

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



APRIL 2018

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Rev. Mike Ford

### Tracking Time by T-shirts

At this time of year, time flies by so rapidly. Just yesterday it was Christmas time! I was sitting back, trying to determine where it has all gone, and I think I found my answer.

A couple days ago I was rearranging my dresser space. It seemed that I no longer had as much room as I had previously. I expected it was because I wasn't as careful as I should be when I put my clothes away. I found a much different reason. I now have more T-shirts than I had a few months ago.

First, a confession: I am a T-shirt horse. I love printed T-shirts. The more the better! Not long after Kelly and I were married, she was going through my T-shirts. She pulled out some that were full of holes and so worn that they wouldn't even be good for dust rags. She started putting aside some of the thinnest and was meaning to throw them away, but I put up such a fuss that she just left them in my dresser.

Later, she asked me why I got upset thinking that she was going to throw those ratty T-shirts away. It was then that I realized that each of those T-shirts had come from an event that was special to me. I still had the T-shirt from a road race I ran to support the restoration of the Statue of Liberty in 1986! I had my practice T-shirt from when I ran cross country in college in 1975! It seems I had a drawer full of T-shirts that I could no longer wear for fear of them disintegrating, but they all held special memories for me.

Evidently, I am beginning to store up T-shirts again! I have a **Boycott Wendy's** T-shirt that I wear every third Thursday. I have a **Drug Free Punta Gorda** T-shirt that I wear twice a month (and a second one for Punta Gorda Middle School Youth Empowerment sessions). I have a T-shirt from **Pride Fest 2018** that I'll wear from time to time until I get the new one next year (it's tie-dyed and a fun alternative to the drab clothes I wear most of the time). I will soon be getting my **March for Our Lives** T-shirt to continue to support our students for change. I also have my **Indivisible** T-shirt that I wear on the first Saturday to meetings and on the street for demonstrations for political change.

Soon I'll be adding a **Congregational UCC** T-shirt to wear at more demonstrations where our Social Justice Ministry Team will be participating. Of course, I also have three **Disney World** T-shirts. Do you see a trend forming?

So where has the time gone? To advocacy for causes we believe in. All these T-shirts have been collected in the past year. I look at them as special moments in my life, whether they be for a cause of change or relaxation. In fact, I kind of lump those two together. I think that recreation must go with causes. If we spend all of our time advocating, we can lose track of our inner child, and if we spend all of our time recreating, we can disregard meaningful causes.

I guess I'll still keep collecting T-shirts and fill my dresser with memories of cause and care. I'm glad that I can mark my time that way. It lets me know that I have spent quality time with the two things I love most in life: family and church! I pray that during this busy season that you've been doing some collecting of your own of memories and joy. Happy Easter!

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

### ***MODERATOR'S REPORT – Judy Minier***

#### **Easter, glorious Easter has come once again!**

On Easter Sunday morning, Christians come together in one of the most globally-unifying annual events to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Although we often get together with family and friends on Easter, it is easy to forget just how unifying that day is. About 2.2 billion people, nearly one-third of the world's population, will put aside their differences and all give thanks to God.



JASON RUSSELL, "Easter is for all of us", *Washington Examiner*, April 14, 2017

**Welcome to all who join us Sundays for worship! I hope you have enjoyed some of our recent services with the inspiring music (thanks to Tim, Joyce, the choir, the bell choir, instrumental and vocal soloists, etc.) and thoughtful sermons by Pastor Mike. It is a joy to come to church each Sunday for all this AND a very convivial coffee hour after the service. During "season" we really appreciate having a full house and a very full complement of activities taking place. Please consider volunteering to bring refreshments to coffee hour – cookies and fruit are popular items!**

---

**Follow up information:** As your Leadership Team now moves forward with the established policy regarding the prohibition of firearms on our premises, we have plans to engage the Congregation in its implementation. Stay tuned to this space and in church to see what the next steps are to make our policy concrete. I'm grateful that the Living the Question group and the Social Justice Team have been thoughtfully considering our policy and implementation and look forward to their continued

guidance as well in the coming days. Since the Leadership Team spent several months discussing and debating the policy, we want to thoughtfully put the plan into place.

