



Celebrate Florida

The United Church of Christ in Florida



October - November 2020



It's Time to Faithfully Gather – Virtually!

REV. JOHN VERTIGAN
CONFERENCE MINISTER

At last year's annual Gathering we announced a site and a theme for the 2020 annual Gathering of the Florida Conference, and we began the behind-the-scenes work of putting together an event with a theme pulled from scriptures, "Fanning the Flames of Faith."

We couldn't have predicted then that we would change directions mid-year to offer a virtual Gathering or that the west coast of the United States would be engulfed in wildfires that have brought unimaginable destruction



and countless millions of dollars of damage in California, Oregon, Washington and other western states.

The move to a virtual Gathering was an easy decision based on the science of the COVID-19 pandemic. A move, just a week or two ago, to change the theme of the meeting came from a heightened awareness of the current state of affairs nationally and a desire to be good covenantal partners with our neighbors living far away. To celebrate "Fanning the Flames of Faith" – as scriptural as that is – while so many pictures of fire and smoke fill the airwaves, seemed insensitive at best and provocatively uncaring at worst. So, that theme is gone. Welcome, instead, to the 2020 Annual Meeting of the Florida Conference of the United Church of Christ.

Ours will be an abbreviated gathering that focuses mostly on the business at hand and takes place on the Zoom platform so many people have become familiar with in the last

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Our Faith Our Vote 2020

Your Vote is Your Voice – Don't Give It Up!

2020 Updates

Issue Education for 2020

We created a page with videos and resources dedicated to making the issues crucial in the 2020 elections feel a bit more manageable. Hear what UCC and ecumenical faith leaders specializing in these issues have to say, find links to important sources, and check out our issue one-pagers for candidate questions and more! [Check it out!](#)



Check Out Our New Civic Action Center!

Check your registration status, find important dates for elections in your area, learn about candidates, and find the polling location nearest you, all from our Civic Action Center! [Check it out here.](#)

Join the Our Faith, Our Vote email list for updates!

[Sign up here.](#)

Make Your Action Plan to Vote

[Check this Graphic](#)

Lift Every Voice — An Invitation from Rev. Traci Blackmon

In Hebrew Scripture the word most often translated "voice" is "qol." This is also the word translated as noise, or sound, or vote. In a broader sense, I would say the Hebrew word, qol, simply means letting oneself be heard. As people of faith, what is the noise we want to make in this election cycle? [Read more.](#)

About

The problems in our world often seem too big to confront. We see injustice every day and feel that change can't or won't happen. But our faith is infused with hope and built on a foundation of action. By serving the vulnerable, feeding the hungry, and standing in solidarity with the oppressed, we serve as God's hands.

Voting is a natural extension of faithful action. The decisions made by our representatives have a wide reaching impact. We have enormous potential to make positive change. We must engage our legislators, vote, and encourage everyone in our communities to do the same.

Our faithful voice is needed. It is tempting to disengage from the political process. As people dedicated to creating a just world for all, we know we must be involved.

Join the Our Faith, Our Vote campaign. Discover how your congregation can participate in the electoral process through faithful, nonpartisan

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several months. Here is a basic outline of our time together:

- Wednesday, October 7, 7pm: We will offer an introduction to Zoom for those who need one.
- Thursday, October 8, 1pm: The Conference Board of Directors will meet
 - 4pm: We'll host a virtual social hour. Bring your snack and beverage and join us on-line for conversation and catching up with friends across the Conference.
 - 7pm: We'll host an informational hearing on the 2021 Conference budget and offer an introduction to the Legacy Funds that make grants and awards available to Conference churches and authorized ministers.
- Friday, October 9, 7pm: We'll host an educational hearing on the Anti-Racism resolution that has been properly submitted and will be part of the day's business on Saturday. Bring your thoughts, concerns, curiosity and questions to this hearing.
- Saturday, October 10, 9am: We'll host the corporate annual meeting of the Conference for the purpose of electing leaders, adopting a budget for calendar year 2021 and considering the Anti-Racism resolution that is before us.

By now, each authorized minister and each local church should have received a link to the documents contained in the business packet. If you have not, or if you have yet to register for the meeting, please be in touch with **Dave Cyril** in the Conference office (dcyril@uccfla.org; 407/835-7501) and we'll assist in getting you ready for this very different meeting opportunity. Come be part of the quorum as we continue our shared ministry and look to the future with hope.

The registration deadline is 4pm, Friday, October 2. Zoom connection information for all sessions will be sent to all who have registered no later than October 6.

To register multiple people at once, please enter your first name, last name and e-mail address under "Who is filling out this form?" below, and then enter the names and information for each.



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9300 University Boulevard,
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(407) 835-7501 / (800) 432-8311
www.ucc-fla.org
E-mail: CelebrateFlorida@ucc-fla.org

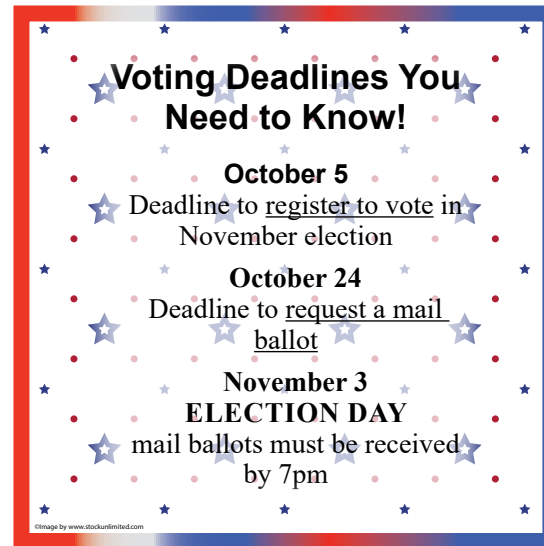
Conference Minister: Rev. John Vertigan
Editor: Rick Carson
Associate Editor: Tom Mitchell
Graphic Design /Layout
Sharon Bond / ZebraGraphicsUSA@gmail.com

Our Vote 2020 ... from page 1

engagement. The United Church of Christ can help with resources on civic engagement, voter registration information, issue education, and voter mobilization.

This election season it is essential that people raise their voices and vote. Will you join us?

