

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



OCTOBER 2019

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

STEPPING OVER LAZARUS

The 16th Chapter of the Gospel of Luke contains some very uncomfortable parables about wealth and perspective. One such parable is of the rich man and Lazarus. The story goes something like this. There was a rich man who dressed in the finest clothes and ate the best food. There was a poor, sore covered beggar named Lazarus who was placed at the door of the rich man every day in hopes of receiving the scraps from the rich man's table. But only the dogs felt compassion for Lazarus and would lick his sores. Pretty picture isn't it?

Well, both men die. Lazarus is taken to the side of Abraham in paradise to be comforted. The rich man is sent to eternal torment in Hades. The rich man sees Lazarus in paradise and begs Abraham to send him to quench the rich man's thirst and ease his discomfort. Abraham refuses the begging. The rich man then asks for Lazarus to visit his siblings to warn them of the fate that awaits if they ignore those in need. Abraham replies that there is a great chasm between the two that prevents them from interacting and that they won't listen even if someone rises from the dead to warn them.

The great chasm caught my attention. That great chasm exists in our world still today. I name it as indifference or apathy. The warning remains the same. I once had a group of folks who were becoming acquainted with the concept of Gospel Justice. In conversations, the plight of the hungry, the homeless, and the uninsured became of primary Gospel Justice concern. I asked what we should do about it. It was agreed that raising awareness was the first step. We agreed that we would camp out on the church lawn three Saturdays in a row (I served three churches at the time) asking the church folk to care for our needs. We got some odd looks when we announced the plan from the pulpit. We decided to forge ahead.

To make a very long story shorter, here what happened over the next three Saturdays. Day one, it rained cats and dogs all night in forty-degree temps. We had a delivery (not from the church on whose lawn we were camped) of chicken pie and all the fixings, but no plates, forks or spoons. Food went untouched with the exception of a few rolls. Day two, it was warmer and very windy, we camped under

a crab apple tree (with the apples recently shed under the tree). During the night we had one sleeping bag and three bottles of schnapps (peach, cherry, and apricot) delivered and a bag of unpopped microwave popcorn. The sleeping bag and schnapps were from unchurched folk. The popcorn was from a church member of the church where we were camped. Day three, warm and windy again. We had a delivery of canned New England Clam Chowder, (no can opener), venison sausage, and hardtack bread. The Clam Chowder came from the person who had donated the schnapps the week before. The other food from a couple returning from a weekend camping trip, neither of which was from the church whose lawn we camped on.

On each Sunday, we would attend worship in the state of dress and unwashedness from the night before. We would thank everyone who helped us out. We would stand and testify about what had happened and how we were cared for. You could hear a pin drop. Come to find out, each church had assumed that the other would take care of us. They were astonished to hear the truth of what really happened. For three weeks I preached about Stepping Over the Lazarus at Our Gates. Needless to say, I wasn't very popular for this :) We got the message though. We began gathering food every week for the Food Shelf, put on a monthly Free Breakfast, and began serving weekly Free Lunches.

The story of Lazarus and the Rich Man comes to our modern awareness as a warning to pay attention to those whom we may be stepping over in our daily lives. There is a long list of them. We may be stepping over kids who go hungry each night, the homeless who sleep under bridges, the ill who wander the streets asking for help, the seniors and working poor who are faced with the choice between food or medicine, the person lost in addiction, the alone, the folks displaced by ever increasing severe weather, the mentally ill who are pushed further away from the center of community, and on and on.

There is hope in the midst of all this. It is never too late to see those whom our culture has stepped over. The rich man KNEW that Lazarus was there every day and even knew his name, but it didn't stop him from ignoring the plight of Lazarus. Perhaps the fear for us is that, if we know the name or recognize the face, we are obligated to do something, that it becomes personal. We can only hope! We can only hope it becomes a matter of Gospel Justice.

FROM YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM



MODERATOR'S REPORT- Bill Colson

Leadership Team Meeting (held Sept. 10, 2019)

Old Business

1. Vacancy: Vice Moderator. Upon discussion about filling the vacancy, it was decided to refer the process of filling the position to the Nominating Committee, for inclusion in the new slate of candidates for the Leadership team, to be voted upon at the next Annual Meeting. In the meantime, Bill Ringelstein or Jan Tulk , have been empowered to conduct the Team meeting in the absence of the Moderator. Melissa Brown has been empowered to sign contracts in the Moderator's absence.
2. Laity Sunday, to be held October 13th, 2019. Linda Greenfield circulated a sign-up sheet for participants of this event. I urge all non-clergy members of our congregation to participate. This is one of the few Sunday's that Pastor Mike gets to sit in the pews with his clergy brethren, and take a break, while the non-clergy members conduct the worship service.

