

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



JULY 2020

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Revolution or Rebellion

So, indulge me a bit, please. I'd like to revel in a West Wing moment. The scene is the second Inaugural Ball of Josiah Bartlett (BTW, the real Josiah Bartlett signed the Declaration of Independence as the NH delegate to the Continental Congress, yes, another group of rich white men). The situation is genocide in a small African region. Ethnic groups were being slaughtered by the thousands by the ruling government. The policy making still is happening amid a gala event. The decision is the response of the U.S. Government to this genocide. A new Deputy Director of White House Communications has just been appointed. A dialogue happens between this new deputy and the President:

President: Never doubt that a small group of dedicated individuals can change the world.

Deputy: Yes sir.

President: Do you know why?

Deputy: Yes sir. Because it's the only thing that ever has.

As I write, there is a rebellion happening in our country. The opposing sides, those who feel they don't have equal rights, the other side are those who feel their rights are in danger of being taken away. Two powerful groups facing off to do verbal and physical battle. Both camps feel they are fighting for the right side, that God is with them. Is that possible? I hope so!

Jesus faced a choice, start a rebellion or begin a movement, a revolution of thought. The powers facing him, Empire in the form of the Roman government and army, the Empire of the established church, and his followers. Some wanted a bloody siege until the opponents capitulated. Some wanted to run and hide. Others just wanted to watch with their popcorn handy. Jesus faced a

momentous decision. He chose an alternative that no one else envisioned, to show strength by exhibiting restraint, to give an example of how one's life can be given and at the same time defeat the opponents in purpose.

The opposing camps in our story are far more numerous than Jesus faced and far more dangerous in the destruction they can achieve. The powers of today are the renewed movement for Civil Rights, White Supremacists, Black Lives Matter, Blue Lives Matter, White Nationalists, All Lives Matter, the Government, the Church, Covid-19, White Privilege, and let's not forget the politicians (possibly the scariest group of all). It has become difficult to discern who faces us and what their intent is. All believe they are fighting on the side of right. All believe their cause to be Holy. Is that possible? I hope so!

I look at the situation and I remember. I remember a small group of dedicated individuals who believed they could change the world. They saw monumental odds before them. Did they give up because these forces seemed too strong? No, they continued to offer a message that God's Kingdom was at hand, that repentance and devotion should be restored, that hope and healing would come in the form of self-denial and throwing down the weapons of opinion.

I'm remembering a small group of dedicated individuals who believed another way was possible. I remember and am changed. The anger, fear, and opposition fall away and leave me vulnerable, as Jesus taught me to be. In that moment I have hope in the movement Jesus began so long ago. I smile. I join the Movement!

FROM YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM



MODERATOR'S REPORT - Bill Colson

Let me see.... Where do I begin? So many topics to choose from. Here we go...

Virtual Worship Services. Have you joined us in worship via the Facebook Live, or YouTube Channel, broadcasts on Sunday morning? The Endowment Fund disbursement allowed the purchase of a notebook computer which became the recording point for our Sunday morning worship services. After

working out the kinks with sound, and some programming issues, **We're on the Air**. A matching grant from the Florida Conference of the UCC allowed an upgrade to our sound board which solved the 'sound' issues during the first few broadcasts. Again, thanks to the Endowment Fund for our portion of the match. Thanks to Kevin Rivadeneira, we can now go to our church webpage, click on the broadcast link, and begin watching the worship service, either on YouTube or on Facebook Live.

Leadership Team Meeting. For our June meeting, in addition to the usual committee and financial reports, we included discussion on the cleaning and janitorial services of Excalibur Services. We discussed the possibility of revoking the upcoming July 1st renewal of the ongoing contract for service, because of dissatisfaction with the services being provided. Contact was made with Brian Earley, owner, and a meeting requested at the church, so an appointed Cleaning Sub-committee could tour and go over items being cleaned, and the frequency of cleaning. Mr. Earley replied, and provided notice that Excalibur would discontinue janitorial services on July 1, 2020. Mr. Earley did agree to provide carpet and tile cleaning service on an 'as needed' basis and would complete the previously scheduled June 26-27th service.

So now we will begin our search for Janitorial Services. We have several candidate names in hand and will contact them this week. Meanwhile, a very generous member of our church has volunteered to perform janitorial services until we get a new provider on board.

Continuing with the Leadership Team meeting; We addressed the 'One Great Hour of Sharing' Campaign, that normally is held in the Springtime. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the beginning of Virtual Worship Services, the dates for "Sharing" Campaign had not been set, nor announcements made to the congregation. We are now in the midst of the Campaign with the electronic letter sent via email the last week of June. Please be generous in your support of the One Great Hour of Sharing campaign. Our target is to complete the giving campaign by July 20, so that the funds collected can be sent to the national offices of The One Great Hour of Sharing.

