

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



MAY 2019

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Rev. Mike Ford

LEFTOVERS

I grew up in a rural household in Vermont with seven mouths to feed. My parents were not wealthy by any means, but we never lacked for any necessity. That included food. If we didn't grow it, slaughter it or hunt it, we didn't have it. We were farmers with a modest size milking herd of sixty Holsteins (the ONLY cow to milk as far as my father was concerned). We had a garden the size of our grass parking lot at church. We had chickens for eggs and meat. We had pigs and rabbits for variation of our meat diet. We lived very well. However, with seven mouths to feed three times a day, we never threw away food. We had leftovers.

I'm thinking of these as I prepared my famous (well, at least in my own mind) ham and lentil soup. I do variations of this soup, depending on the holiday. Twice a year I make turkey and lentil soup. For Easter, we have ham for our celebratory meal after church. Thus, we also have ham and lentil soup for several days after.

My mother's fridge would be filled with leftovers. She would, somehow, gather empty Cool Whip containers to store her leftovers. This was slightly miraculous considering that we NEVER used Cool Whip in our house, but there they were, filling every spare space on every shelf in the fridge.

Now, this used to drive my dad crazy, not because he didn't like leftovers, but because he couldn't SEE what was in the containers. He was forced to lift the lid of each one to find out what was inside. My mother knew what each one contained but never shared that with her family. At times, my dad would open one that had a very aromatic leftover inside and he'd slam the lid shut, mutter a profanity, and put it back on the shelf. I could almost swear, at times, that I saw a smile cross my mom's face when he would encounter one of those leftovers. It didn't get any better when my mom discovered Tupperware. My mom had Tupperware in her cupboards that was so old it "groaned" instead of "burped" when the air was let out!

I grew up on leftovers. Whenever we had a pot roast, we could count on eating that roast for at least three days following. Often, we would have it in soup or hash or in sandwiches on a Sunday after church. Needless to say, my mom had to be fairly inventive in how she used those leftovers. If we saw the same dish more than once, there would be resistance. Holiday times were the best. We would have turkey or ham variations for what seemed a week, and I never get tired of it.

When my mom passed away, it took my dad nearly a month to rid the fridge of all those Cool Whip containers. He knew he shouldn't open them, but he sometimes did. Instead of profanity, I would hear a muttered, "Oh that's where that went" as he chucked it into the trash. He did so reluctantly, because each time he did, he was letting a little more of Mom go.

It took me some maturity to learn one of the reasons I torture my family with leftovers. It isn't only the desire to not waste food (sadly, something our culture relishes doing, throwing away food I mean), but those leftovers are memories of times shared together around a table. There would usually be stories and jokes told that were saved for "special" occasions. There was laughter and some tears shed when we remembered loved ones who were no longer with us for those special occasions.

I sit here basking in the times we have shared together in the past few months. I relish the "leftovers" we have from our time together: when we decorated the sanctuary to usher in another Advent; how we managed to have yet another pageant that still felt fresh; another Annual Meeting, (over in near-record time!); another Ash Wednesday where we might have left the service and actually let people see the cross emblazoned on our forehead or hand; a benefit concert; Lenten Bible Study; Palm Sunday, with thirteen new mouths to feed ;) ; Maundy Thursday around the table for food and Communion; the Good Friday showing of the Passion; decorating the cross with flowers; a truly gifted Easter worship service with music galore!

All of these joined experiences are saved to bring out and sample now and then. The best part is that they never wear out or spoil! We can dine on them for as long as those memories withstand the passing of time.

I have come to realize that our remembering of Jesus is the same. I am catching on to the fact that it is in remembering that the Resurrection is real. For me there doesn't need to be a testimony that there was a bodily Resurrection, though there are stories of an altered form of Jesus visiting the disciples. There doesn't need to be the controversy around "if there isn't a body then there wasn't a Resurrection." There are sightings of Jesus around us still every day: each time we remember his teachings and try to live as disciples. I think those are Resurrection moments and just as real today as two thousand years ago.