New Business

1. Capital Campaign. Kathy Frantish presented the report from the Capital Campaign Steering Committee. A meeting of project teams was held Sept.11th, to receive reports about scope of the proposed projects, and their associated costs. During the discussion following the reports, the Endowment Team offered a motion to fund the printing and mailing of the Capital Campaign printed materials, in the amount of \$1500.00.

Committee Reports

Normally Committee Reports are prepared and circulated ahead of the Team Meeting. The following was brought forward by Bill Ringelstein, in light of the weather related disaster in the Bahamas.

1. A special offering will be collected for Bahamian Relief. The announcement to the Congregation will be sent via e-mail blast, and verbally during the next Sunday announcements.

Conclusion: After a very short meeting, following the Pastor's Closing Prayer, the Team adjourned.

The next regularly scheduled Leadership Team meeting will be held October 8th, 2019.

Comment: A Pot Luck Breakfast was held before worship on September 29th. Most of the chairs in the Fellowship Hall were full, as were the occupants after the meal. Everyone enjoyed the baked goods and several hot casseroles that were brought. Plenty of food and fellowship. Let's do it again.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN TEAM – Kathy Frantish, Chair

Building our Legacy: 35 years of God's Mission, Faith and Justice

SAVE THE DATE – The Kick-off is scheduled for Saturday, November 9th, 3 – 5 p.m. Please plan on joining us as we celebrate the beginning of our Capital Campaign that will provide the improvements to our facilities that will enhance our ministries to our members and the community.

ENDOWMENT TEAM – Bill Ringelstein, Chair

Your Endowment Fund has applied to Vanguard to upgrade our Endowment account so that contributions of appreciated stock can be made without paying capital gains tax. Typically, when a stock is sold for more than you paid for it, there are capital gains that will be taxed. However, if that same stock is donated to a tax-exempt organization, the capital gains tax does not apply. Your Endowment Fund will soon be able to function as a brokerage account in such transactions. This function will be used in our soon to be announced Capital Campaign.

STEWARDSHIP – Elden Wick. Chair

A STEWARDSHIP Thought
Rev. Beverly Markham, ALPHARETTA Presbyterian Church

What Am I All About?!

“Compassion will help us if we let it.
Selfishness will bury us if we permit it.
Kindness will save us if we accept it.
Acceptance will unite us if we practice it!”

NEIGHBORS IN NEED: This is a special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. Grants are available to fund projects whose work ranges from direct service to community organizing and advocacy. This year, special consideration will be given to projects focusing on serving our immigrant neighbors and communities.

Our church will receive the NIN offering during worship on **October 6th**. If you write a check, please be sure to indicate that it is for Neighbors in Need on the check. Envelopes will be available for your contribution. We understand that some of our snowbirds will be giving to the Neighbors in Need offering at their home churches up north. If you cannot be here on October 6th, and you wish to make a donation to this offering, you may do so by sending a check to the check (Congregational United Church of Christ, PO Box 510838, Punta Gorda, FL 33950) Please indicate on your check that it is for the Neighbors in Need offering.

TREASURER – Melissa Brown



October Treasurer’s Report

Operating Income/Expenses	19-Aug	2019 Y-T-D	Budget
Donations and Other Income	\$7,351.40	\$102,164.97	\$101,000.00
Expenses	\$12,828.01	\$103,781.55	\$107,709.96
Net Income	-\$5,476.61	-\$1,616.58	-\$6,709.96

Lots of red numbers, but this is only temporary. September should be a good month: there will be collections from five Sundays as income, and we are starting to see the return of our snowbirds. It’s all good.

Below are the FPL charges for 22 months of solar use. This is a just a quick snapshot of our savings since the installation of the solar panels.

