached by persons seeking financial assistance. Upon conversation with those seeking the assistance, it is obvious that they are in need and will benefit from help. The discussion between Pastor Mike and the Leadership Team has been how best to provide financial assistance. The consensus is that the best solution is to provide prepaid 'Gift Cards' in various denominations, and possibly 'Gas Cards' to nearby locations.

The purchase of the Gift Cards and stocking of them into a secure location in the office safe is the easy part of the problem. The hard part is the effect on a strained church budget. A not so obvious problem is the longevity of the unused card. Upon purchase, a "service fee" becomes effective, payable monthly, to the issuer of the card, as well as a fee at the time of purchase.

Also, most store or chain, gift cards are reloadable; designed to have additional funds placed on the card's cash balance. Pastor Mike, as well as others, are concerned about recipients returning to the church seeking additional funds for the card. It is desired that the cards have a finite or fixed amount of funds to be used and then the card discarded.

Because we did not have solutions to the questions raised, we decided to continue to seek solutions from different card sources and reconsider the possible solution at the next meeting.

- Other business. It was discussed how would those not in attendance at Worship on Sunday know of meetings or other happenings of general interest. Currently, the weekly calendar is printed on the reverse side of the worship bulletin. After discussion, it was decided to establish a weekly/monthly calendar on the website, for general information. The calendar on the website is to be updated regularly.
- There were no other discussions before the Leadership Team, other than the Team Member's monthly reports. Their information is contained within their reports elsewhere in the Beacon.

The Leadership Team meeting was concluded after prayer.

If you have anything that you feel is needed to be discussed by the Leadership Team, please contact Bill Colson, Pastor Mike, or any Team member. Remember, we are here to serve you.

The next Leadership Team meeting will be held November 12th at 3:00 PM in the Church Library.

ENDOWMENT TEAM – Bill Ringelstein, Chair

The procedure that follows can be used for transfer of stock to the Capital Fund, Endowment Fund or your Church operating fund pledge that you contribute to. Just identify the fund that the deposit should go to.

PROCEDURE FOR TRANSFER OF STOCK

The stock you wish to transfer will be with your broker or financial institution who holds the stock. They will have a form to handle the transfer and process it once the form is completed and signed. You will need to provide the following:

1. The receiver of the transfer: Vanguard Brokerage Services
2. The DTC participation number: 0062
3. The receivers account number: 76095616 Brokerage Account
4. The receiver's name: Congregational United Church UCC, Inc

The holder of the stock is responsible for initiating the transfer to the Vanguard account identified above and will have the proper fax or other Vanguard contact information to complete the transaction.

Once the stock appears in our brokerage account, it will be sold within 3 business days and a matching check written to the Capital Campaign on your behalf. You will receive a copy of the stock transaction and your church account will be credited. The transaction will appear on your next quarterly statement.

Any questions, please contact me.

Bill Ringelstein 941-637-9979

STEWARDSHIP – Elden Wick. Chair

A STEWARDSHIP Thought:

What Am I All About?!

“Compassion will help us if we let it.

Selfishness will bury us if we permit it.

Kindness will save us if we accept it.

Acceptance will unite us if we practice it!”

(Credit to Rev. Beverly Markham, ALPHARETTA Presbyterian Church)

For this Stewardship moment in the Beacon, I thought Beverly's idea very succinct for this time in our church life. Goodness knows, politics is stretching and stressing us daily.

As many congregants return from other climates, we CUCC members and friends enter what feels like another worship year. You will be or already are asked for financial commitments to support the Capital Campaign. This is essential to permit the church physical plant to regain health and service all of our congregants.

Soon after the New Year, our Pledge Campaign will seek next year monies to support and authorize 2020 church expenses and programs.

These are indeed exciting opportunities for us and our stewardship, personally and in our church life. Indeed, we are being stretched. But let us praise and worship our God who GIVES us from his bounty every resource needed.

Let HIS people say, "So be it; Amen."

TREASURER – Melissa Brown



November 2019 Treasurer's Report

Operating Income/Expenses	19-Sept	2019 Y-T-D	Budget
Donations and Other Income	\$12,237.30	\$114,402.27	\$113,625.00
Expenses	\$12,213.29	\$115,994.84	\$121,173.72
Net Income	\$24.01	-1,592.57	-\$7,548.72

Fewer red numbers this month, and we didn't even change the printer cartridge!



Accounting humor. Get it?

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.



MUSIC DIRECTOR – Isaac James

It is so good to see all of you coming back South, the last couple Sundays have been great to catch up with you all. I was at my brother's wedding in New York on October 26th and was unpleasantly reminded of how blessed I am to be in warm weather!