One of my favorite leftovers this year is when Jesus sits with his friends at a meal and when the meal is over, he blesses bread and cup, shares it with his friends and tells them to REMEMBER every time they are together what he tried to teach them about God and faith: how they are to love one another and those around them; how to serve God before themselves.

My friends, remember the life and ministry of Jesus. Savor its unique composition. Live with purpose. Share your leftovers with all whom you meet. Easter Blessings to you all!

FROM YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

MODERATOR'S REPORT- Bill Colson

Your Leadership Team was busy during April!

Buckley's Pass

After the congregational meeting on March 31 and on behalf of our congregation, Pastor Mike and I negotiated with the City Manager of Punta Gorda regarding the assessment terms and payment schedule. We finally agreed to pay the assessment over a ten-year term, with no interest to accrue during that period. After the City Council's approval of the Buckley's Pass project on April 3, a Public Hearing was held, with several Church Members present and offering comments.

My thanks to everyone who attended the Council meeting and those who spoke in support of the Congregational UCC. The contract with the City of Punta Gorda regarding repayment of the assessment and the terms was signed on April 10.

Hearing Loop

The Hearing Loop was installed at the end of March and is in service now. It was greatly appreciated by several choir members during the Easter Service, and by the congregation during the choir's performance of the Hallelujah Chorus. It was noticed and appreciated by those attending Dr. Terry Root's presentation, The Impact of Plastics on Wildlife. Thank you to everyone who pledged and contributed funds for the Hearing Loop installation. Please notice the signage of a Hearing Loop installation on each door leading into the Sanctuary, the notification slides during the Sunday morning announcements, and the notice on the Home Page of our website. The system is paid for, and the grant for partial reimbursement has been sent to the Grantor.

I have demonstrated the Hearing Loop performance to two interested outside parties: a nearby church and my Home Owner's Association Board Member.

Leadership Team Meeting

The entire Leadership Team is very aware of the condition of our building. A large portion of April's meeting was spent discussing pending repairs and the proposed costs. The repairs to building components covered by stucco are proceeding. Water damage beneath the stucco was greater than expected. Because of dissatisfaction with repairs to our roof on the rear additions, Boyette-Miller Construction was contacted seeking a coordinated approach to repairs impacting the siding/fascia, the roof and stucco interface. Upon their inspection of the affected areas, they prepared a proposal for immediate remediation of the stucco, roof and siding interface. Stucco repairs will pause a few days so that a series of flashings can be installed to prevent water infiltration beneath the stucco and walls.

Boyette-Miller will prepare a set of estimates for replacement and/or repair of the siding and fascia around the building. Their roofer will prepare an estimate of any immediate roofing repairs, and the projected remaining useful life of the east and west roof areas.

Finally, **the next regularly scheduled Leadership Team meeting** will be held Tuesday May 14, in the Church Library, from 3:00-4:30 PM. Remember: we (the Leadership Team AND the congregation) are here to support our pastor, our church's ministries/responsibilities, the church's general operations, and one another. We welcome your input.

ENDOWMENT TEAM – Bill Ringelstein, Chair

Our church demonstrates that we are truly socially responsible. For that and the leadership who got us there, we should be very proud. In that light, the investments held by your Endowment Fund were examined to insure there were no conflicting positions.

There are over 200 corporations that have guns/ammunition business in the U.S. Only about 5% of those 200+ corporations are publicly traded; the rest are privately held or are considered obscure foreign providers.

Your Endowment Fund does not include any of those corporations that are publicly traded; all investments are socially responsible. All meet our high criteria as safe, conservative producers of both growth and income to fund our distributions and improve the lives of those we touch.

Your Endowment Team is fully aware of our stewardship responsibilities; to that end, we will embrace the policies of being socially responsible.

STEWARDSHIP – Elden Wick, Chair

One Great Hour of Sharing for 2019 was successfully completed. We received \$1,881 in donations. CUCC-PG thanks those who gave of themselves in prayer for OGHS. To everyone who supported the initiative with dollars for the important works of OGHS, many thanks. One Great Hour of Sharing depends on our stewarding to sustain their important efforts amid disasters and human suffering.

