

# CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF PUNTA GORDA

*An Open and Affirming Congregation*



JULY 2019

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Rev. Mike Ford

## Dancing with the Trinity

On June 16<sup>th</sup>, Trinity Sunday rolled around again. I am truly thankful that happens only once a year! But I am glad when it does, because it gives to me the opportunity to talk about relationships. The Doctrine of the Trinity is a slippery creature. It gives one the impression that it is a truth that is assumed to be true for everyone. I know that is actually not the case for many people.

The concept of the Divine persons of the Trinity had been tossed around and argued about since as early as the year 100CE. If you want a head spinning exercise, go to Wikipedia and check out the MANY iterations and explanations which were tossed about for over three hundred years. In the end, it was neither accepted or codified universally in Christianity as a Doctrine of the Christian Church. Check out this history and you will find why MOST preachers take up another topic on Trinity Sunday!

I should have titled this article, "I wish I knew then what I know now." In reality, I'm not certain I know any more now than I did in Seminary about the Trinity. Believe it or not, they didn't actually have a course on the Doctrine when I went to Seminary. That is probably a very good thing, I don't remember my Systematics Professors trying to explain it. I think, looking back, that may be because it was meant to be a fluid concept and not a "set in stone" Doctrine.

What I understand now, after over a quarter century of encountering and studying the Trinity, is that it is at best a description of relationship and experience. Over the years, I have tried, inadequately, to "explain" the Trinity in terms that everyone could claim as their truth. I told the story of my examination for Ordination when, even though no one asked me to define the Doctrine, but I tried anyway. The most experienced persons in the room rolled their eyes and some winced in pain when I launched into "my" explanation. The Doctrine of the Trinity is the third rail of ministry! Long story short, they decided to allow me Ordination DESPITE my explanation that no one wanted to hear.

What I have learned since is to keep my mouth shut when I am inclined to provide anyone else with theological certainty, but rather talk about what I have found in my study of scripture in general and my own experience. I have come to realize that the New Testament is the early church's attempt to put into human

language their experiences. Now, I have to acknowledge that our language cannot fully describe our encounter with the Divine but can only come closer than if we didn't talk about it at all. It is as if we hear the words, "well, it's LIKE this, but not exactly", we come closer to finding that there are no absolutes when it comes to language about the Divine.

What I have come to accept is that the bible attempts to put into words the EXPERIENCE of the Divine. The Doctrine of the Trinity is that attempt to find a path that explains MY/OUR encounter with the three aspects of God in our own lives. I cannot say that there aren't MANY more encounters of the Divine which could be tacked onto the Trinity. But then we would have so much more to keep track of and try to justify.

I come away with this simplified version for myself. In my experiences, I have found the God of Creation in my daily walks along the river. I encounter the Jesus of Healing and Wholeness in my walk with you. I find the Spirit of Enlightenment in my walk with scripture. The three together constitute the core of my faith, but not ALL aspects of my beliefs.

I don't try to explain the Trinity any longer, that is an exercise meant for someone far more mature in theological studies than myself. I simply try to engage the dance of faith with three of the partners of the Divine I find who are willing to dance with me. At times I get dizzy. At times I get giddy. At times I get sobered. At all times I am amazed at how much fun it can be if I don't try to figure out the steps, but simply allow myself to dance. I find that when I try to lead, my toes get stepped on! It doesn't stop me from being happily Trinitarian. I don't need to explain the Trinity anymore. I am just asked to live it. Thank the Divine!

I pray that your dance with the Divine is as much fun and as challenging. May you be blessed in your dancing.

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



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

##### **LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING**

A large portion of the June meeting discussion was devoted to determining which items to include in the proposed Capital Campaign. When the current repairs to the church building are completed, the Leadership Team must address the remaining useful life of the building's major components. Some of the items to consider are air conditioners, replacement of the roof covering, Handicap Access into and within the building, Handicap Accessible restrooms that are code compliant. This is not an exhaustive list and is subject to revision as we determine costs to be included in the Capital Campaign.