One last item from the LT meeting: the discussion and response to the topic with a working title of "Racism Confrontation" The Leadership Team wrestled with what and how to respond for the better part of an hour, and the usual time of adjournment was past. The Moderator asked one of the Leadership Team to take the lead in writing a draft letter to the congregation, using the position and language used within our Team meeting. She agreed, and with the support of other Team members, a draft letter was published via email for discussion by Leadership Team members. The string of email responses, and revisions, was the longest that we have ever had as a group and a consensus was not reached. We agreed to hold a special meeting, partly virtual, and partly 'in-person' to continue discussion. The physical meeting was held in the Sanctuary, with the meeting broadcast to the remaining LT members virtually. All in attendance were masked, and carefully 'Distanced' to protect each other. After viewing video resources and much discussion, we did reach consensus on a letter that was sent to the congregation, via email, this last week. If you did not get a copy, please contact the church office to get your copy.

The last item from the LT meeting; the Capital Campaign update. The campaign leader reported that two motions were being made for Leadership vote: 1) the approval of a project to revise and construct a new front entrance to the Sanctuary, consisting of a new ramp and new stairs leading to a revised

portico; and 2) to ask for financial support from the Endowment Fund for the new entrance work. After both motions passed, the Moderator asked, and received, the authority to enter a contract with Boyette and Miller Construction for the new construction.

The following week a contract was signed, a 'Notice to Proceed' notarized and recorded, and construction permits applied for. When the congregation returns, we will be in the midst of a construction project. More details in this newsletter.

This is a good place to renew my request of you, the congregation's members. I want to hear from you. What are you thinking about the Leadership Team's letter? What is your thinking about the virtual worship services? What is your thinking about the Covid pandemic, and when should Congregational UCC resume 'in-person' worship services? What protections should we employ when we do resume? My email address: bill.colson@gmail.com.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE– Kathy Frantish, Chair

The Capital Campaign Team is very excited to share news about the next project that will occur thanks to your support of our "Building our Legacy" effort.

We are excited to announce that we have signed a contract with Boyette & Miller for the upgrade to our front entrance. The team has been working for several months to ensure the needs of our church match the project plans. Once permits are received, we hope construction will begin early July with a completion target of early September.

Because of the generous pledges from the congregation and the Endowment Fund, we have the cash on hand for this project. Please keep in mind that we would still like to add a "Family" restroom, that will also be compliant to ADA requirements, as well as setting up a contingency fund for our HVAC system.

Though we are not able to be together in worship or in any gatherings, please know that the work of the Capital Campaign Team continues so that we might achieve the goals we presented to the congregation when sharing the vision of our future years. We rely on your pledges, confidence and prayers until we can be together once again.

Grateful for the past, excited for the future, together we are Building our Legacy as God's Beloved Community.

The Capital Campaign Team



Architect's rendering of the proposed entrance modifications

ADDING THE REMAINING LEAVES TO THE TREE OF HOPE!



ENDOWMENT TEAM – Bill Ringelstein, Chair

Your Endowment Fund recommended and the Leadership Team approved a request of \$25,000 for additional funding of our Capital Campaign. The contract for the new front entrance construction came in higher than expected and we needed to provide financial breathing room for the follow-on projects of the handicapped/family bathroom and HVAC units. There is a detailed Capital Campaign report in this issue of the Beacon.

Leaving a legacy for the future of your Church can easily be done through the Endowment Fund. It is a fitting way to remember a loved one and all such endowments are conservatively invested to produce growth and income. Please contact me if you have any questions.



TREASURER'S REPORT – Melissa Brown

June 2020 Treasurer's Report

Financial Results	May 2020	2020 Y-T-D	Budget
Donations and Other Income	\$12,555	\$89,412	\$72,750
Expenses	12,813	67,561	72,750
Net Income	-\$258	\$21,851	\$0

It was bound to happen: May's expenses *slightly* exceeded our donations and other sources of income. Actually, that is truly amazing, given all the issues related to COVID-19. It's not just the inability to meet and worship together. These have been unsettling times for many who have experienced personal revenue losses. Yet, we continue to receive donations that exceed last year's numbers! As of May 2019, our year-to-date net income was \$8,419. **Thank you** for continuing to send in your operating account contributions.

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

Welcome to July! So hard to believe that it is here. I cannot stress to all of you how much I miss seeing you all seated in the sanctuary. I have great hope though that one day soon that might happen.

I also wanted to personally extend the invitation to anyone wanting to sing in a service or even play an instrumental piece to

please contact me. I don't always know what you may play or sing so please don't wait for me to contact you. You can either reach me at my cell 315.681.1399 or my email Isaac.james@icloud.com. I would prefer email.