[*Learn more about how your congregation can legally engage in the elections*](#)



Voting Deadlines You Need to Know!

October 5
Deadline to register to vote in November election

October 24
Deadline to request a mail ballot

November 3
ELECTION DAY
mail ballots must be received by 7pm



Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Philippians 4:6-7

Tips & Resources

- ✓ [Find out Your Registration Status](#)
- ✓ [Get Active in the Elections](#)
- ✓ [Get Out the Vote](#)
- ✓ [College Resources](#)
- ✓ [Youth and Young Adults in Action](#)
- ✓ [Worship Resources](#)
- ✓ [Being a Civil Voice in Uncivil Times](#)
- ✓ [Ballot Initiatives](#)
- ✓ [Election Protection](#)
- ✓ [Helpful Links](#)
- ✓ [About](#)
- ✓ [Download Advocacy Toolkit](#)

From the national United Church of Christ, September 18, www.ucc.org/ourfaithourvote



Florida Conference Offered Worship Service for Sunday before Labor Day

BY REV. JOHN VERTIGAN
CONFERENCE MINISTER

Labor Day weekend has long been taken as the symbolic end of summer. The summer of 2020 will be remembered for everything it wasn't as well as everything it was in the midst of a world health crisis, economic uncertainty and renewed attention to the national sin of racism. In all of it, our local churches have worshiped in new ways, and some have taken halting steps into defining a new normal. All of our congregational leaders and pastors deserve recognition for their steadfastness in rapidly changing times.

The staff and Board of Directors of the Florida Conference invited you and your pastor to a time of Sabbath rest and worship. We prepared a full worship service for September 6, that could be shared in lieu of our churches preparing online worship for that day. Of course, the link will be live after the fact, too, and might become an additional worship opportunity for those who will participate. Included were a printed bulletin, a read-only document for those without access to the Internet and a full video service.

We look forward to worshipping together as one body in the United Church of Christ in Florida, and we invite you to remember that no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

Taken from e-Celebrate, August 5

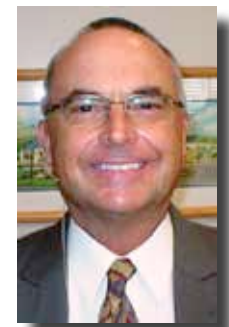
Thank You!

I heard from those on last Sunday's Zoom Fellowship call that the Florida Conference virtual worship service that day was well-received. I enjoyed it myself and was very appreciative of the Conference reaching out to churches and pastors in this thoughtful and caring way. I know you were glad to see some familiar faces that reminded us of our connection in the Body of Christ in Florida.

From Interim Pastor Rev. Candy Thomas (Christ Congregational UCC/Miami) in an e-blast to members, September 11



God is still speaking.
life evolves. perspective evolves.
we evolve. why shouldn't our faith?
Are we still listening?



Immokalee Fair Housing Alliance (IFHA) Update

BY REV. ALAN COE
MAYFLOWER UCC/NAPLES

On September 8 the Collier County Board of Commissioners approved the zoning change to the land the IFHA has been seeking to purchase. The sale of the land to IFHA took place within ten days of the rezoning approval. Now the IFHA can proceed with fundraising to begin the infrastructure work and construction. An estimate of cost of the project is around \$18 million. The project can be done in phases as funds are available.

This is a wonderful project that will have a tremendous impact on families and the community of Immokalee as the IFHA builds safe, secure affordable rental properties for farm worker families and other lower income residents. The

national UCC and Florida Conference have long had a presence in Immokalee working with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and the Alliance for Fair Food. Another UCC presence in Immokalee is Cypress Run, a low-income apartment complex for residents over 62. It is part of the United Church Homes network of housing ministry.

It is the hope of the IFHA Board of Directors that the UCC, Florida Conference churches and individuals will continue to support and become more involved with the Immokalee Fair Housing Alliance. For more information and ways to become involved and support IFHA, please go to www.ifha.info or on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ImmokaleeFairHousingAlliance>





Reflections on Sacred Conversations to End Racism (SC2ER)

BY NEAL WATKINS
MINISTER FOR FAITH FORMATION

It has become my habit and my self-enabled mechanism to have something to say to address things, explain things or even (in my mind) make things better. Over the last several weeks, through the Sacred Conversations to End Racism, I have been led and encouraged to embrace time in discernment, acknowledging the need to listen to the wisdom of others and the Still Speaking God. I wonder if it is hard for many of us to face evil, guilt, hurt, anger confusion and more without seeking to speak to it first — almost as if there is no time to listen. It is for me, anyway.

This week, during our Lectionary Hour Sermon Prep, hearing so many others discuss the story of Peter walking out on the water towards Jesus, it occurred to me how many ways I had retold that Bible story, incorrectly. The *NWV* (Neal Watkins Version) took several liberties as to who spoke to whom, what happened when, and who did what — even with such a “familiar” story! It doesn’t matter how many times I heard the story before, I was profoundly impacted when I was actually able to LISTEN to the story.

SACRED CONVERSATIONS TO END RACISM



And I suppose that is one of the ways that I have been impacted as of late in many of our sacred conversations. I have certainly had my share of time to look at things before, but I feel that with partners willing to share in honesty, work and vulnerability, there is a lot that I have missed or ignored that is to be seen. I give thanks to and for all of those who have been willing to stand out on the rocky waters and hold out a Christ-like hand.

If you enjoyed Neal’s column and would like to receive more material like this from the Florida Conference Faith Formation team, consider going to <http://uccfla-email.brtaapp.com/subscribe> and subscribing to «Faith Formation in Florida» for similar columns and content at least monthly and occasionally more often.

From e-Celebrate, August 5



Photo by Andrew Need, Unsplash

First UCC/Orlando — Job Opportunity for Office Admin Assistant

The Office Administrative Assistant is a part-time position requiring approximately 10 hour per week. Proficiency in Adobe, Microsoft Office applications (PowerPoint, Word, Excel, etc.) are required. Duties include:

- Create Sunday Worship bulletin
- Create PowerPoint presentations for worship and announcements
- E-mail newsletter “Monday Musings” to be distributed to the congregation; mail hard copies to members without e-mail access or as directed by Pastor or Church Council
- Track worship attendance on spreadsheet
- Check e-mails to church and voice mail; handle as appropriate

Interested candidates should email a resume to nevdana0@gmail.com or may call Dana Ney at 407/694-9537. Resumes will be submitted to the First UCC Church Council for review.



