

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



NOVEMBER 2020
FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Rest for Your Souls

So, plainly, I am weary. I suspect you may be as well. I am weary of the turmoil of the elections. There are not many opportunities to escape from it. It invades every space we occupy lately. To begin with, we do not have many spaces left in our refuge. They have become closed in this time of Pandemic. We are hesitant to venture out into public for fear of becoming a statistic. So, we are left to the electronic distractions which offer an escape from time to time. Now, however, even those escape mechanisms are clogged with demands for our votes and money. I have done enough binging on Netflix and Amazon to last a lifetime. I am now repeating the repeats!

Escape is necessary. So, I look for a new way to alter circumstances away from stress and into rest for my weary soul (and brain). Words come to me from Matthew 11. They are famous words offered by the Gospel writer, put into the mouth of Jesus. "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." Ah, just what I needed! It clearly is an invitation to step away from the cares that burden and into a place of rest.

The context is important. The movement begun by John the Baptizer was in full swing, until John criticized Herod for committing adultery. Herod slapped him in prison until he could decide how to handle this popular evangelist. So, all of the people who had flocked to John to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sin were left without benefit of what had been offered. The people were becoming restless, pressured, as if their salvation was being held back by a dam.

Jesus is ministering in the country sides, small hamlets at a time, but word was spreading of his ministry. The people became curious as to whether Jesus might be the replacement for John and could offer them repentance and forgiveness. Even John wondered if the true Messiah had come. It was a tense time, filled with turmoil and questions. Sound familiar?

Jesus offers his now famous invitation for the people to come to him, that he offers rest from the stress of wondering what the future holds and how they can return to God and live. Jesus offered a bit of peace in a troubled world. Not only that, Jesus offered a Way. The invitation included not only rest from the torture of sin, but a path that led to gentleness, humility, and rest. Ah, how pleasant that sounds!

I really feel that, at times such as these, we can reach back into the essential teachings Jesus offered, a path which leads to a less panicked way of life. It does come at a cost though, the yoke. We need to find the answer as to whether we are willing to yoke ourselves with Jesus to find that path. It may, at times, be troublesome when we want to veer off the path for a bite of sweeter grasses, a shiny object or two, a distraction from learning. The yoke not only offers strength, it gives purpose. Remember that path which leads to rest?

When I am feeling particularly stressed by CNN or Fox, I take a break and slip back into that yoke of learning and striving for a better place to. Read the words again, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and *I will give you rest*. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and *you will find rest for your souls*." Can you not feel the knots relaxing in your shoulders? Can you not feel your breath again? Can you not feel the frenzied thoughts slip away? Jesus beacons, Come, Rest in your soul. Refreshed by that release of chaos, we come to our future, resolved to continue the path of Peace and Justice.

Do me a favor. Take a deep breath, let it out. Do it again. Repeat as often as you wish. With each breath feel that yoke. Learn. Rest in your soul. Blessings.

FROM YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM



MODERATOR'S REPORT - Bill Colson

How time passes so quickly. Here it is, time for another Beacon Article. What has been happening with the Leadership Team during October?

Have you attended the 'In Person' worship, Sunday mornings? At the October Leadership Team meetings, the LT voted to increase the seating capacity to 50 for worship, without prior reservations necessary. The other procedures for attending, are still in place. We want to see everyone in worship, even though you are masked.

Other news from the LT virtual meeting. A Nominating Committee was announced, composed of Joanne Arvid, Judy Minier, and Bill Colson. They will produce a slate of candidates for election to the Leadership Team of 2021. The election will be during the Annual Meeting, to be held January 24th, 2021. The slate of candidates will be presented to the Leadership Team at the January meeting, to be held January 12th.

Because of term limits imposed by the congregation's Bylaws, it will be necessary to elect nearly a completely new Leadership Team, 7 of 10 positions. If you are asked to serve on the Leadership Team, please seriously consider accepting a nomination. More about the turnover in the December Beacon.

Other actions taken during the October meeting of the Leadership Team: formation of a Scholarship Program, under the Endowment Team. The Scholarship Program is to be administered by the new Scholarship Team, named during the LT Meeting. Please see the Endowment Report for names and other news.

Upcoming, at the next Leadership Team meeting, will be the consideration of the 2021 Budget.

Stay tuned for more news about your Leadership Team.



ENDOWMENT TEAM – Bill Ringelstein, Chair

The Leadership Team tasked the Endowment Team with setting up a scholarship program as part of our Church’s response to the Poor Peoples Campaign. The Scholarship Team is now in place and has held its first organizational meeting which selected Kathy Frantish as Chairperson and Linda Greenfield as Clerk. Other members of the Scholarship Team include Mary Anger, Susan James, Emily Klossner, Kathy Rivadeneira and Lee Swift. I will act as a resource person since Endowment will be the source for funding; the Scholarship Team will be responsible for all administrative functions. Stay tuned, this will be exciting!