---

### **Reminders and Announcements:**

1. **Social Justice Activities** are becoming a hallmark of our ministry in the greater community. I am impressed and grateful for the work being done by this very active team and look forward to being involved in an upcoming opportunity. It is doing our duty to “try to do what Jesus would have done” and provide care and support to the marginalized and underserved people in our area. Thank you, Team, for your efforts and keeping us informed of your activities!
2. **St. Vincent DePaul Collection Box** is available for your cash and check donations to the food bank. The box is near the wheelbarrow and convenient for you to drop in your contributions. Remember, the cash that you submit goes a lot further than providing a box of cereal or a jar of peanut butter. One dollar donated translates into \$7 worth of goods when SVdP purchases items for their food pantry - 7 times the value of our usual food donation. Please consider giving cash as a wonderful option to support this worthy cause. Neoma Remiger will continue to collect the cash donations (and food items) for weekly delivery. Thank you, Neoma, for being our connection to this helpful organization!
3. **Baker Street Children’s Clothing** collection is now completed. Thank you all once again for a very successful clothing drive! The cute outfits will go to nearly 100 children and help them to have a wonderful summer in their new clothes. Well done, everyone, with a special thanks to Neoma and her team (Marty and Sandy N.) for taking on this annual happy event!
4. **Seeking individuals to take on leadership roles** The LT continues to seek a Discipleship Chair/Committee. We also need Committee members to support CathyAnn Colson with stewardship responsibilities. We need these filled to keep worship operating and to keep our facilities in good shape. Associate Members are welcome to serve in the Discipleship role and with Stewardship – please let me or another LT member know if you can step into one of these roles. Job descriptions are available if you’d like to learn more about what is expected in these positions.
5. **Updates to our website** Take a look at our website! Jim DeGood is doing a great job of bringing us along into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with updated church information.
6. **Let’s complete an in-house, updated church directory** by late spring with photos, names, and contact information of our membership. We are looking for volunteers to take photos so that we can get this started. Please let me know if you can take pictures and would be willing to help compile the directory! Let’s do this project! Thank you.

### **Ongoing Goals and Matters under Consideration:**

1. **Still working on a plan for the replacement and upgrade of the eastern section of the church’s roof** which leaks badly during the rainy season. This issue has been on hold for some time but with the rainy season ahead, we are approaching a critical situation needing our attention. The LT is looking into a capital campaign to kick start the project, so stay tuned for more information to come!

2. **Another facilities project will be to complete** upgrades of our very dated air conditioning system with modern wall mounted, energy efficient units. We spend a lot of money cooling the building and could do so with less cost if we upgrade our system. This will be tackled as we find ways to help upgrade our approach to cooling, one of our biggest bills during the summer.

**Next LT Meeting:** The April Leadership Team meeting takes place on Tuesday, the 10th from 3:30pm to 5:30pm. Remember, we are here to support our pastor, our church ministries, responsibilities, operations, and one another in the congregation. We welcome your input about what we are doing, how we are doing, and what we should be doing. Please see any of us if you have questions, concerns, or suggestions about how we can more effectively manage our resources or make our church more responsive for our members and the community we serve.

Once again, Easter blessings to all.

### ***MINISTER OF MUSIC - Tim Sperber***



As I write this we will have finished the Lenten season and will be into the Easter season. It has been a busy time for church musicians.

I am thankful for the musicians I work with in our church music program: the choir, the bell choir, instrumentalists and soloists. We are blessed with so much musical talent.

I want to thank those who provided special music during Lent and Easter: Mary Barnt, Bob and Joyce Baskovic, Melissa Brown, Lori Larson, Ana and Lucia Rivadeneira, Barb Schachtschneider, Carol Schmuhl and Donna Sidmore.

April 8 will be the last Sunday our full choir will be singing. They have been doing a wonderful job leading us in worship, and I am proud of them. Just a reminder that choir

continues throughout the summer with rehearsals on Sunday mornings at 9:15am in Faith Hall. We welcome new members to join us. Please check the bulletin for when those rehearsals begin.



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

We are happy to report that four distributions have been recommended by the Endowment Team, approved by the Leadership Team and presented at services in March.

On Sunday, March 18, Back Pack Kidz received \$1,800 to assist their project of providing food to school students over the weekends when schools and the cafeterias in the schools are closed. Drug Free Punta Gorda received \$2,500 to assist in providing substance abuse prevention to students.

