

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



August 2019

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Don't Just Stand There, Do Something!

Don't Just Do Something, Sit There!

If you are confused by my title for this month's article, you're in good company. It seems that this is where the Gospels have taken us two weeks in a row. When we get conflicting messages, it's hard to know what the whole thing means.

Let me back up a bit and tell you where this confusing seems to come from. Two weeks ago, we encountered one of the most well-known parables in scripture. It is famous enough that people who are not familiar with the bible can tell you how it goes. I'm speaking about the parable of the Good Neighbor. Now, you may have heard it called the parable of The Good Samaritan. Please discard that title and replace it with The Good Neighbor.

Calling this the Good Samaritan implies a cultural bias that we are better served ignoring. We find that title in our modern versions of the New Testament of Luke 10:25-37. It is a fairly modern practice of numbering the verses, separating the chapters, and titling sections of chapters to indicate meaning. In the Greek texts they were taken from there are no chapter or verse numbers, nor titles used. In this parable, Luke, nor for that matter Jesus, NEVER uses the word "good" in the telling. Some academic type after reading the section figured that you and I needed to know that Jerusalem and Samaritan Jews did not get along. They were religious and cultural enemies.

We can probably tell the Good Neighbor story without referencing the pages of the bible. A lawyer asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus turns the question back on the man. The lawyer answers, "Love God with all you are (my paraphrase) and your neighbor as yourself." Jesus tells the man to do these things and he will live. The lawyer wants to up the ante so he asks, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus tells a parable. "There was a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho (south, toward Samaria) and robbers fell on him, stripped him, beat him, robbed him, and left him for dead. A priest sees the man and walks by. A Levite sees the man and walks by. Neither of them stops to help. Then a Samaritan sees the man, binds and soothes

his wounds, carries the man to an inn, stays overnight to tend to him, and leaves money behind for the innkeeper to tend to the man's needs while he is away, with the promise that he will come back and pay whatever more the inn keeper has spent beyond what he left." Jesus asks the lawyer, "Which of these three was the neighborly one?" The lawyer answers, "The one who showed mercy." Jesus tells him, "Go and do likewise." So, it seems that to be a good neighbor we must both "go" and "do", thus "don't just sit there, do something!"

Then the following week, we have the equally famous story of Martha and Mary. As Luke tells it, Jesus was in Bethany. He needed a place to chill out and rest up a bit after a full day of healing and teaching. He chooses the home of Martha and Mary. Martha welcomes him into HER home (emphasis mine. It is very counter cultural for Martha to be the head of household) and Mary sits at his feet (Another cultural oddity. Mary has assumed the position of a disciple. In that cultural time, only men were allowed to be disciples and be taught by the rabbi) and listens to Jesus. Well, Martha is not happy that she is providing the hospitality alone and Mary is sitting around doing nothing. Martha stomps out to Jesus and demands that he tell Mary to get off her butt and help out (she approaches Jesus as an equal and demands he take action in HER house, something she should have done herself, another cultural no no in that time). Jesus responds, "Martha, Martha, you are so distracted being a host that you are missing out on my being here. Don't you know that I'm headed to Jerusalem and that I may never have the chance to accept your hospitality again? Mary is choosing to be with me. She will cherish this time together forever and you will have missed it by trying to do it all." So, it seems that there are times when DOING is less important than BEING. Thus, "Don't just do something, sit there!"

Martha and Mary have been used for centuries, by the church, to imply the role of women in the church. I feel certain in saying, nothing could be further from the truth! This passage, much like the Good Neighbor passage, is full of cultural bias. In the days of Martha and Mary women could not own property, be head of household, be scholarly, or have opinions. They were property of men.

In the episode of Martha and Mary, those cultural norms are turned upside down in the telling. Martha owns property. Mary is a scholar; Martha certainly has opinions. Both are seen as equals of Jesus. How much more revolutionary can you get! I have a slight suspicion that Jesus would have had a smirk on his face thinking about this encounter. Even using Martha and Mary as characters is a lesson in and of itself. The fact they are named, when often women were not, has meaning. Martha's name when translated means, "she was rebellious." Mary's translated means, "their rebellion." Do you think Jesus and Luke might have chosen Martha's house for a reason?

If looked at as a pair, these two episodes are not as contrary as they seem. It is clear that Jesus has taught that taking action, especially when the life of another is threatened, is the right thing to do. The Priest and Levite may have been so concerned with their religious obligations that they chose to walk by a person in need. It also seems that Jesus taught that there is a proper time to not be as concerned with a list of tasks to be accomplished as to sit and be taught.