First Congregational UCC/Lake Helen Seeks Input on [Tithe.ly](http://tithe.ly) app

First Congregational UCC/Lake Helen is considering using the app tithe.ly to collect tithes from its members, and the treasurer is interested in any input or feedback from other churches that have used or are using this app. Please e-mail the treasurer at LakeHelenUCC@cfl.rr.com if your church has had any experience with this smartphone app.

From e-Celebrate, September 16



Photo by Christian Wadiger, Unsplash

Helpful Guide Available

United Church Funds has created a new guide that describes the building blocks for a customized, workable and effective investment policy. It may be accessed here: https://ucfunds.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020_Q3_Fiduciary-Focus.pdf

Tomorrow’s Faith Leaders

Faith UCC/Dunedin said “goodbye” to Teña Nock-Hope September 13 as her time of supervised ministry at the church came to an end and she continues her journey in the Pathways Program in another capacity elsewhere. As noted in the church newsletter, “Teña has been with us for about a year now, and has been engaged in so many aspects of the life of the congregation and she has made a strong impact on this church in so many ways.” Tena is a member of **First United Church of Tampa** and a Member in Discernment for ordination. **Brian Craig**, a member

of FUCC/Dunedin who is currently pursuing ordination with the UCC, has begun a new year-long ministry position as a Resident Chaplain at Tampa General Hospital. He will be at the hospital full-time, which is where he did his Clinical Pastoral Education internship.

Jeremy Wallace, currently a student at Chicago Theological Seminary, will be a field education student at **Good Samaritan Church/Pinellas Park** from September 2020-May 2021 as part of his training for ministry. He was commissioned Sunday, September 6, during the church’s virtual worship.



We are celebrating the life and legacy of Rev. Avery D. Post, president of the UCC from 1977-1989. He passed on Monday, September 7, at age 96.

We are remembering Evan Golder, founding editor of *United Church News*. He passed away at age 82.

Paul Werner, AP, First United Church of Tampa, service began July 26

Brad Lutz, SM, Coral Isles UCC/Tavernier, service began January 19

David Kaiser-Cross, EM, Naples UCC, service concludes October 11

John Barnette, P, Pilgrim UCC/Port Charlotte, service begins October 6

Bromleigh McCleneghan, P, United Church of Gainesville, service began September 16

Candy Thomas, INT, Christ Congregational UCC/Miami, called as DES to August 25

Lisa LeSueur, ORD, Coral Gables Congregational UCC, December 6

Key: P, Pastor; SM, Supply Minister; EM Executive Minister; INT, Interim Pastor; DES, Designated Pastor; AP, Assistant/Associate Pastor; ORD, Ordination

OPPORTUNITIES

Considering Part-Time Clergy

Beginning in mid-October, **Rev. John Vertigan** will lead a six-week small group read of *Part-Time is Plenty: Thriving Without Full-Time Clergy* by G. Jeffrey MacDonald, where readers are introduced to making the most of an opportunity that facilitates a higher level of lay engagement, responsibility, playfulness and creativity. Perhaps these conversations will be helpful to those churches utilizing/exploring models of staffing that involve part-time clergy. If you are interested in such a group read, please fill out the linked survey (it’s literally two questions): www.surveymonkey.com/r/6MD626L and submit ASAP.

the groups to run smoothly. Each COP develops a covenant to guide the group members in creating a community of trust. Confidential information is held within the group so that members feel safe to share freely, because mutual trust is at the heart of healthy communities of practice.



Photo by Carolyn V on Unsplash

If you are preparing for retirement in the coming three years, or have recently retired, we invite you to consider joining this community of practice. For more information, please contact **Rev. Leslie Etheredge** at letheredge@uccfla.org.

From e-Celebrate, September 2

New Community of Practice for Ministers Preparing for Retirement

A clergy community of practice (“COP”) is a small group of ministers intentionally focused on meeting together to focus on self-care, to provide support and wisdom to one another, and in this group, on how to navigate this next chapter beyond full-time ministry.

COPs are convened by trained facilitators who empower

Boundary Training

The Conference offered a Zoom workshop on boundary training requirements through 2022, which was hosted by the Northern California Nevada Conference and conducted by the recently retired Richard Blackburn (35-year executive director of the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center). It was held on September 12.

From e-Celebrate, August 19

UCC National Setting Mourns Passing of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

UNITED CHURCH NEWS, SEPTEMBER 19

The national staff of the United Church of Christ has issued a statement mourning the loss of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The second woman to serve on the high court and a warrior for gender equality died September 18 at her home in Washington, D.C. from complications of metastatic pancreatic cancer. She was 87.

- We speak with one voice on the passing of a woman of courage, of integrity, and of the highest order of jurisprudence
- We mourn the passing of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg.
- Her commitment to ensuring that the voices of the vulnerable would be heard in the highest courts of this land will long be remembered by the citizens of America, if not the world
- She was a champion for women, for the poor, for the uninsured, for the LGBTQI+ community, for communities of color, for the environment in a world where the monied interests of the more powerful were silent to their suffering
- She was the voice of resistance on a court that sought to undo so much of what justice advocates spent decades of blood and toil to advance
- She was both brilliant and humble, resilient and vulnerable, strong-willed and empathetic
- She was, as a lawyer, judge and Supreme Court Justice, an ally aligned with the core values of a United Church of Christ whose purpose is to love the Lord our God with our whole heart, soul,

mind and strength and our neighbor as ourselves; whose mission is to love all, welcome all, and seek justice for all; and whose vision is a just world for all

- Not all who find their seat placed among



Photo by Gayatri Malhotra, Unsplash



Photo by Gayatri Malhotra, Unsplash

the most powerful agents in our democracy are able to maintain their integrity, their sensitivity to the sufferings of the common people, and their steadfast commitment to eschew the trappings of power and wealth to fight for the weak, the poor and the vulnerable. She never wavered from that

- We celebrate her life and career
- We mourn her passing.
- We hope for one to rise up to fill the void she has left
- We pray for her eternal rest in the peace of her Creator

The National Setting of the United Church of Christ

CALENDAR

All staff travel continues to be on hold pending further decision-making; staff is working from their homes and tasks are being conducted via phone and electronic device.