On Sunday, March 25, the Edgewater Bicycle Ministry received \$1,800 to provide bicycle locks for those receiving free bicycles from the Edgewater ministry. The Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Heartland (ELC) received \$2,000 to provide quality reading material for children who do not have access to literature and to also provide free cook books, *How to Eat Well On \$4 A Day*, which has numerous recipes for nutritious meals that are both cheap and easy to prepare.

The Endowment Team has a few other worthy applications that will receive due consideration in the weeks ahead. We are grateful for the comments we have received from the congregation and the support shown for the Team.



## **STEWARDSHIP**

Sunday, March 18, was the special offering for One Great Hour of Sharing. Through March 25, we collected \$905. Our 2017 offering was \$1,235. There is still time to contribute, and there are a few envelopes available at the back of the sanctuary. You can also include an amount with your usual giving amount; either indicate that the donation is for One Great Hour of Sharing on the memo line of your check or in the section of your envelope titled "Special Offering."

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



March was a busy month for Fellowship with two special events scheduled. On March 11, we hosted the church picnic, which turned into a church potluck because of the weather. At any rate, I think everyone had a good time, even if we couldn't be outside. Maybe next year. On March 29, we had a soup and bread supper in Faith Hall at 5:00pm before the Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service at 6:00pm. Thanks to all who helped supply food for these events.

The hosts for the month of March were Don and Kay Winslow, Mary Barnt, Marty Buckingham, Bill Ringelstein, Linda and Glenn Weaver, Jan Tulk, and the Caring Friends Group under the guidance of Neoma Remiger. Thanks to all of you for your help.

Fellowship sign up for the month of April is on the clipboard in the back of the sanctuary. Please sign up for a section or two.

**TREASURER – Melissa Brown**

Financial Results	Feb-18	2018 Y-T-D	Budget
Donations and Other Income	\$11,992.00	\$27,693.00	\$28,500.00
Expenses	\$12,688.00	\$24,831.00	\$27,166.00
Net Income	-\$696.00	\$2,862.00	\$1,334.00

As you can see from the chart above, CUCC is staying very close to budget, having generated a surplus of \$2,862 through February. As many of you know, given the seasonal nature of our congregation, we need to generate a surplus in the first four to five months of the year to compensate for the reduced collections when our snowbirds head north.

I want to thank everyone who contributed toward the offering envelopes. By decreasing the number of envelopes that we purchased for 2018 and the contributions that you have made, we have covered almost 100% of the cost of the envelopes.

We have also begun to take in monetary offerings for St. Vincent DePaul, and we have included their most recent thank you letter at the back of the Beacon. This is a wonderful partnership that allows us to give back to our community in a meaningful way.



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.

**LADIES' LUNCH OUT – Neoma Remiger**



The April Ladies Lunch will be on April 20<sup>th</sup> at Phil's 41 at noon. The sign-up sheet is in the kiosk at the back of the sanctuary. Please join us. It's a great time of conversation and fellowship!



## **LIBRARIAN – Sandy James-Nogaj**

Thanks to Neoma and Gretchen for hosting March's tea (even though Neoma was unable to attend, she did prepare some goodies for us). We discussed some interesting books and enjoyed our fellowship.

I have a new shelf for books about social justice. At the last Social Justice Committee meeting, Linda Weaver requested that I do this. If you have any books on this subject that you would like to donate to the library, please contact me before or after church on Sunday.



April Book Talk Tea will be at Nadine Sommerfield's home on Friday, April 13, at 1:00pm. Her address is Ventura Lakes, Queen Palm Drive #45, Punta Gorda. I will be collecting everyone's

tallies at the April Tea. I need a total of all the books that you read on the Reading for Renewal list.

## **SOCIAL JUSTICE TEAM – Jerry and Lori Larson**

The Congregational-UCC Social Justice Team and the Citizens' Climate Lobby have the privilege of hosting Dr. Terry Root in a presentation of "Changing Climate: Changing...Well...Everything". Dr. Root is Professor Emerita at Stanford University and was lead author of the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change 4<sup>th</sup> Assessment Report that in 2007 was co-awarded the Nobel Peace Prize with Vice President Al Gore. Her presentation will be held in our church on April 14, 2018, at 2:00 p.m. with a reception to follow. We invite you to participate in this timely presentation.