I feel that if Jesus were to be asked the question, "which of these two is better, to do or be?", his reply just might be, "YES". I feel that Jesus was fully aware that if we only sit around and study, there will be countless people in need that we pass by AND that if we are so busy accomplishing tasks for the sake of the kingdom, we might just pass by an opportunity to meet him along the way. There should be balance. There are times when things need get done and times when we sit together and seek meaning. There should be an equal measure of both in my not so humble opinion.

This topic has been on my mind for the past year because I encountered the writing of a professor from Chicago Theological Seminary, Claudio Carvalhaes, who was writing specifically on the need for balance in

religious life. In his writing he acknowledged that even Jesus took the opportunity to get away and refresh, usually to a high mountain to pray. It was a costly practice because there were a lot of people in need of help who would not get it while he was apart. Jesus realized, though, that if he did not get away from time to time, he would be burned out soon and of no help to anyone or even resentful of the needy. But by taking that time to reflect and grow, he was better able to meet the crowds and serve them as he was supposed to. Claudio also warned of letting the tasks become our faith. Our faith is built up by contemplation and Sabbath rest. It is strengthened in accomplishing ministry among those whom God has placed in our path.

Claudio writes, "A heart without action is ineffective and an action without a heart is empty. Jesus is calling us to have a compassionate heart and to do strong actions of Justice. Both things! Together!" Amen!

I spoke this during last week's sermon, responding to the two teachings we've recently received from Luke, "Unless we know how this task is a ministry or service to another person, we shouldn't do it. Until we know God is in the midst of it, we shouldn't do it." Let it be so.

Rev. Mike Ford

FROM YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM



MODERATOR'S REPORT- Bill Colson

Leadership Team Meeting

OLD BUSINESS- -Capital Campaign

The Leadership Team considered broad areas of projects that will be needed in the near term. Some areas that were considered, without stealing attention from the Campaign Kickoff, were roofing for the entire building; air conditioning system(s) for the entire building; renovations or alterations for handicap access into and within the building; floor coverings throughout the building; parking surfaces; interior lighting and air redistribution; audiovisual system(s) and speakers; and exterior landscaping.

Team Leaders for each project area were considered, and they were contacted after the meeting to get their agreement to serve. The order of importance for the selected projects was considered and set. The Capital Campaign Leadership Team will meet independently of the congregational Leadership Team, on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month, until further notice, for the

purpose of giving campaign directions and receiving progress reports. The Campaign Leadership Team will give the entire congregational Leadership Team reports monthly at the regular second Tuesday meeting.

We are off and running, gang!

Other actions from the Leadership Team Meeting- - A motion was made and considered requiring two signatures on disbursement checks from the Endowment Fund. The motion passed, and new signatories (Moderator and Treasurer) were added as authorized signers.

Follow-up to the Roofing, Stucco, and Siding Repairs. The new paint applied onto the replacement siding, fascia, and stucco repairs looks very good. The repairs are substantially complete. The contractor (Boyette and Miller) is working on the final punch list and is expected to finish the list shortly. Pictures to be included in the next Beacon and posted on the website.

The next regularly scheduled Leadership Team meeting will be August 13th (3:00-4:30 p.m.), in the Library.

Blessings and Peace,

ENDOWMENT TEAM – Bill Ringelstein, Chair

At the July 14, 2019 meeting of the congregation, a motion to change the 1999 Endowment Fund Resolution was passed to provide better access to approved distributions. The new verbiage for Category 4 now reads “To provide for major capital improvement of facilities, building programs and debt reduction in addition to annual giving and capital campaign efforts.” All other distribution rules remain unchanged; ½ of earnings and capital gains will be considered with no invasion of principal.

In addition, all current applications for distributions remain in place, have been placed on hold and will be considered at a later date.

Your Endowment Fund Team appreciates your continued support as we strive together to make the Fund a viable part of our church’s mission. We enjoy a currently strong economy coupled with conservative investment positions that serve us well in that mission...

TREASURER – Melissa Brown



July 2019 Treasurer's Report

Operating Financial Results	June 19	2019 Y-T-D	Budget
Donations and Other Income	\$7,881	\$81,721	\$75,750
Expenses	\$12,599	\$78,020	\$80,782
Net Income	-\$4,718	\$3,701	-\$5,032

Back to reality. We had an operating loss in June, but our operating income is currently above budget (\$3,710 versus a budgeted loss of **\$5,032**). 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. In July, we made a progress payment of \$13,105.67 on the facia project, using the Horton monies.

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

As the summer passes by so quickly, it's hard to imagine where it has gone. This heat makes me want the summer to pass by quickly, and sure enough, it has.

Choir rehearsals start in October. I've been doing some recruiting myself and would urge anyone that would be interested in singing with us, to reach out to me. The rehearsals will be on Thursday's from 6:30-8:30pm. On Easter, we had such a large chorus and some of those have agreed to stay on. I welcome anyone, so please feel free to contact me.