OCTOBER 2-3
CM Rev. John Vertigan, UCC Board (virtual)

OCTOBER 4
RM Rev. Raymond Hargrove, Ordination service (virtual), First Congregational UCC/Ashfield, MA

OCTOBER 5
Deadline to register to vote in November election

OCTOBER 7-10
Annual Gathering of the Florida Conference

OCTOBER 24
Deadline to request a mail ballot

NOVEMBER 3
Election day; mail ballots must be received by 7pm

NOVEMBER 10
RM Rev. Leslie Etheredge, Western Region Committee on Church & Ministry

DECEMBER
RM Rev. Leslie Etheredge, on sabbatical

DECEMBER 6
RM Rev. Raymond Hargrove, Service of Ordination for Lisa LeSueur, Coral Gables Congregational

DECEMBER 8-12
RM Rev. Raymond Hargrove, AM 21 (Ministerial Excellence, Support & Authorization National Gathering) virtual

EVERY TUESDAY (4PM):
Florida Conference clergy lectionary group

EVERY WEDNESDAY (1PM):
Florida Conference clergy/lay screenside chat
Staff has ongoing virtual appointments/meetings with church staff and leaders

United Church Funds Awards More Than \$100K for Clergy Support

United Church Funds (UCF) announced that Brown Endowment grants of over \$100,000 have been awarded so far this year to 13 United Church of Christ (UCC) Conferences. These grants will allow these Conferences to implement support programs and leadership development for authorized ministers who are addressing and responding to the crisis and trauma caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and protests for racial justice.

“From the grant proposals we have received, it’s clear that churches and pastors are not excluded from the disruption and stress caused by the pandemic and recent racial upheaval,” UCF President & CEO Charles Buck said. “They need long-term support to continue leading their congregations in a healthy and sustainable way. United Church Funds is pleased that the Brown Endowment Fund that we administer is helping churches and faith leaders recover from the impact of COVID-19, and elevating churches’ role in addressing systemic racism.”

The UCC Conferences receiving grants are Central At-

lantic, Florida, Illinois South, Indiana-Kentucky, Kansas-Oklahoma, Missouri Mid-South, Northern California Nevada, New York, Penn Northeast, Penn West, South Central, Southern and Southwest.

Nearly all of the proposals cited the significant toll on parish clergy and institutional chaplains as they have had to set up an operational remote worship and pastoral care in a short time, deal with the increased workload and minister to grieving families and church members. In addition, several Conferences have witnessed increased racial tension in their communities, and they see a heightened need to support pastors as they navigate the stresses of lifting up a prophetic voice while receiving threats for speaking out against racism. Read more!

UCF also announced that 28 Members in Discernment have been awarded Helen and Richard Brown Endowment Scholarships totaling \$125,000. They created an infographic to present the diversity of this year’s scholars and future ministers, which you can find here.

From e-Celebrate, September 2



Church on the Hill Congregational UCC/Boca Raton

(September)

*Four Fundamentals of Martin Luther King, Jr.
Love – Equality – Justice – Peace/Shalom*

United Church UCC-DOC/St. Augustine

(Summer)

Imagine the People of God & Creation Spirituality



By engaging in the African practice of Sankofa (which means “Go back and get it”), congregants will look back at their history — as a church and as individuals — to find what is of value and bring it forward with them into their future.

United Church in Gainesville

(Early summer)

*Homeward Bound
Sacred Storytelling: The Stories of Our Lives* (with guest preachers)

(September)

Known

A deeper consideration into those places and spaces in our lives where we find our spiritual strength and nurture

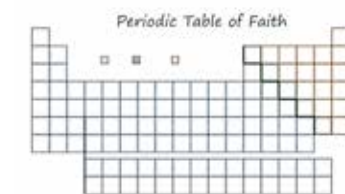
(Fall)

Getting Into Good & Necessary Trouble with Jesus

First Congregational UCC/Sarasota

(Mid-summer)

Elements of Faith: Considering the Building Blocks of Your Faith



(August)

Apostle Paul’s Greatest Hits: Words of Wisdom for Such a Time as This



UCC/Fort Lauderdale

(Summer)

*Loaves and Fishes
Navigating Life’s Storms
Building Materials*

Back to School Days

There is a tradition at **Hope UCC/Rockledge** to help its families with school supplies, and this year they are also planning to help out two church members who work in classrooms. Members **Larney Garcia** and **Denise Cotton** are both returning to classrooms where they will be working face-to-face with children. The basic items that are needed right now are things that are often hard to find — like large containers of Lysol or Clorox wipes, hand sanitizer, Zip Lock bags and boxes of tissues are requested for several of the classrooms. A list of some of the other supplies that children and the teachers have requested was provided to church members, and they were invited to purchase the items or provide monetary donations.

The Mission Committee at **Church by The Sea/Bal Harbour** organized a school supply drive, but this year is different in so many ways that the support is being done differently. Rather than collecting supplies for weeks and distributing them, they are asking church members to consider purchasing an Office Max, Staples or similar gift card to aid students in any amount.

The **United Church of Gainesville** held its “Back to School Blessing” on Sunday morning, August 30. **Rev. Talia Raymond** and **Keri Trospen** facilitated a drive-through blessing in the church’s east parking lot before the start of the school year.

In lieu of backpacks and school supplies which **Fort Myers Congregational UCC** used to acquire for its Back to School Drive, the church instead collected monetary donations to assist The Harlem Heights Foundation as it is in a better position to purchase in bulk what items would be best suited for the return to schools, whether it be at home or face-to-face.

First Congregational UCC/Sarasota held its “Alta Vista Back to School” mission moment for its next door neighbor, and the generosity of church members resulted in raising over \$7,000 – or more than \$12 per student.

Pass-a-Grille Beach Community UCC/St. Pete Beach offered its “Back to School Blessing” during worship on Sunday, August 23.