Now that our congregation is again experiencing the separations of close relationships for summer hiatus (or “snowbird activities”), we are strained within our church programs to sustain continuity. However, at the same time, we must celebrate the body of Christ and resilience gained in each of our lives, given God’s love for us as embodied in our love for each other. So, continue praying for successes of the swarthy souls of CUCC-PG maintaining the life of this profound congregation, most especially Pastor Mike! May your summer stewardship be profound.

DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY TEAM – Linda Greenfield and Linda Weaver, Chairs



Many thanks to Pastor Mike and Isaac James for such an uplifting Easter season! On Palm Sunday we held our annual “palm procession” and gently laid our palms at the foot of the cross.

We also welcomed 13 new members: Ann Barker, David Cramer, Debra Greznov, Isaac James, Jean Mann, Brook Marsh, Grace Marsh, Val Moran, Jerry Oscarson, Elizabeth Pitcher, Betty Pitcher, Chrystal Reichard and Barb Smith. We are so happy to include you in our church family and look forward to getting to know you.



On Maundy Thursday, about 70 people gathered for a bread and soup fellowship supper followed by a communion and Tenebrae service, leaving in silence. On Good Friday, the movie, *The Passion of the Christ* was shown at the church.

Seven hardy members gathered on Easter morning at 7:00 a.m. for our exciting and joyful sunrise service. Our traditional Easter service included a joyous presentation of the Hallelujah Chorus by our 26-member choir, Skip Potter and the Port Charlotte Brass Quintet. It was a heart-stirring memory to last the entire year! Thanks also to Pastor Mike for his thought-provoking and moving sermon. Like that first Easter morning: a time to remember!

Communion Preparation: May 5-Glenn and Linda Weaver; June 2-Ian and Sandra McLauchlan; July 7-Stacy Scarrow and Mary Tulip

Wendy's Demonstrations- On April 26, Pastor Mike and two members from the Social Justice Ministries Committee participated at the Jones Loop Road demonstration and distributed handouts with the explanation for our reasons for demonstrating for justice for the farmworkers. We also placed these handouts on the back table by the kitchen for our members. All are invited to join!

The next Worship Team meeting will be held at the beginning of September

MINISTRY FELLOWSHIP TEAM - Jan Tulk

Thanks to our April Fellowship hosts:

April 7 Bruce and Mary Ellen Nielsen, John and Carol Schmuhl

April 14 The Leadership Team

April 21 Easter – No coffee hour

April 28 Emily Klossner, Fern Sparks, Evie Swinamer, and Connie Beverly



We had seven or eight different kinds of soup for our Maundy Thursday supper. Each one was delicious. (Not that I tried all of them, but from what I overheard. I could only personally try three!) The breads were tasty also. If you have never attended one of these suppers, you don't know what you are missing. Maybe next year. You won't be sorry.

Most of the May spaces on the sign-up sheet have been filled. There is an empty one for coffee on May 5, and no one has signed up for the last Sunday, on May 26. Please consider helping out on these dates. Thanks.

LIBRARIAN – Sandy James-Nogaj

Thanks to Linda Greenfield and Nadine Sommerfield for co-hosting April's Book Talk Tea. Lots of good food and discussions about books that the group has read. Here are some recommendations: "Madame Fourcade's Secret War" by Lynne Olson; "Being Mortal" by Atul Gawande and "The Hate U Give" by Angie Thomas. The final Book Talk Tea of the season is Friday, May 10, at 1 pm in the church library. Please sign up at the kiosk in the back of the sanctuary.

Please visit the library and check out the Social Justice Ministry display. There are some very good books in the collection.

TREASURER – Melissa Brown

	Mar-19	2019 Y-T-D	Budget
Donations and Other Income	\$12,381	\$39,499	\$37,875
Expenses	\$12,413	\$39,171	\$40,391
Net Income	-\$32	\$327	-\$2,516

Although April results are not finalized, with five Sundays in April, including Easter Sunday, we had donations and other operating income of \$16,135.70.