There is so much hate all around us daily, it seems that it grows stronger every day. It pains me to see it because we all want to just live in peace and love our brothers and sisters no matter what differences we may have. There just simply is not enough love in the world right now. My daily prayer is asking for more. We need it during this time.

Sy Miller and Jill Jackson were a husband and wife songwriting team. In 1955 they wrote a song about their dream of peace for the world and how they believed each one of us could help create it.

They first introduced the song to a group of teenagers selected from their high schools to attend a weeklong retreat in California. The young people were purposefully from different religious, racial, cultural and economic backgrounds, brought together to experiment with creating understanding and friendship through education, discussion groups, and living and working together in a camp situation. Sy Miller wrote in his own words what happened: "One summer evening in 1955, a group of 180 teenagers of all races and religions, meeting at a workshop high in the California mountains locked arms, formed a circle and sang a song of peace. They felt that singing the song, with its simple basic sentiment – 'Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me,' helped to create a climate for world peace and understanding."

When they came down from the mountain, these inspired young people brought the song with them and started sharing it. And, as though on wings, 'Let There Be Peace on Earth' began an amazing journey around the globe. It traveled first, of course, with the young campers back to their homes and schools, churches and clubs. Soon the circle started by the teenagers began to grow. Before long the song was being shared in all fifty states – at school graduations and at PTA meetings, at Christmas and Easter gatherings and as part of the celebration of Brotherhood Week. It was a theme for Veteran's Day, Human Rights Day and United Nations Day. 4H Clubs and the United Auto Workers began singing it. So did the American Legion, the B'nai B'rith, the Kiwanis Clubs and CORE. It was taped, recorded, copied, printed in songbooks, and passed by word of mouth.

The song spread overseas to Holland, England, Italy, France, Germany, Lebanon, Japan, India, to South America, Central America, Africa, Asia and Australia. The Maoris in New Zealand sang it. The Zulus in Africa sang it.

Professional singers began singing it. Over the years many artists have performed the song. Among them are Tennessee Ernie Ford, Andy Williams, Danny Kaye, Nat King Cole, the Smothers Brothers, Roy Rogers, Dale Evans, Eddie Albert, Placido Domingo, Edie Adams, Gladys Knight, Mahalia Jackson, John Gary, Pearl Bailey, Roberta Shore, Champ Butler, the King Sisters, Mary Tyler Moore, John Raitt, Liberace, Bob Crosby, the International Children's' Choir, Gisele MacKensie, Lloyd Bridges, Patti Page, Angela Cartwright, the Young Americans, Jack Smith, Pat Boone, Crystal Gayle, Vince Gill, Harry Connick Jr., Johnny Mathis, Allison Chu, Rhonda Fleming, the Norman Luboff Choir. Television shows with Bing Crosby, Bob Hope, Lorne Greene, The Boston Pops, Ted Mack and Father Keller have used the song. "Let There Be Peace on Earth" was awarded the George Washington Honor Medal by the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge for "Outstanding

achievement in helping to bring about a better understanding of the American Way of Life.” It also received a Brotherhood Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

In Sy Miller’s words again: ‘This simple thought, 'Let There Be Peace on Earth, and Let It Begin With Me' first born on a mountain top in the voices of youth, continues to travel heart to heart – gathering in people everywhere who wish to become a note in a song of understanding and peace—peace for all mankind.”



DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY TEAM – Linda Greenfield and Linda Weaver, Chairs

Communion: July 5-Virtual-Go to our Website

August 2- to be decided

September 6

The easiest way to view recorded Sunday services is to go to the church website: puntagorda-ucc.com. Then Click at the top of the page-Weekly Sermons.

Education: Our Bible Study group (Thursday, 1pm) on Zoom continues to grow and we have members from across the U.S.!! Thank you, Pastor Mike, for informative, thoughtful and challenging discussions.

Our church face book page also allows us to have outreach across the U. S. and other countries. (In fact, we, the Weavers, are so happy to have our son, David and wife, Yadhira, joining us each week from Quito, Ecuador!) Thanks again to M.E. Steele-Pierce, Kevin Rivadeneira, Isaac James, Susann Luckenbach, Mellissa Brown, Carol Schmuhl, volunteer readers and Lucia and Ana Rivadeneira for helping Pastor Mike bring the Good News of the Gospel and social justice to so many people.(This is how God makes good come out of bad!)

Movies and books: During this time of upheaval and quarantine, if boredom is setting in, here are some recommendations. Movies: *Just Mercy*, *The Hate U Give*, *The Uncomfortable Truth*,

Documentaries-13th, The Story of Emmett Till. On the lighter side, there's a Canadian series on Netflix that's a great escape: *Anne with an E!!!* Books on Racial Justice can be found on our Social Justice bookshelf in the library.