## **LIVING THE QUESTIONS – Linda Weaver**

### **Highlights from Living the Questions Class-- Prophetic Faith**

March 12: Our class was privileged to have Trish Greeves, the author of our book, *Prophetic Faith*, visit and lead the class on "Healthy Conflict is Possible." Trish, a retired UCC pastor and friend of Myra & Don Nagel, has had a broad range of experience dealing with congregations and social justice conflicts. She kindly shared strategies to help develop relationships between people with different points of view. Trish had our class apply the strategies to group discussions about an issue pertinent to our church. Thank you, Trish, for sharing your expertise with our class!

March 19: The class had a guest speaker, Lindsay Kohlenburg, from the Citizen's Climate Lobby, who showed us how to write persuasive postcards and letters to our members of Congress and state representatives. She gave us a great formula to use as a strategy to write letters to the editors of local newspapers. Thank you, Lindsay, for a very informative and productive class.

March 22: We visited the Coalition of Immokalee Workers to learn about their program to help obtain fair and just treatment for migrant workers in Florida. After a tour and presentation, we visited local Mexican restaurants for lunch. A fun and educational time was enjoyed by all!

March 26: Our last class celebrated a traditional potluck supper in Faith Hall.



Looking forward to next year!

### **Writing Right is a Fast-Fading Concept**

The young clerk at the office supply store was hunched over her tablet, scribbling out a rain-check for an item the store had run out of. Her ball-point pen, gripped in a clenched fist, dug into the paper as she completed the form.



When I got into the car, I looked at the slip the salesgirl had handed me. How in the world would the folks at the store be able to read the information on the note? The disconnected words and undecipherable instructions gave no clue as to what I wanted to buy.

Driving home, my mind wandered back to that long-ago classroom where I sat with my schoolmates, struggling with the Palmer method of “penmanship.” As we practiced, Miss Ingram roamed the aisles, correcting here, encouraging there. She was a stickler for turning her charges into “readable” writers. If, like me, you are “older than dirt,” you may remember those endless practice sessions of push-pulls and ovals. The pencil or pen had to be held just right. No gripping allowed. The motion, we were constantly reminded, was to come from our wrist and arm, not our clenched fist. Eventually, our painstaking repetition resulted in sheets of paper filled with sweeping, easily-read letters and words.

It’s been many years since I’ve been in a classroom setting. I’m sure by now the study of penmanship has vanished along with such old-fashioned school supplies as ink bottles, slide rules and carbon paper. Today’s school kids use computers for almost everything from composition to data storage. And, to be honest, writers like me seldom write their works in longhand. It’s become a computer world out there.

That’s why I was surprised not long ago to learn of an event called National Handwriting Day. It is celebrated annually on John Hancock’s birthday. The date honors Hancock, the first signer of the Declaration of Independence and an early proponent of good handwriting. According to history, when Hancock took pen in hand for the historic autograph, he signed in lettering so large that the King of England couldn’t miss it.

But a signature as well as writing in general has deteriorated markedly since the time of Hancock and his patriot brothers. In fact, even since you and I were in school, the writing we see today has lost much of the readability taught by Miss Ingram and the Palmer method. Not only do today’s young people avoid handwriting, but as the generations come along, fewer and fewer will be able to READ handwriting.....like copies of the original Declaration of Independence.

What would Miss Ingram and John Hancock say?



## ***APRIL CELEBRATORY DATES***

### **APRIL BIRTHDAYS**

April 1	Lee Arvid
April 5	Bill Colson
April 6	Dick Tulip
April 7	Melissa Brown
April 11	Virginia Bowker
April 15	Barbara Campbell
April 23	Guy Greenfield
April 23	Lou Stayner
April 23	Don Winslow
April 24	Maggie Boschert
April 26	Lori Larson



### **April Anniversaries**

April 9	George & Marty Buckingham
April 29	Richard & Suzanne Cleveland
April 30	Lucille & Larry Begin

Did we miss a birthday or anniversary? Please email the office, and we will try to make sure it doesn't happen again: [office@puntagorda-ucc.com](mailto:office@puntagorda-ucc.com)