During the Reports section of the meeting, Bill Ringelstein proposed a motion that distributions from the Endowment Fund be frozen so that existing funds will be available for use by the Capital Campaign. The motion was passed. Further action came from the Endowment Team in the form of a motion asking the Leadership Team to call a special Congregational Meeting on Sunday, July 14<sup>th</sup> at the end of the Worship Service. The Endowment Team unanimously asked that their charter be changed to allow distributions to be used for a Capital Campaign if needed.

I am going to present a shortened report this month so I can include pictures of the current repairs-in-progress for our Snowbird members.

As I stated last month, Stay Tuned Folks, more to come.

**The next regularly scheduled Leadership Team meeting** will be July 9<sup>th</sup> (3:00-4:30 p.m.)

Blessings and Peace,

Bill Colson, Moderator









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

The Endowment Team recommended and the Leadership Team approved placing a temporary hold on 2019 distributions from the Endowment Fund until such time as it is determined if an Endowment distribution is needed for our pending Capital Campaign. Any pending applications will be duly considered once this need is known.

Your Endowment Fund makes distributions based on 4 categories one of which provides money for "...capital improvements that cannot adequately be raised by annual giving and capital campaigns" This wording would delay the entry of Endowment Funds into a Capital Campaign until it was determined how "adequately" the Capital Campaign had performed.

**A congregational meeting has been called for July 14, 2019, immediately following the worship service, to consider the following:**

#### **Endowment Fund**

Your Endowment Fund mission is to make distributions of the Fund's capital gains and dividend earnings. One of the categories that govern those distributions that include Capital Improvements. We are proposing a change to the Capital Improvements category that will make distributions more accessible to our anticipated Capital Campaign. Current wording requires that your Endowment Fund wait until most of the Capital Campaign has concluded before the Fund could be considered a source for Capital Improvements. The change in wording will result in an earlier entrance of the Endowment Fund as support for the Capital Campaign. No other changes are being made. Other applications for distributions will continue to be accepted for review.

The actual wording of the motion is:

Proposed: The current wording of Category 4. Capital Improvements be changed from: “To provide for major capital improvement of facilities, building programs and debt reduction that cannot adequately be raised by annual giving and capital campaign efforts.” to read: “To provide for major capital improvement of facilities, building programs and debt reduction in addition to annual giving and capital campaign efforts.”



**TREASURER – Melissa Brown**

### June 2019 Treasurer's Report

Financial Results	May-19	2019 Y-T-D	Budget
Donations and Other Income	\$14,617	\$73,841	\$63,125
Expenses	\$13,160	\$65,421	\$67,319
Net Income	\$1,457	\$8,420	-\$4,194

May was a very good month, and our operating income is currently \$12,614 above budget (\$8,420 gain versus a budgeted loss of \$4,194). The results above do not include \$13,875 that was spent in May for capital expenditures (repairs to the roof and stucco). Those expenses were funded out of a gift we received years ago from Ken and Mary Horton. We will also be tapping into those funds to replace the fascia on the building's exterior.

Our savings from our solar panel investment continues.

Electrical Service	Charges		
	Current	Before Solar (Nov 16 - Oct 17)	(Higher)/ Lower
Year 1 (Nov-17 thru Oct-18)	\$5,088.69	\$6,798.01	\$1,709.32
Nov-18	\$291.49	\$367.98	\$76.49
Dec-18	\$254.77	\$417.55	\$162.78
Jan-19	\$278.13	\$269.00	(\$9.13)
Feb-19	\$385.13	\$465.25	\$80.12
Mar-19	\$346.33	\$476.17	\$129.84
Apr-19	\$512.54	\$641.42	\$128.88
Year 2 thru April	\$2,068.39	\$2,637.37	\$568.98





Since Installation	\$7,157.08	\$9,435.38	\$2,278.30
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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**

### GIVING

2Cor 9:7 “Every man according as he purposes in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity. For God loves a ‘hilarious’ giver.”

As we approach and now enter our 1/2 way of Calendar Year 2019, I am compelled to ask, ‘Am I being faithful to what I asked of myself when this year began’? That is, have I courage to answer if my promised stewardship is on track? Adequate? Fulfilling?

In stewarding of my time, talents, finances, et al, have I cause for celebrating to God’s Glory (Soli Deo Gloria)?!