Electrical Service	Charges		
	Current	Before Solar (Nov 16 - Oct 17)	(Higher)/ Lower
Year 1	\$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
May-19	\$505.40	\$805.49	\$300.09
Jun-19	\$736.91	\$771.63	\$34.72
Jul-19	\$627.23	\$723.58	\$96.35
Aug-19	\$528.08	\$787.81	\$259.73
Year 2 thru April	\$4,466.01	\$5,725.88	\$1,259.87
Since Installation	\$9,554.70	\$12,523.89	\$2,969.19

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

My how the year has gone by, it's already October! It's shocking to be honest with you, I hope your summer has gone well. The new choir robes are in and they look great. Some choir members have already commented how well they look and feel and that they are so much lighter and cooler than the old ones. Very excited for the choir to be back. The first rehearsal starts on Thursday, October 3rd. As I have for the last few months, I'd like

to continue stories of hymns and their composers.

“My Jesus I Love Thee” is an expression of love for the Savior that flows directly from the author’s experience of the Savior’s love for him. A remarkable thing about “My Jesus I Love Thee” is that it was not penned by an aged and experienced hymn-writer like so many of our favorite hymns. Rather, it was originally written as a devotional poem by William Ralph Featherston, a teenager who had recently come to faith.

Not much is known about Featherston, except that he attended a Methodist church in Montreal, that he was young when he wrote the poem (12 or 16 years old), and that he died at just 27 years of age. One story about how the poem became public is that Featherston mailed it to his aunt in Los Angeles who, upon reading it, quickly sought its publication.

It wasn’t until several years after Featherston’s death that Adoniram Judson Gordon (founder of Gordon College and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary [pictured to the right]) added a melody and published it in his book of hymns, thus forever transforming this poem to a song.

As we consider the words of the poem, it is clear to see why Gordon deemed it worthy of wider attention. As we sing Featherston’s words we are all able to declare our intimacy with Christ, to sing of our assurance of salvation, to celebrate the gospel, to delight in Christ’s loveliness, and to resolve to praise Christ through all circumstances. The movement of each of these themes extends from now—this very moment—into eternity.

My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine;
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign.
My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou;
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I love Thee because Thou has first loved me,
And purchased my pardon on Calvary’s tree.

I love Thee for wearing the thorns on Thy brow;
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I'll love Thee in life, I will love Thee in death,
And praise Thee as long as Thou lendest me breath;
And say when the death dew lies cold on my brow,
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

In mansions of glory and endless delight,
I'll ever adore Thee in heaven so bright;
I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow;
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRY TEAM – Linda Greenfield and Linda Weaver, Chairs

Communion Set-Up Schedule

Oct. 6-Linda and Guy Greenfield

Nov. 3-Mary and Dick Tulip

Dec. 1- Melissa Brown and M.E. Steele-Pierce



Laitly Sunday will be held on October 13. It provides the congregation and Leadership Team the opportunity to lead the service. Only ordained clergy may not participate! This year, rather than a sermon, Isaac will select several hymns, with readers explaining the history behind them. Thanks to all who offered to serve. It reminds us how much is involved in preparing a service when Pastor Mike makes it appear so easy!

EDUCATION - What is the Revised Common Lectionary? Who uses it? Why is it important? Where can I find it? The Revised Common Lectionary is a three-year cycle of weekly scripture texts used to varying degrees by the majority of mainline Protestant churches in Canada and the U.S. The RCL is built around the seasons of the church year- Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost- and includes four scripture selections for each Sunday. During most of the year, passages are a reading from the O.T., a Psalm, a reading from the Epistles and a Gospel reading. The liturgical seasons of the year are meant to reflect the life of Christ. Our denomination (UCC), Presbyterian Church U.S.A., Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (E.L.C.A.), United Methodist Church, Episcopal Church and other denominations design and use the RCL through their participation in the Consultation on Common Texts. (Information taken from Consultation on Common Texts) The lectionary is important because it provides continuity across denominations in the systematic reading and reflection on passages from the entire Bible. Pastor Mike uses it for our Bible Study and Sunday worship services. If you want to see the Revised Common Lectionary, go to https://www.ucc.org/revised_common_lectionary

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

Coming this fall! Two new sanctuary banners!

- Recognizing the interconnectedness of all Creation, we seek to act for God's justice and encourage our congregation to participate in justice ministries.
- What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:8

Resources for learning more about what social justice means from a Christian lens.