The Fellowship and Outreach Team at **Good Samaritan Church/Pinellas Park** has hosted a Back2School Festival at Good Sam for the past three years. Because of the pandemic, the on-site festival did not happen this year. Instead there was a simple “drive-through” distribution of supplies on August 1 in the church’s parking lot. Fliers were distributed through the church’s food pantry and info posted on Facebook. The original budget of \$500 (much lower than what has been spent in previous years) was increased to over \$900 thanks to donations. Expenses were reduced so that left more money for school supplies



Eric Johnson and Carolyn Woodard organize the supplies in the Sanctuary for bagging

The August 1 distribution team included (L-R) Ferris Van Dien, Suzie Steger, Bud Glacken and Eric Johnson



making it possible to give a good-sized bag full of items to 100 appreciative children.

The financial strains of the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the difficulty many parents already have purchasing the list of required back-school-supplies. So to help defray the costs, **Sanibel Congregational UCC** collected donations of supplies on Thursday, July 30. These supplies were given to F.I.S.H. (located on the island) and to the Gladius Food Pantry for distribution to families. A complete list of school supplies by grade was posted online, and the supplies were retrieved from the trunks and rears of vehicles when they pulled up under the church portico.

Member of **First Congregational UCC/Lake Helen** collected school supplies for Volusia Pines Elementary School. The school’s principal had seen the church sign and asked one

of the teachers to come by, and she spent the morning on the church porch and filled her trunk with generous donations.

At the all-church Zoom gathering on Sunday, August 23, **Lake-wood UCC/St. Petersburg**’s theme was “Back to School.” It was a celebration of learning and a time to share memories of



teachers who have made a difference in our lives. In addition, prayers were said for teachers and students in these difficult

times. The next Sunday and the following Tuesday members organized drive-by celebrations for church member teachers and students, distributing cards and gift bags packed with school supplies and goodies.

Naples UCC collected school supplies for its mission partners and those families in need who are part of its Precious Cargo Academy that serves infants, toddlers, pre-K and K-5 children. The Back to School Blessing took place on August 30 highlighting the children’s ministry as well as the PCA.

The **United Church in Tallahassee** decided to make it possible for five Leon County School District families to gain Internet access for one year (that is \$120 per family). A member of the church’s Community Action Committee generously

Targeted Outreach During a Pandemic

Outreach at **UCC/Fort Lauderdale** comes in many forms. There are people who weekly sort and organize clothing donations, and **Suzie Alvey** has been distributing clothing to people where need is seen. Some of the clothes go to Pastor Perry and Hope South Florida, an organization that provides showers with a mobile bus and health screening for people in need. Because the church has been blessed with many clothing donations, it is able to provide clean clothes for people after they shower.

The church also helps to feed and clothe people in need in Pompano Beach and works with the Lighthouse Half-way House. **Howard Kaplan** not only works with the congregation’s Health Care Ministry Team but volunteers as a Chaplain at Broward Medical Center where he prays with patients and helps Social Services place homeless people when they are discharged. He was even able to arrange 14 days of free room and board at a Miami Hotel for COVID-positive patients when they are discharged from



matched the church’s so that ten families are being sponsored.

Spring Hill UCC donated a dozen backpacks and many art supplies to a local elementary school it regularly supports.

Back to School Sunday 2020 at **Coral Gables Congregational UCC** was on August 30 and included a special blessing of backpacks and computers. Children and young people opened the special envelopes that had been sent to them as part of the service and discovered tags that said, “You Are Loved.” These tags can be placed on their computers and/or backpacks. The church’s German Language Ministry pre-recorded an inspiring Back to School worship service, which was recorded in the Chapel.



Thanks to the members of **First Congregational Church/Orange City**, donated items and money enabled the church to deliver school supplies to a local elementary school.



BEING CHURCH

the hospital. Part of his ministry includes providing shoes and clean clothes and even a wheelchair when necessary.

In early September volunteers with the Ruth Ministry gathered (with masks and socially distanced) and assembled over 70 “goodie bags” for distribution to people who are homeless. Each “goodie bag” contained information on community resources and also items such as toothpaste, brushes, socks, washcloths and more. And even during this time of physical distancing the Ministry continues connecting with those in need of food [read more about this in the Food section].



DON'T GO TO CHURCH BE THE CHURCH

Our churches continue to adapt, expand, tweak, reverse course, innovate — and pray a lot — as they adjust to being church in the age of the novel coronavirus. In the August/September issue, we shared what we had heard from our congregations on ways in which they were conducting Sunday worship and other church activities. In this issue we update what we have learned — including that a growing number of congregations have opened to in-person worship or are planning to do so soon.

More church activities can be found in the Time for Conversations, Food, Music & Arts and other featured sections in this issue [on pages 18-24 and 26-27].

The listing which follows updates some of that information and includes churches which hadn't contacted us in time for the last issue. So skim through and learn what's happening in the congregations of your brothers and sisters here in Florida. Please keep in mind that all that is taking place keeps changing and the snippets that follow are snapshots in time as of mid-September.

There is also a reflection from Regional Minister **Rev. Leslie Etheredge** on how she is experiencing the virtual church. Conference Moderator **Rev. Barton Buchanan** shares how his congregation, **Windermere Union Church**, is adapting to "being church" — "doing church" — during COVID-19.

Altamonte Springs — Altamonte Chapel Community UCC

9:30am in-person Sunday worship (taped for YouTube)

Auburndale — Christ's Promise UCC

10:30am Sunday worship on Facebook Live

Bal Harbour — Church by the Sea

Virtual worship on Sunday is at 10:30am on Facebook and the church website

- Every Tuesday evening a virtual service is offered with prayerful meditation and music
- Virtual worship on July 26 was Christmas in July — singing of Christmas carols, with special music by the Chancel Choir, guest soloists and instrumentalists and enjoying the beauty, the hope, the joy, the peace that is the Christmas season
- The church will be offering a virtual re-employment workshop in October
- Seniors were celebrated during worship on Sunday, September 13, including after worship Caravans of Love that drove to visit several seniors to show the church's love



Boca Raton — Church on the Hill Congregational UCC

The Sunday service is on Facebook Live at 10am and the bulletin (with the full text of the sermon) provided online on Saturday

- Pastor **Rev. Tom Lacey** began in early September a Bible Study via Zoom on Wednesday mornings that is based on the book *30-Day Journey With Martin Luther King, Jr.* by Jonathan Chism