Since our ‘CUCC-Punta Gorda’ Leadership Team has initiated planning for a Capital Campaign to sustain our physical plant in which “I” worship, have I an itch to participate? Not so much from ‘duty’, but for love. The ♥ which Christ alone (Solis Christus) brought and sacrificially bought for ME!

Am I able and willing to challenge my stewardship spirit and respond by faith alone (Sola Fide)? Is God’s grace alone (Sola Gratia) sufficient for ME?

With yearning in my heart, my prayer this month is to hear with my ears Paul’s call in his 2nd Corinthians letter.

(Sola Scriptura)

Pardon me. I have borrowed from the Five Solas, or Theopedia, in expressing my Stewardship message.

Elden Wick

No human is ‘illegal!!!’



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

I want to thank all of you for your prayers, cards, gifts and well wishes during my slight health scare. All is well now and am so happy to be on the other side. It means so much to be a part of such a loving and caring church family.

I would like to continue with yet another hymn story. I think it is so important for us to understand the story behind the words we sing. It gives a much bigger meaning to our worship.

This month...Amazing Grace!

John Newton's earliest memories were of his godly mother who, despite fragile health, devoted herself to nurturing his soul. At her knee he memorized Bible passages and hymns. Though she died when he was about seven, he later recalled her tearful prayers for him. After her death, John alternated between boarding school and the high seas. Pressed into service with the British Navy, he deserted, was captured and flogged. More voyages, dangers, toils, and snares followed. It was a life unrivaled in fiction, as he eventually became the slave of a slave in Africa. Then on the night of March 9, 1748, John, 23, was jolted awake aboard ship by a brutal storm. In great peril, he cried to the Lord and began a slow spiritual journey that eventually transformed his life. The next several years were ones of slow, halting progress; but in the end John Newton became one of the most powerful evangelical preachers in British history, a powerful foe of slavery and the slave trade, and the author of hundreds of hymns. "Amazing Grace" is his hymn of testimony, originally written to accompany a New Year's Day sermon Newton preached on January 1, 1773, from the text 1 Chronicles 17:16-17. "I once was lost," he said, "but now am found; was blind but now I see."

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

**Worship-** Summer Communion Set-Up

July 7- Mary Tulip and Jan Tulk

August 4- Stacy Scarrow and Hazel & Bill Klossner

### **Education-Did you know? This is taken from the UCC website- About Us The Church of Firsts**

Since 1957, the United Church of Christ has been the church of firsts, weaving God's message of hope and extravagant welcome with action for justice and peace. Together, we live out our faith in ways that effect change in our communities. The UCC's many "firsts" mean that we have inherited a tradition of acting upon the demands of our faith. When we read in Galatians: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus"—a demand is made upon us. And so, we were the first historically white denomination to ordain an African American, the first to ordain a woman, the first to ordain an openly gay man, and the first Christian church to affirm the right of same-gender couples to marry. We were in the forefront of the anti-slavery movement and the Civil Rights movement. Our response to the demands of our faith is woven into the history of our country.



This June at the UCC SYNOD, our leadership voted to become the first Christian denomination to support the New Green Deal!!!!

Book Review - *Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water, and Loving the Bible Again* by Rachel Held Evans (This book is in the library on the shelf of Book Talk Tea books.) The author explores what the Bible is and how it's read. She talks about the origin stories, resistance stories, poetry and much more. According to one reviewer, "a theme that is consistent in her books is that Christianity isn't about having the answers but about discussing the questions in community."  
Rachel Evans (37) passed away this Spring from complications due to the flu and an infection. She has a husband and 2 children.

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

Thanks to our June Fellowship Hosts:

June 2 Bill and Jean Ringelstein, Denny and Kathy Reed  
June 9 Susann Luckenbach, Linda Weaver, Jan Tulk  
June 16 Lou and Lynn Stayner, Jan Tulk  
June 23 Joanne Arvid, Susann Luckenbach, Linda Greenfield  
June 30 Bill and Jean Ringelstein, Kathy Frantish



If you should notice we are running short on supplies, from paper towels to coffee, please email me at [jetulk@embargmail.com](mailto:jetulk@embargmail.com). That will help me keep the Coffee Hour supplied. I try to check it every week, but if I am not actually serving it, I might miss something. I appreciate your help in this.