- *Sojourners* magazine. On the shelf in CUCC's library.
- United Church of Christ's justice ministries webpages at www.ucc.org/justice_issues.
- Read Reverend Trish Greeves *Prophetic Faith: Exploring Social Justice Advocacy as a Congregation* or Reverend William Barber's *The Third Reconstruction*. Both works have been the sources for CUCC's Living The Question's winter series. Available in our library.

Together we pray: You know all that has been, is, and is yet to come, Lord. Expand our minds to imagine a world that is reflective of Your kingdom and guide us as we take steps toward Your vision of unity and love. Amen

MINISTRY FELLOWSHIP TEAM – Jan Tulk



Thanks to our September Fellowship Hosts:

Sept. 1	Dave Cramer, Jerry Oscarson, Barb Smith & Val Moran
Sept. 8	Ann Barker and Chrystal Reichard
Sept. 15	Joe Larson and Bev Honkola
Sept. 22	Kathy Frantish & Jean and Bill Ringelstein
Sept. 29	Breakfast Potluck

I just looked back over the hosts for this summer. Since we are a small group of "year-rounders", we have the same names over and over. I want to thank everyone again for keeping Coffee Hour going over the summer.

LADIES' LUNCH OUT – Neoma Remiger

Our August ladies' luncheon will be at 12:00 noon on October 25 at the South Port Square Café which is located at 23053 Westchester Boulevard, Port Charlotte off Kings Highway. If you do not want to drive, there will be a car pool going from the church meeting at 11:15 am. Please join us, we have a great time of conversation and fellowship! A sign-up sheet is available on the table in the back of the church.



LIBRARIAN – Sandy James-Nogai



The first Book Talk Tea of the 2019-2020 Season is Friday October 11 at 1pm in the church library. Please sign up at the back of the sanctuary. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone!!!

FROM THE CHURCH SCRIBE – Joyce Schenk



Treasure the Ordinary Things of Life

Not long ago, I read a magazine article that struck a chord with me. The author stressed the importance of the ordinary stuff of life. “We tend to take these things for granted, until they’re gone,” she said.

The article reminded me of the scenes I had been watching of the devastation of Hurricane Dorian that hit the Bahamas...As home after home was turned into rubble, one newscast I saw was especially wrenching. The reporter interviewed an exhausted, weeping woman, standing amid the remainder of her dream home. “It’s all gone,” she said in a stunned voice. “We built this as newlyweds, raised our kids here and welcomed our first grandchild. Now it’s all gone. And, you know, it’s not the big stuff I miss the most. It’s the common things we just can’t replace...like our wedding album and the kids’ baby books, and....” her voice trailed off as she turned away from the camera. I found myself tearing up in sympathy for this woman who had lost so much to nature’s fury.

I recalled a conversation I had with my late husband, George, about this subject. He told me how hard it was when he was overseas during the Korean “conflict.” He said, “You don’t realize till you lose them how much you miss things like hamburgers and hot showers and fresh drinking water.”

I thought of all the ordinary things I would miss if they were gone from my life. Yet, day in and day out, these things are so common we seldom give them any thought.

Some years ago, our friends lost their home to a flood. It took many months to rebuild and get their lives back on track. But they never forgot the treasures they had lost, the things that couldn't be replaced like their grandmother's china and a beloved antique clock.

Learning to appreciate the ordinary stuff of life takes an awareness of the value of each moment. We get so caught up in planning for tomorrow that we forget to live today.

With this in mind, I started a list of the ordinary treasures that highlight my normal days.

- Sleeping in a freshly made bed
- My Teddy bear, Benji, who keeps me company at my desk
- The smell of fresh-cut grass
- My worn, pencil-marked Bible
- A morning hug from my son
- A collage of family photos
- A call from one of my daughters

You, too, may decide to take some time to make a list of the ordinary things you treasure...Just taking the time to look at your world with such a list in mind will help you to be more aware of your everyday blessings.



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

October 5	Kathy Reed
October 8	Jean Mann
October 10	Kathy Rivadeneira
October 11	Jerry Larson
October 11	Cathy Ann Colson
October 13	Pat Blandford
October 15	Ann Barker
October 17	Carroll Crosley
October 19	James DeGood
October 19	John Schmuhl
October 21	Dick Michael
October 23	Jenna Klossner
October 25	Kathy Frantish
October 25	Bob Wood

ANNIVERSARIES

October 7	Gerry and Pat Blandford
October 14	Fred & Sally Benson

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