Boynton Beach — Boynton Beach Congregational UCC

No virtual or in-person Sunday worship at this time

- **Rev. Jack Copas** posts a weekly sermonette message on YouTube

Brandon — Faith Family UCC

Sunday services are being livestreamed at 10:30am via Facebook; a virtual hospitality time via Zoom following worship has begun

Coral Gables — Coral Gables Congregational UCC

Sunday worship is livestreamed at 11am and posted on YouTube

- An eight-page plan for re-entry for public worship has been created composed of three stages with instructions and directions for a well-organized, safe return
- For one week beginning, Monday, August 10, the church was "officially" closed to provide staff a one week break to regroup and renew spirits
- Each Tuesday evening, **Lisa LeSueur**, Minister of Congregational and Staff Care, leads a Zoom opportunity to connect members of the church community with one another as they share stories — as well as survival strategies — for getting through these challenging times.
- Associate Pastor **Rev. Aaron Lauer** coordinates a weekly Sunday afternoon Zoom check-in for the young adults of the church at which each week a new leader facilitates a conversation
- Sunday, September 13, was "Spirit Sunday" for the church's first-ever drive-in worship where participants could park in the lot/green space, tune their FM radio to 87.9 to hear the service or find the service online in the usual ways through Facebook or website; bulletins and sealed Communion elements were provided
- An All-Church Family Church Trivia Game Night was held on Zoom on Saturday evening, September 12



Deltona — Deltona UCC

Sunday worship is at 10:30am on Facebook

Dunedin — Faith UCC

Sunday services continue to be streamed on YouTube and Facebook Live

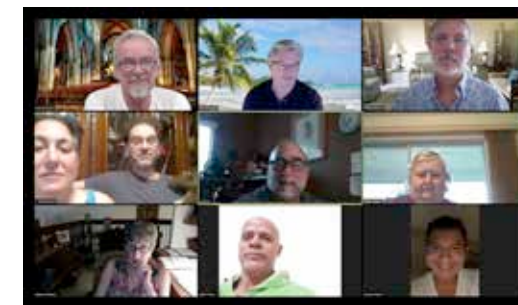
- "Life is Life" is a support group for those living with mental health challenges and/or experiencing difficulties in life, which meets via Zoom on Mondays; there is also a Friday morning meditation group of 10 that meets once-a-week for an hour in the church butterfly garden
- Witness Wednesdays have resumed in front of the church with positive messages of love, hope, inclusion and justice.



Fort Lauderdale — UCC/Fort Lauderdale

Sunday worship is posted on YouTube

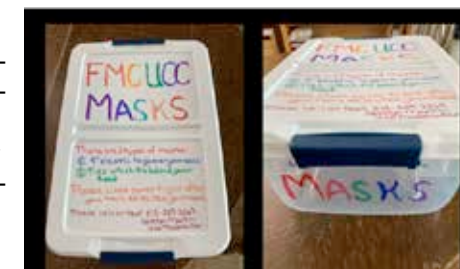
- The congregation has a Zoom "check-in" every Wednesday from 7-8pm for members to drop in and say "Hello!"



Fort Myers — Fort Myers Congregational UCC

Sunday worship is at 10am on YouTube; Zoom coffee time at 11:30am

- The church has adjusted its reopening for worship date to no earlier than Sunday, January 17
- The church Deacons have made it easy to procure cloth masks by providing a supply in containers outside the Narthex door.



Fort Walton Beach — Eternal Hope UCC

Sunday morning worship began in-person on June 21 (limiting attendance to 10) while continuing to livestream at 10am on Facebook

Pastor **Rev. Booth Iburg** e-blasts a weekly message to

church members. Volunteers from the church continue helping feed the homeless and hungry populations in Fort Walton Beach and Pensacola

Gainesville — United Church of Gainesville

Sunday "virtch" church worship is pre-recorded and available for viewing on YouTube Sunday morning

- "Gathering of Waters" has been a meaningful annual worship service every August in which members were invited to bring their water



Pre-2020 ceremony

to the church courtyard on designated dates and times when the pouring of water by each individual/couple/family was recorded with sharing from where the water came and then the finished product was used during the virtual service on Sunday, August 30

- In early September the church issued a member survey offering ten basic questions asking about preferences for possible regathering protocols and scenarios
- Good Men Drinking Beer happened on Friday, September 11 — an informal gathering of UCC men sharing their drink of choice and, more importantly, sharing good humor and fellowship

Jacksonville — Arlington Congregational UCC

Sunday worship at 10am via Facebook and posted on website; in-person worship began on September 20 (Facebook viewing continues)

Lake Helen — First Congregational UCC

The church is currently without a pastor and no Sunday services are being offered; considering engaging a Supply Pastor; first virtual service available on YouTube beginning September 20

- Church Council has responded to a survey and comments and has formed a Worship Team to begin recording worship videos and posting them online; results indicate that a Zoom service led by the Deacons would definitely or sometimes be attended by 80%, and 67% do not feel it will be safe to worship in the Sanctuary before next year

Lake Worth — First Congregational UCC

Sunday worship at 10:30am via Facebook Live and YouTube; Zoom Fellowship following service at 11:30am

- Members are invited to join the Lake Worth Interfaith Network on Wednesday evenings for Rainbow Interfaith Meditation when each week a teacher from a spiritual tradition offers a teaching and leads in meditation via Zoom
- On Thursday mornings there is a time of Zoom chat and fellowship in the church's "virtual parlor"

Melbourne — CrossRoads UCC

Sunday worship at 10am live on Facebook

- The church e-blasts a print version of its weekly Bible study including notes of Supply Minister **Rev. Frank Lamson**

Miami — Christ Congregational UCC

Sunday worship is livestreamed at 10:30am on Facebook

- Some 20 or so members of the church surprised member **Frank Trib** on his 90th birthday with a parade of cars that pulled up to his home, honking horns and displaying balloons and signs with good wishes



Naples — Mayflower

In-person worship resumed on July 5 requiring an extensive list of procedures and safeguards to be followed

Naples — Naples UCC

Sunday service is livestreamed at 10am

- Church council has voted to remain closed until the end of the year' re-opening will be determined by meeting metrics of the Harvard Global Health Institute
- On August 28 Rev. Dr. Dawson shared an update via YouTube on what is happening at the church; he frequently holds a "Dialogue with Dawson" on Zoom for a Q&A discussion about the life of the church and upcoming plans
- The Bargain Box thrift store is now open on a limited basis
- Proceeds from the church's Mighty Mask Ministry benefit the Harry Chapin Food Bank