The choir is growing! I am so very proud of the work they've already accomplished. Anyone interested in joining, please see me after service. We would love to have you sing with us.

As usual I would like to continue with stories on the hymns we sing. "Holy, Holy, Holy" by Reginald Heber (1783-1826) is unique in many ways. It spans many Christian traditions and centuries, unifying them in four stanzas. Not only that, but Heber was an Anglican bishop whose ministry spanned continents and races, placing him as one of the heroes of the Christian faith.

Perhaps the most intriguing characteristic of the hymn is how the text does not initiate praise, but instead encourages the singer to join in an endless song. Both Isaiah 6:1-5 and Revelation 4:2-11 inspire this hymn, spanning the Testaments, reminding us that Holy, Holy, Holy has been uttered in worship for centuries. Isaiah received his vision in the eighth century B.C.; John the Apostle recorded his revelation in the first century C.E.; while Reginald Heber composed his hymn in 1826, in the nineteenth century.

Congregations continue to be inspired by Heber's text in the twenty-first century. It is safe to say that songs of praise, begun by the seraphim and cherubim, have been echoing throughout the millennia through the voice of the people.

What makes this hymn so special? First, the rhyme is unique since all four lines of each stanza rhyme with the word "holy." One won't easily find another hymn written this way. Another reason why "Holy, holy, holy" is such a timeless hymn is its pairing with the well-known tune NICAEA. Written by John Bacchus Dykes (1823-1876), NICAEA has a unique elegance, which complements Heber's stately language. There's no cheap emotionalism and subjectivity apparent in the music or the words. Named after the Council of Nicaea, where the nature of the Trinity was shaped theologically, NICAEA is also a classic example of Victorian hymn tune writing, notably with its solid harmonies and subtle chromaticism.

Heber is careful to describe the Trinity without encroaching upon its mystery. This is especially evident with the phrase, "though the darkness hide Thee" in stanza 3, and this separation between God and man is exacerbated by sin ("though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see"). Though we may not see or completely understand the Trinity in its fullness in this lifetime, Heber's and Dykes's collaboration reminds us those are not reasons that preclude our worship of the Triune God.

Along with the rhythm, the melody was masterfully constructed. The tune commences with a rising third, which could easily symbolize the Trinity, and continues with a chant-like style (there are few leaps

and many consecutively repeated notes). Hymnals have left the original four-part harmony of Dykes's untouched, although most of them have transposed the key down a whole step from the original of E Major.

Reginald Heber was born in Cheshire, England, in 1783, with a precocity toward poetry. By the time Heber was twenty, he had already penned a poem titled "Palestine," which won the prestigious Newdigate Prize. Four years later, he was writing numerous hymns while he was vicar of Hodnet, Shropshire. This is the most probable time he composed "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty," as he stayed there fifteen years.

Most of his hymns, though, were not published until he passed away in 1826. His widow published Heber's impressive volume of hymns, which are arranged according to the church year, *Hymns Written and Adapted to the Weekly Church Service of the Year* (1827). This, along with *A Selection of Psalms and Hymns for the Parish Church of Banbury*, brought his most eminent hymn into the spotlight.

DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY TEAM – Linda Greenfield and Linda Weaver, Chairs

On Sunday, October 27, we welcomed into our church family new members, Marjorie Bruns, John Casey, Tom Cartwright, Juanita Maher and Stan Smith. We are so happy to include you in our church family and look forward to getting to know all of you!!

Communion Set-Up Schedule:

Nov. 3- Mary & Dick Tulip

Dec. 1-Melissa Brown

Jan. 5-MaryAnn Farnquist & Lou Stayner

Laity Sunday- "We are all preachers/ministers of the Word!" A huge thank you to all who helped make our worship service a wonderful and uplifting gift to God! Also, thank you to the Leadership Team for hosting the Coffee Hour after the service. Pastor Mike, you are so impressive as you make the service run so smoothly week after week!



Please mark your calendars for these

ADVENT ACTIVITIES:

Nov. 17- Bringing out the Christmas decorations

Nov. 24-After the service, decorating the church

Dec. 1-Hanging of the Greens Service

Education- If you are interested or so moved to learn more about immigration, please check with Pastor Mike about the Immigration Movie Series put on by the UU Fellowship in Port Charlotte. There will be four different movies shown in November. All movies are FREE!