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

Our July ladies' luncheon will be at 12:00 noon on Friday, July 26<sup>th</sup> at Carmelo's. We would love to have you join us. We have a great time of conversation and fellowship! A sign-up sheet is available at the kiosk in the back of the church.





### ***LIBRARIAN – Sandy James-Nogaj***

No report this month. Enjoy your summer reading!



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

Social Justice Ministry – Glenn Weaver and M.E. Steele-Pierce

Recognizing the interconnectedness of all Creation, CUCC's Social Justice Ministry Team seeks to act for God's justice and encourage our congregation to participate in justice ministries.

"Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me: for it is the least among you all of you is the greatest." (Luke 9: 48). If Jesus valued children and admonished us to treat them well, how can we do otherwise?

CUCC's Sandy James-Nogaj has joined hundreds of witnesses outside the Homestead, Florida, for-profit child detention camp. The witnesses' goal is to let the teens—now numbering over 2000 children—inside know they have not been forgotten. Sandy writes, "My father was stationed at Homestead Air Force Base after WWII. It was a horrible feeling to visit the base knowing a portion of it had been turned into a detention center immigrant children." Demonstrators have to stand on stepladders to see—and be seen—over the tarp-covered fences. Sandy holds her sign to say, "Te Amamos." We love you. You are not forgotten.

CUCC will join hundreds of churches and organizations around the county to host Lights of Liberty: A Nationwide Vigil to End Child Detention Camps. Join us in prayer and reflection, Friday, July 12, 7:00 PM in the sanctuary.

What else can we do?

- Write to our lawmakers to express our concern. See the template at the ucc.org website: <http://bit.ly/UCCSupportOurImmigrantNeighbors>.
- Read the resolution presented to the 32<sup>nd</sup> UCC Synod: Protection of Immigrant Children and Their Families: <http://bit.ly/UCCImmigrantChildren>.
- Join us in prayer as we seek to move our Sunday peace song from words into action: "To love with kindness and work for justice that all may be set free."





## Life Lessons Learned Along the Way

Robert Fulghum, one of my favorite writers, declared “Everything I needed to know I learned in kindergarten”.

But, unlike Fulghum, I have found that life is a continual learning process that will go on as long as I live.

For the past two months, my computer was silent while my body played host to a nasty malady of the respiratory kind. But even during the prolonged coughing sessions and the general discomfort, I re-learned a lesson I sometimes forget when all my days are sunny. I found that the more I concentrated on those around me.... from the nurses to the cooks, from the folks who kept our room so spotless to the therapists who gently led with love and empathy.... the less I thought about myself.

I also had lots of time to think about some of the valuable lessons I’ve learned along this ever-fascinating road of life. Here are a few that come to mind.

- \*Smiles need no translation. They’re the same in all languages.
- \*The best way to appreciate something is to have to do without it for a while.
- \*Your room, your house and your world get smaller as you get bigger.
- \*You can complain because rose bushes have thorns or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses. It’s all in the attitude.
- \*The most important turning points in life come quietly, without whistles or bells. And they often arrive just as you reach a fork in the road.
- \* There are few experiences in life as sweet as having a baby fall asleep in your arms.
- \* Good memories are among God’s best gifts.
- \*When your husband/wife is also your best friend, you are truly blessed.
- \*Life is like farming. If you sow love, you reap love. Unfortunately, the same applies to anger and misery.
- \*To love and respect others, you have to start by learning to love and respect yourself.
- \*Every new day is a fresh chance to marvel at the world God has given us.
- \*Don’t rush through life. Take time to listen to kids laugh, watch birds at the bird feeder, and smell the sweetness of the morning air. Slow down and savor each day knowing it will never come again.
- \*Learning is a lifelong process, best done by living day-by-day with eyes, ears....and heart.... wide open.





**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

July 1	Dick Sommerfield
July 3	Betty Balmer
July 5	Jim Carroll
July 17	Fred Benson Jr.
July 22	Cameron Ford
July 24	Vicki Getz
July 27	Susan Zakeer
July 30	Evelyn Swinamer
July 30	Glenn Weaver
July 31	Sandy Weber

## **ANNIVERSARIES**

July 16	Dick & Nadine Sommerfield
July 16	Bil Tucker & Judy Minier

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)