I've looked back at the last year and am so thankful for God's goodness. In so many instances and so many ways. His faithfulness is always new, every day, it gives us that hope to realize that we have a clean slate daily with Him. You don't need to be rescued from life-threatening danger or see God's miraculous provision in the direst of financial crises to truly know the faithfulness of the Lord. God remains faithful day in and day out in the largest and smallest of circumstances.

Thomas Chisholm wrote "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" as a testament to God's faithfulness through his very ordinary life. Born in a log cabin in Franklin, Kentucky, Chisholm became a Christian when he was twenty-seven and entered the ministry when he was thirty-six, though poor health forced him to retire after just one year. During the rest of his life, Chisholm spent many years living in New Jersey and working as a life insurance agent. Still, even with a desk job, he wrote nearly 1,200 poems throughout his life, including several published hymns.

Chisholm explained toward the end of his life, "My income has not been large at any time due to impaired health in the earlier years which has followed me on until now. Although I must not fail to record here the unfailing faithfulness of a covenant-keeping God and that He has given me many wonderful displays of His providing care, for which I am filled with astonishing gratefulness."

Just think, with each new day, God gives us the chance to prove His faithfulness. And throughout history, He's never once been proven wrong, for His mercies are new every morning, no matter what.

DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY TEAM – Linda Greenfield and Linda Weaver, Chairs

Worship-Communion Schedule

August 4-Stacy Scarrow and Bill and Hazel Klossner

At this point, we would like to thank all of you who generously gave of your time and money to help provide communion each month for the past year! Starting in September, we will have a new communion set-up schedule, with some of the same people and also, some new helpers. Here is the new schedule. If you have any questions or conflicts, please contact Linda Weaver (616-516-1896).



2019-2020 Communion Set-Up/Serve Calendar

Sept .1- 2019-Judy Minier & Bil Tucker
Oct.6-Linda & Guy Greenfield
Nov.3-Mary&Dick Tulip
Dec.1-Melissa Brown & M.E. Steele-Pierce
Jan.5-Mary Ann Farnquist & Lou Stayner
Feb. 2-Sandy & Keith Weber
Mar. 1-Sandy James-Nogaj & Sue James
Apr.5-Bev Honkola & Joe Lawson
May 3-Linda & Glenn Weaver
June 7-Sandra & Ian McLauchlan

July 5-Jan Tulk & Mary Tulip
Aug.2- Stacy Scarrow & Hazel & Bill Klossner

Substitutes

MaryEllen & Bruce Nielsen
M.E. Steele-Pierce
Mary & Dick Tulip
Linda & Glenn Weaver

A list of directions is on the bulletin board in the small kitchen.

Education

As I sit here in Grand Rapids, MI, writing this article, I'd like you, our church family, to know how much we miss Pastor Mike's Bible Study on Thursday afternoons! We miss the fellowship, discussions, and preparation for the following Sunday's sermon. The class requires no previous biblical knowledge but an opportunity to ask questions and seek God's direction together-- from the Word. So, grab a Bible and check out a great class!!

"Be still and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10

MINISTRY FELLOWSHIP TEAM - Jan Tulk

Summer is more than half over. We have been having around 30 people stay for Fellowship on Sunday. I would like to thank the following people for hosting:

July 7 – Joanne Arvid, Linda Greenfield, Susann Luckenbach

July 14 – Judy Minier, Bil Tucker, and Linda Greenfield

July 21 – Bill and Hazel Klossner

July 28 – Jean and Bill Ringelstein and Kathy Frantish



The month of August is pretty much wide open. If you haven't hosted lately, please think about serving on one of those dates. Thanks. If you are a "summer repeater", then double thanks!

LADIES' LUNCH OUT – Neoma Remiger

Our August ladies' luncheon will be at 12:00 noon on Friday, August 23rd at Perfect Caper at 121 E. Marion Ave, Punta Gorda. Please 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

Nothing to report this month. Have a good month and happy reading!

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



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.

We recently heard the story of Mary and Martha and the balance between action and contemplation. About this balance, Claudio Carvalhaes, Union Theological Seminary, writes: "A heart without action is ineffective, and an action without heart is empty. Jesus is calling us to have a compassionate heart and to do strong actions of justice. Both things! Together!"

What does that look like in our own practice?

About children: "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For it is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest." Luke 9: 45-47.

In Action: At Lights for Liberty on July 12, we gathered nationwide to pray that immigrant children would be set free from US detention camps. CUCC hosted Punta Gorda's vigil. Seventy people, including some of our members, attended from around the county, and "snowbird" CUCC members attended vigils in their cities that same evening. An offering was taken with \$545 collected for the Witness Project at Homestead, FL. Vielka Wambold spoke that evening and has been invited to testify to Congress about the situation at Homestead.