Caring Friends: We continue to get good reports about our church family phone calls!

It helps us to stay connected!! If you would like to be put on the "Call list", please call Linda Weaver (616-516-1896).

Mission: Check out our Social Justice section in the Beacon for important news about the committee sending money to CIW for masks for their farmworkers!



STEWARDSHIP – Elden Wick, Chair

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING (OGHS) 2020

[1 OF 4 United Church of Christ special mission offerings]

"INVEST IN FUTURES" – of communities/projects supported by OGHS; not a financial instrument

Be a servant in the service of GOD: PLANT, WATER, let GOD grow & nurture your investment, either a donation or an endowment to One Great Hour of Sharing.

Here at CUCC Punta Gorda, I have heard the term 'servant leadership'. The concept should inspire us to act using the model of Jesus' ministry, who stooped to wash his disciples' feet, then served them at the table, and faithfully prayed for them even to his final day. Certainly, God invites us to lead by serving and freely share our gifts, such that God's work is accomplished through us. In his letter to the church at Corinth, 1Cor. 3:5, Paul uses the term servant/deacon in describing work of benefit to others. That is, an individual's work that God then channels for good and growth in the community and for 'needy' benefactors.

So, by humbly choosing to place our God-given resource for our Creator's work, we become servant-leaders, nurturing the Sustainer's healing love, and facilitating all to enjoy an experience of shared value, worth, and investment.

One Great Hour of Sharing works through a global network of partners, so none of us is called to do the work alone, individually or as a congregation. Rather through bonding of covenantal relations and shared ministry, energized by the entropy within God's embrace, we are empowered to bring about monumental change of benefit to the peoples of this planet spinning through space.

Members and friends of Congregational United Church of Christ – Punta Gorda, I entreat you to offer a supporting donation to this worthy God-directed initiative, ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING 2020.

Your gift should be submitted separately from any other offerings or donations that you send into the church. Please make your check out to Congregational UCC but notated clearly that it is for One Great Hour of Sharing on the Memo/For/Comment line on the check face. Please send all donations **no later than July 20, 2020.**

We have the joyful opportunity to participate in the growth God has already providing in the world.

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.

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

“Give us this day our daily bread.” Matthew 6:11

Our Social Justice Ministry Team remains committed to our work on behalf of Southwest Florida’s farmworkers, essential workers in our nation’s food chain. Because of Florida’s spike in COVID-19 cases, work on behalf of these brothers and sisters intensifies as their health and well-being are in danger. Doctors Without Borders/ Médecins Sans Frontières, the international medical humanitarian organization, spent two months in Immokalee, where an estimated 15,000-20,000 migrant farmworkers continued to work during the pandemic with minimal access to health care and testing.

About Florida’s farmworkers, the Governor DeSantis recently said, “You don’t want those folks mixing with the general public.” As Christians, we strongly disagree. Farmworkers are our brothers and sisters, essential in providing our “daily bread.” The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) has reached out to faith communities for help in providing facemasks and other COVID essentials as the pandemic spreads. To that end, the Social Justice Ministry Team has voted to send CIW a check for \$500 from our CUCC Endowment Fund Grant.

If you would like to personally support CIW you can still

1. Help provide materials for facemasks that the CIW Women’s Group is sewing. Donate here: <https://masksforfarmworkers.funraise.org/>
2. Sign their petition here, and share with friends and family: <https://bit.ly/COVID19PetitionCIW>
3. Join with us in praying for our farmworker community:
Daily Bread by Malcolm Guite

Give us this day our daily bread, we pray,
As though it came straight from the hand of God,
As though we held an empty plate each day,
And found it filled, by miracle, with food,
Although we know the ones who plough and sow,
Who pick and plant and package while we sleep
With slow, back-breaking labor, row by row,
And send away to others all they reap.

We know that these unseen who meet our needs
Are all themselves the fingers of Your hand,
As are the grain, the rain, the air, the land,
And, slighting these, we slight the hand that feeds.
What if we glimpsed You daily in their toil

And found and thanked and served You through them all?

We remain devoted to our goal to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8). You are invited to join us. Write or call any of CUCC’s Social Justice Ministry team: co-facilitators Glenn Weaver or M.E. Steele-Pierce, Mary Cassidy-Anger, Jim DeGood, Lori Larson, Jerry Larson, Elizabeth Pitcher, Carol Schmuhl, Linda Weaver, and Elden Wick. Social Justice

Ministry Mission statement: Recognizing the interconnectedness of all Creation, we seek to act for God's justice and encourage our congregation to participate in justice ministries.



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

July 1	Dick Sommerfield
July 3	Betty Balmer
July 5	Bill Carroll
July 10	Linda Harkness
July 16	Elizabeth Pitcher
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	William 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