TREASURER’S REPORT – Melissa Brown

September 2020 Treasurer’s Report

Financial Results	Sept 2020	2020 YTD	Budget
Donations and Other Income	\$9,764	\$130,201	\$130,950
Expenses	12,710	118,854	130,950
Donations Above/ Below Expenses	-\$2,946	\$11,347	\$0

Financial Results	Sept 2019	2019 YTD	Budget
Donations and Other Income	\$12,237	\$114,402	\$113,625
Expenses	12,213	115,995	121,174
Donations Above/ Below Expenses	\$24	-\$1,593	-\$7,549

2020 versus 2019 (Better/ <i>Worse</i>)	Sept	YTD
Donations and Other Income	<i>-\$2,473</i>	\$15,799
Expenses	<i>-497</i>	<i>-2,859</i>
Donations Above/ <i>Below</i> Expenses	<i>-\$2,970</i>	\$12,940

September expenses exceeded our donations by \$2,946, but we still have a YTD surplus of \$11,347 to get us through to the end of the year. We are ahead of last year's September YTD net of donations over expenses by \$12,940.

For the first time this year, our YTD contributions (\$130,201) were below budget of (\$130,950), albeit slightly (\$749). A large portion of that variance (\$415) is because many of the groups that regularly use Faith Hall for meetings have been on hiatus because of the pandemic. One group has returned but others are still not meeting. We will continue to see a drop in "rent" over the coming months. Although 2020 YTD expenses are well below budget, we will see an uptick in expenses in December with the paid time off payments to employees. Additionally, Comcast expenses are going up. Initially the increase was going to be \$90 per month, but I am still negotiating with them to lower the pricing. Keep your fingers crossed.

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.



DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY TEAM – Linda Greenfield and Linda Weaver, Chairs

Communion: Nov.1

Dec. 6

In person worship has resumed and now no reservations are needed. But of course, you can still connect via Facebook or YouTube.

Education: *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson is Oprah's latest book selection. It is written by an African American female author. You learn so much about our history that was never taught in school. We tend to think "if we are kind people, we are not racist". This book is eye-opening! It draws parallels between India's caste system, the 3rd Reich and slavery and beyond in America.

Caring Friends: Many thanks to Neoma Remiger and her groups of Caring Friends and Caring Circles! You keep us inseparable (Pastor Mike's sermon-Oct.25)! Even though we are physically apart, we are close in spirit, heart...and by phone, Zoom or thoughtful cards and notes.

STEWARDSHIP – Elden Wick



No Report submitted



MUSIC DIRECTOR – Isaac James

What is a saint? The Apostle Paul often speaks of hagioi—a word that means “holy ones,” but is usually translated “saints” in our English-language Bibles. Paul writes “To all God’s beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints” (Romans 1:7).

Bishop William How wrote the hymn, “For All the Saints,” in 1864 for All Saints Day, a day meant to honor departed saints, whether known or unknown. This hymn, then, celebrates the saints who

went before us—” who from their labors rest.” It tells how God sustained them through difficult times—strengthened them to battle evil—brought them light in their darkest days. This hymn has always meant something personal to me. So many of our loved ones who have gone before us are in that “cloud of witnesses”.

As saints, we are linked to each other by our faith in Christ. The New Testament speaks of Christians as brothers and sisters, so we are one family in Christ. We are blood relatives of Godly people from other races and nations (the blood that connects us is the blood of Christ). We are blood relatives of Godly people who lived long ago—and of those who will come after us.

It offers a prayer for the saints of today—for us and for our children. It says, “O may Thy soldiers, faithful, true, and bold, Fight as the saints who nobly fought of old.”

It paints a picture of the saints of all times streaming through the Pearly Gates in countless numbers. “And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long, steals on the ear the distant triumphs song, then hearts are brave again, and faith grows strong. Alleluia! Alleluia!

MINISTRY FELLOWSHIP TEAM – No report this month.

LADIES’ LUNCH OUT – Neoma Remiger

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, our ladies luncheons are on hold. We will keep you posted as to when we will resume Ladies’ Lunch, so keep reading your email updates from the church



LIBRARIAN – Sandy James-Nogai



No report this month. Sandy will be back in Punta Gorda the week of Nov 1. Looking forward to seeing you Sandy!

No Report this month.



DON'T FORGET TO TURN YOUR CLOCKS BACK SATURDAY NIGHT, OCTOBER 31ST 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@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 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

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

ANNIVERSARIES

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

Did we miss a birthday or anniversary? Please email the office, and we will try to make sure it does not happen again: office@puntagorda-ucc.com