About the environment: "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good." Genesis 1:3.

In Action: Arielle Taylor-Magnes of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection provided an overview of the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves Program on July 13 at the Indivisible meeting here at CUCC. She presented an update on water quality in the Punta Gorda area and care for our beloved local environment.

About leadership: "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant." Matthew 20: 25-26

In Action: Mark your calendars for September 7 and 21, 2 PM in our sanctuary. We'll learn from Dr. Dale Anderson in a two-part presentation sponsored by Indivisible Southwest Florida on "How Fascism Works." Dr. Anderson will help us understand the definition of classical fascism (Orwell's 1984) to help us understand present-day risks of authoritarian rule.

Did You Know? On the Social Justice bookshelf in our church library you'll find current and back issues of Sojourners magazines. Sojourners is a Christian magazine that presents articles about faith in action for social justice. August's theme is "Dear sisters and brothers in Christ: Letters to the American church from Christians around the world."

FROM THE CHURCH SCRIBE – Joyce Schenk



Heaven's Exclamation Point

On a recent warm and windy night, I was startled from sleep by a dazzling flash.

I caught my breath and lay there, not quite awake, wondering and listening.

Suddenly, another flash lit the darkened room with the brilliance of midday. In the distance, the deep voice of thunder rolled across the sleeping countryside. In a moment, I felt the rush of wind as the drapes began to sway. I got up quietly in my still-sleeping house and gently closed the windows. As I moved from room to room, I heard the first tentative drops hitting the awnings. Once the windows were secured, I stood, looking out the large window in the living room, seeing the lightning turn night today and hearing thunder turn the quiet to chaos.

All my life I've found such demonstrations of nature's majesty a source of wonder. To watch and listen as God unfurls his awesome power is a humbling experience. The loss of a little sleep is a small price to pay to witness such demonstrations of God's majesty.

Whenever I feel that special electrical tension in the air that tells me a storm is coming, I find a protected place outside to wait for the show. I scan the sky, watching the clouds, waiting for those first big drops. When the rain finally drives me inside, I still watch the lightning and listen to the rain and thunder for a while, reluctant to leave the show before the sun comes back out.

There are dozens of old sayings about those brilliant flashes that cut the sky. One popular myth in the old west was that wherever lightning strikes, you will find oil.

Unfortunately, it's impossible to predict where a bolt will hit. It is true, however, that Florida is the lightning capitol of the country. Other interesting facts are that more than 200 people are killed by lightning each year, one in five is killed on a golf course and each year seventy per cent of forest fires are started by lightning

But on the night of the recent storm, as I stood by the window, I wasn't thinking of any of the lightning information I've collected over the years. Instead, I was just a spectator, watching and listening to the awesome power of God as He marched across His heaven, proclaiming His majesty.

A BIT OF CHURCH HUMOR:

Children's Letters to God



Dear God, did you mean for the giraffe to look like that or was it an accident? ~ *Norma*

Dear God, instead of letting people die and having to make new ones, why don't you just keep the ones you have now? ~ *Jane*

Dear God, who draws the lines around the countries? ~ *Nan*

Dear God, I went to this wedding and they kissed right in church. Is that okay? ~ *Neil*

Dear God, thank you for my baby brother, but what I prayed for was a puppy. ~ *Joyce*

Dear God, please send me a pony. I never asked for anything before. You can look it up. ~ *Bruce*

Dear God, I want to be just like my daddy when I get big, but not with so much hair all over. ~ *Sam*

Dear God, I think about you sometimes, even when I'm not praying. ~ *Elliott*

Dear God, I bet it is very hard for you to love all the people in the world. There are only four people in our family and I can never do it. ~ *Nan*

Dear God, of all the people who worked for you, I like Noah and David the best. ~ *Rob*

Dear God, my brothers told me about being born, but it doesn't sound right. They are just kidding, aren't they? ~ *Marsha*

Dear God, if you watch me in church Sunday, I'll show you my new shoes. ~ *Mickey*

Dear God, we read Thomas Edison made light. But in Sunday school, we learned that you did it. So, I bet he stole your idea, RIGHT? ~ *Sincerely, Donna*

Dear God, I didn't think orange went with purple until I saw the sunset you made on Tuesday. That was cool! ~ *Eugene*



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 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

August 1	Marty Buckingham
August 4	Bill Remiger
August 12	Isaac James
August 16	James Grunden
August 23	Chrystal Reichard
August 23	Stacy Scarrow
August 25	Richard Cleveland
August 27	Dylan Klossner

ANNIVERSARIES

August 3	Ron & Louise Jankowski
August 9	Lee & Joanne Arvid
August 12	Duane & Marilyn Belseth
August 29	Ian & Sandra McLauchlan
August 31	Bill & Neoma Remiger

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