- The Sanctuary Choir joined together virtually with friends near and far to sing "The Lord Bless You and Keep You," composed by Peter Lutkin; this music video was featured in the postlude during worship for the month of August (you can also view and share it with others by [clicking here](#))

New Smyrna Beach — UCC/New Smyrna Beach

Sunday services are at 10am on Zoom

- The church threw another drive-through dinner fundraiser, this time an August spaghetti version that also requested donations of men's tank tops, shorts and shoes for those in need
- A "Call Tree" has been established in order to be able

to contact church members in times of need, utilizing a core group of "callers"

North Port — North Port Community UCC

In-person Sunday worship at 10am began on July 19; viewing online will be available by noon

- Beginning in October Tuesday Bible study will meet outside on the church lawn
- In October Zoom prayer gatherings, a new program, began on Thursday mornings
- The church joined with the Salvation Army for a suc-



cessful food drive in July

Ocala — First Congregational UCC

Sunday worship is at 10:30am on Facebook and YouTube

Orange City — First Congregational Church

In person Sunday worship at 10:30am began July 5 but ceased at the end of August and reverted to Zoom

- A midweek message/prayer is issued along with some music from **David Putnam** with **Sam Bass** putting the final touches on the recorded music
- Beginning in mid-September the church invited members of **First Congregational UCC/Lake Helen** to join their Zoom Sunday services
- On Sunday, August 9, the church had its first Zoom Fellowship Hour that included members from near and snowbirds from afar



Orlando — First UCC

In-person worship began Sunday, June 14, in Crimson Hall (not the Sanctuary)

- Pastor **Rev. Terry Hood** offered a prayer at the close of her final service at the church



Pensacola Beach — Pensacola Beach Community UCC

Sunday worship podcast posted on Saturday; in-person Sunday worship in the Sanctuary began on June 14 (with restrictions) but were canceled beginning July 5 for the remainder of the month until August 2; on-site worship with limitations resumed in August in the Sanctuary and services were available for viewing on podcasts, posted on the previous Saturday; on-site worship was suspended beginning September 20

- Recording the service in the Sanctuary
- Church members were invited to participate in a virtual 5K "you pick the route" walk/run/skip event between September 18-20 to benefit Street Grace, a faith-based anti-sex trafficking organization focusing on exploited children



Pinellas Park — Good Samaritan Church

Zoom worship on Sunday begins at 10:30am

- A brief survey was sent to church members in mid-August to solicit their thoughts on in-person worship and related spiritual needs
- During the pandemic, the church regularly offers a wide variety of Zoom "pop-up events" for its members with selections like "The Enneagram Under Pressure: Who Do We Become When We are Stressed?," guided meditation, a food fast challenge and Bible trivia
- A challenge to members was to organize drive-by visits to friends and members to let them know how much they are missed
- Held special suicide awareness worship service on September 27 that featured former Florida Conference staffer Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund, now UCC Minister for Disabilities and Mental Health Justice and author of *Blessed Are the Crazy*



Port Orange — Port Orange UCC

Recordings of the Sunday service are available via calling into a phone site or on the church website

Punta Gorda — Congregational UCC

Sunday worship at 10am is on Facebook Live or viewed on YouTube; the Leadership Team voted to approve in-person worship starting September 20 (limited to 30 people who have RSVP'd)

Rockledge — Hope UCC

Sunday worship is at 10am on Zoom

- Church members demonstrated to protest postal cuts on August 15 in front of the Cape Canaveral Post Office

Sanibel — Sanibel Congregational UCC

Sunday worship is livestreamed at 10am; Sunday, November 1, has been determined as the tentative date for returning to in-person worship with the church's Executive Committee reconvening in mid-October to reassess the situation

- The annual Christmas Eve beach service will not be held this year
- The church's preschool opened for the semester on August 31

Sarasota — First Congregational UCC

Sunday services continue to be livestreamed at 11am on Facebook (the bulletin is e-blasted in advance) with later posting on the church website and livestreaming will continue after the pandemic; a simulcast on the website was created beginning September 20; beginning October 18 there will be a half-hour outdoor worship at 9am

- At the end of August the church sent a survey to members asking for their feelings about in-person worship

- Member **Rev. Donna Papenhausen** led an Artful Prayer Zoom exercise in which participants drew their hands on pieces of paper — saturating their fingerprints and DNA on the paper while praying daily over a week — and then returning the papers to the church so that they could be placed on pews for those leading worship to see



- Thursday Prayer Services continue on Facebook Live at 1pm, gathering in September around the theme "Story People"

Sarasota — St. Andrew UCC

Sunday worship is live at 10:30am having switched on June from an online app to Facebook Live; up to 10 people can now RSVP to attend in-person worship in the Sanctuary

- Because the pandemic has made it more difficult for church members to meet the new Interim Pastor, **Rev. Mary Alice Mulligan**, several people mentioned the possibility of having a glass of wine with her some afternoon — so she has set up a Zoom time and invites members people to get a glass of wine (or sparkling grape juice) and join her
- A new outreach program is planned — a virtual Bedtime Story Hour — in which once a week a church member will read a children's book, which will be filmed live for streaming and posting on the church's Facebook page and promoted in the wider community

Sebring — Emmanuel UCC

In-person Sunday worship began on June 7 at 10am; also appears on Facebook Live and posted on church website and YouTube

- Congregants celebrated Women's Equality Day and the Ratification of the 19th Amendment on August 30 by wearing white, highlighted with yellows and purple



Spring Hill — Spring Hill UCC

A reflection/sermon is recorded for YouTube (in lieu of a service on Zoom, which was the platform before April 19); in-door worship began on September 6 (reservations required so as to not exceed seating limits); listening to the service live on FM radio in church parking lot is possible

- The church now has a new YouTube page
- A casual vesper service with Communion (and gorgeous sunset!) was held on Pine Island on Wednesday, September 2, with 20 folks in attendance



- Members did a drive-by to thank retiring Pastor **Rev. Robin DeAngelis**
- The Deacons will be offering a healing service at Pine Island on October 7 with messages about healing versus care and holistic health