MINISTRY FELLOWSHIP TEAM – Jan Tulk



Nov. 2019 Fellowship Report

I would like to thank the October hosts:

- Oct. 6 Susann Luckenbach, Ann Barker, Chrystal Reichard, Jan Tulk
- Oct. 13 The Leadership Team
- Oct. 20 Bev Honkola, Joe Lawson, Helen (Birdie) Tiistola, Lou and Lynn Stayner
- Oct. 27 Ann Barker, Chrystal Reichard, Susann Luckenbach, Vicki McDonald

Everyone seemed to enjoy the Potluck Breakfast last month. Please mark Nov. 9, at 3:00 pm, on your calendars for the Capital Campaign Kick-off. My thanks, in advance, to all who are helping with the food. It should be a great Saturday afternoon. Be sure to sign up for hosting Coffee Hour. The last two Sundays in Nov. are open at this time. We filled Faith Hall on Oct. 20. Good to see old friends returning.

LADIES' LUNCH OUT – Neoma Remiger

Ladies, we would love to have you join us at our monthly lunch out. It is an opportunity to get to know your "sisters" you sit with on Sunday morning.

Our next luncheon will be our annual "High Tea" on Friday, December 6 at Zoetz Sweet Boutique at 12:00 noon. Zoetz is located on Hwy 17 in the Winn Dixie plaza on Bermont Road. A sign-up sheet is available on the table in the back of the sanctuary. Deadline for signing up is Nov. 27. Please sign up early as we have space considerations at the restaurant. Everyone is asked to bring their favorite china cup and saucer. If you don't have one, not to worry, as we will be sure to have extras on hand. Just let Neoma Remiger or Mary Tulip know that you will need one. Looking forward to seeing everyone!



LIBRARIAN – Sandy James-Nogai



It's that time of the year again! The first Book Talk Tea of the season had good group discussions as well as some laughs! Thanks to Molly Hall for co-hosting with me. Here are some books that we recommend: "Born with Wings: by Daisy Khan; "Unsheltered" by Barb Kingsolver; "Lost Girls of Paris" by Pam Jenoff and "Elinor Oliphant is Completely Fine" by Gail Honeyman.

The November Book Talk Tea is Friday Nov 8 at 12 noon in the church library. PLEASE NOTE the change in time!!! Please sign up at the kiosk in the back of the sanctuary. Newcomers are always welcome.

Thanks to Marianne Johnston from the Wednesday art group for her donation to the library. We welcome any book donations.

SOCIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY

The Coastal and Heartland National Estuary Partnership (formerly called the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Partnership-CHNEP) is sponsoring the annual Nature Festival on Saturday, November 16, 2019 from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM at Laishley Park in Punta Gorda. The theme of the Nature Festival is "Uniting Central and Southwest Florida to Protect Water and Wildlife." Please come see what your friends and neighbors are doing to protect and enjoy Southwest Florida, our home.

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Charlotte County/Immigration Justice Committee announce a film series addressing the current immigration crisis. The public is invited to view and discuss these free films. All four films will begin at 5:30 pm and will be shown at the Mid-County Regional Library, Forrest Nelson Blvd. and Tamiami Trail. A moderated discussion will follow each film.

Nov. 4, "The Other Side of Immigration" discussing the reasons people emigrate and the impact this has on their families.

Nov. 18, "Distant Barking of Dogs" describing a Ukrainian boy who loses innocence beneath the pressure of war.

Nov. 24, "El Norte" picturing the Guatemalan army's attack on workers and their families and the harrowing escape of teen siblings.

Dec. 2, "Llevates Mis Amores" will portray the courageous and compassionate Mexican women who prepare and feed migrants on a moving train.

FROM THE CHURCH SCRIBE – Joyce Schenk



Look for another of Joyce's articles soon. Feel better soon, Joyce!



DON'T FORGET TO TURN YOUR CLOCKS BACK SATURDAY NIGHT, NOVEMBER 2ND BEFORE GOING TO BED. YOU WON'T WANT TO BE LATE FOR CHURCH!



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.

Please note: To have an event listed on the Sunday bulletin, please have the information in to the church office by Tuesday at 12:00 PM.

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@puntaorda-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 and Anniversaries: Is your birthday or anniversary missing from the bulletin or screen on Sunday morning? Please let us know. It probably is missing because we do not have that information for you.



BIRTHDAYS

November 3	Louise Jankowski
6	Molly Hall
7	Neoma Remiger
8	Herb Henry
12	Sawyer Ford
16	Donald Nagel
17	Joyce Baskovic
18	Joyce Schenk
19	Ian McLauchlan
21	Helen Coll
24	Audrey Young

ANNIVERSARIES

November 5	Lee & Anne Swift
11	David & Rene Ley
17	John & Carol Schmuhl
29	Guy & Linda Greenfield

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