We may be entering the rainy season when it comes to the weather, but we are entering the dry season when it comes to donations. Bye, bye snowbirds. However, fear not! With the installation of our T-Coil system, we have found a way to increase donations:



For \$3 per service, you can choose your favorite channel to be played during the service!

Just kidding, but we are heading into the season where net income and, as a result, cash flow will be negative. Keep that in mind and try to stay current with your donations. If you are heading north for the season, consider contributing throughout the summer as well, either by direct deposit (see below) or sending a monthly or weekly donation.

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

After such an amazing Easter service and now not having choir, everything seems so empty. I cannot thank the choir and Lori Larson enough for all that they did in making our Easter service stunning, beautiful and breathtaking. Also, a thank you to Skip Potter for his marvelous aria from the Messiah. I appreciate the Charlotte High School Brass Ensemble: they are such a young, talented group, that gives me hope for future generations carrying on great musical talents. As a side note, they were made possible by the Paul Simpson Memorial Fund.

As I stated last month, this summer I am open to suggestions for any special solo or instrumental songs during the service. I book the music out two months, but I can make exceptions if it is two weeks prior to the Sunday being proposed.

Choir rehearsals will start again in October, with the choir starting to sing in November. New choir members are always welcome. We have a fun time together while making some great music. See me after service if you are interested.



Finally, I wish safe travels and blessings to all of you that are travelling back north. I hope to see you all in the fall or mid-winter. Thank you for your support for the music here at the CUCC. I hear it from you all every week, and it is much appreciated. Many blessings on all of you!

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



Environmental Justice Dr. Terry Root gave us numerous helpful strategies for reducing our use of plastic: throw out your sea salt, remember to take your cloth bags to the store, turn down plastic straws, use water bottles that aren't made from plastic, get biodegradable garbage bags-to name a few easy ones to remember and use! She also documented the horrible destruction to the environment and death to oceanic wildlife from the dramatic accumulation of waste plastics in the world.

Immigration Justice-Over 20 members attended the play "Refugee" at North Ft. Myers Academy of the Arts. A big, sincere thank you to Ana Rivadeneira for making this possible. This play and book certainly help us to empathize with refugee families-especially the children!! Thank you for opening our eyes and hearts!

Racial Justice- Please mark your calendars for the special celebration of Emancipation Day on Saturday, May 18 at the Blanchard House. Anyone wanting to carpool, please call Linda Weaver (616-516-1896).

Social Justice Bookshelf- The book, *The Devil in the Grove: Thurgood Marshall, the Groveland Boys, and the Dawn of a New America* by Gilbert King, has been donated to our library. Here is a short summary by member, Bruce Nielsen:

Devil in the Grove is the true story of how white, southern, citrus farmers went to extremes to maintain an African American work force in virtual slavery. In 1949, a 17-year-old, white, Florida girl accused four African-Americans of having raped her. (It would have been impossible for the events to have transpired as she or the state's sheriff testified.) But southern, white men weren't interested in justice, they only sought the death of the African American men they thought had deflowered a southern, white woman (and to intimidate other African American men who might have thoughts about leaving the citrus fields of Florida). Future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, of the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund (at personal risk) led the defense of the accused men.

LADIES' LUNCH OUT – Neoma Remiger

Our next Ladies' Lunch Out will be at 12:00 noon on Friday, May 24, at River City Grille. We would love to have you join us. A sign-up sheet is available at the kiosk in the back of the church.

Safe traveling to our snow birds. We look forward to seeing you in the fall.



FROM THE CHURCH SCRIBE – Joyce Schenk



Look for another of Joyce's articles next month! We miss you Joyce!



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 that 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

May 1	George Buckingham
May 3	Edward Schuckman
May 11	Brian Rowlands
May 17	Carol Salisbury
May 20	Judy Lyon
May 21	Anne Swift
May 23	Diane Wick
May 25	William Ringelstein
May 28	Myra Nagel
May 31	Cindy Trudeau

ANNIVERSARIES

May 4	Kathy and Kevin Rivadeneira
May 28	Bill and Hazel Klossner

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