St. Augustine — United Church UCC-DoC

Virtual Sunday worship takes place via Zoom at 10am; Zoom coffee hours follow

- Members could take advantage of an interactive webinar, "Introduction to Applying Racial Equity Lens to End Hunger and Poverty," that was offered on Monday evening, August 31
- Interested church members can join weekly Zoom conversations on Wednesdays – on topics of interest or just social – and a silent worship meeting that is held Wednesday evenings by the Friends Worship Group of St. Augustine



St. Pete Beach — Pass-a-Grille Beach Community UCC

Pre-recorded Sunday worship is livestreamed at 8:45 and 10am on the church website where it is posted for later viewing; in-person worship on the pavilion (with limitations) will begin on October 4 at 8:30 and 9:30am

- A brief survey was e-blasted to church members in early September to gauge comfort levels in in-person worship in the Sanctuary and outside on the labyrinth/pavilion
- A beachside Scripture and Prayer service will begin on Sunday, October 4, at 6:30pm to pray as a community while enjoying the beautiful shoreline and sunset
- Virtual Zoom study groups include **Rev. Dr. Keith Haemmelmann's** "Coffee with Keith" on Wednesday mornings that utilize videos by prominent scholars as the focus of discussion and **Rev. Dr. Guillermo Marquez-Sterling's** Thursdays-in-September "Thy Kingdom Come," a look at the teachings of Jesus regarding the Kingdom of God

St. Petersburg — Lakewood UCC

Sunday worship is at 10:30am through Zoom

- A group of nine from the church visited member **Elinor Ross**, who is now under Hospice care and living with her daughter



Tallahassee — United Church in Tallahassee

Zoom worship services are every Sunday at 10am

- The Communications and Technology Committee launched its "Spotlight" series on Facebook and Instagram in mid-July as a way to get to know one another better especially during this time when we aren't able to gather in person
- Saturday, September 5, was UCT's first ever Breakfast-on-the-Go in which members donated cooked casseroles, biscuits, sausage, etc.) and dropped the items off that Friday evening for drive-by pickup Saturday morning with care-packages delivered to shut-ins.
- Children enjoy a virtual "Time for Kids"



Tampa — First United Church of Tampa

Sunday morning worship is at 10:30am on Zoom

- The congregation has a new spiritual support group designed to be a loving, supportive and confidential gathering in which participants can share dealing with their own mental health challenges or their family members'; this group will initially meet monthly for one hour
- A Zoom gathering is set for Thursday, October 8, on «All Are Welcome Here: Becoming an Anti-Racist Church» led by **Rev. Dr. Sheila Guillaume (Union Congregational UCC/West Palm Beach)**
- For several Thursdays in late October-early November Associate Pastor **Rev. Esther Robles** will lead "Sacred Rhythms: Spiritual Practices for Living in These Times" via Zoom

Tavernier — Coral Isles UCC

Sunday worship is at 10am on Facebook; a virtual social hour follows

The Villages — UCC at The Villages

Weekly sermon posted on YouTube

Vero Beach — The Community Church of Vero Beach

In-person (space limited) in Sanctuary and livestreaming on Facebook at 10:15am; Zoom coffee at 11:30am

- Sacred Pause is offered Monday mornings at 8:30am for 15-20 minutes to start one's week with music, prayer and reflection together with others on a



Zoom call

Windermere — Windermere Union Church

Sunday virtual worship on YouTube is at 10am with La Iglesia del Pueblo services at 11:30am

- First outdoor service is planned for November 15
- The homeless ministry Peace Meals creates 60 meals twice a month that are delivered to the homeless in Orlando

Winter Park — First Congregational UCC

The Sunday worship video goes out late on Saturday both on a streaming service and YouTube channel

- A new "blog" section of the church website has been created with new content being added daily; **Rev. Shawn Garvey's** daily e-mail meditations are there as well as a new mid-day video affirmation called "The Daily Dose" that appears on the church YouTube channel
- Rev. Shawn has also developed a podcast called "Conversatology" in which each week there will be a new 30-minutes-or-so episode interviewing people about all manner of ways to consider these extraordinary times we're living in.

FOCUS!

BY REV. LESLIE ETHEREDGE
WESTERN REGIONAL MINISTER
FLORIDA CONFERENCE



When my little granddaughter was 16 months old, my daughter — her mother — was quite ready for her to begin walking. My granddaughter chose to take her own sweet time. One day she began to take a few steps and the rest is history. When she took several steps in succession, my daughter sent me the video she'd made of that big event. After about three steps walking toward her mother, my granddaughter looked away and in the video I heard my daughter say "Focus!" I have laughed about that so much... as if that 16-month-old baby knew what in the world "focus" meant.

"Focus" is the key word that I want to bring to you today in this message: Focus! Since the days of COVID-19 began and changed our lives in numerous ways, it has been difficult to maintain our focus regarding many things. Unfortunately, our focus has been obscured with fear, challenges and uncertainties. Perhaps our lives were not a piece of cake pre-COVID, but things sure do seem more complicated now. Our churches and their incredibly competent pastors have risen to the occasion. Church is being done in a new way. Most are applauding this creativity and getting on board with Church 3.0. However, in our lack of uncertainty for what the future holds, anxiety for what the present may bring on any given day and our deep desire for things just to go back to normal, sometimes we forget our focus.

That projection of our angst can sometimes result in heated council meetings, emotional exchanges between church members, hurtful or angry interactions between members and their pastors — words or actions that are not characteristic of us. It is obvious that these are challenging times for us all. We need to be reminded to just "Focus!"

As followers of the Jesus way, our focus remains the same. Our focus is to be on the good news that the Gospel brings and the Biblical directive of Micah when he wrote: "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

We are all going through unprecedented times and we all need understanding and grace. Focus, my friends. Focus on the Jesus way. That path has been a certain one for centuries. That has not and will not change. I implore you to be ever mindful of when and how you were called to walk that path in the first place. Reason and rationale obviously tend to be much more difficult in the midst of a pandemic, but remember, though, God is a God of mystery and wonder, this we know, God walks with us on every step of that path and is present with us in every breath that we take. "Focus" on that and be blessed.



Priscilla Du Preez, Unsplash



COVID-19 and One Church's Experience

BY REV. BARTON BUCHANAN
PASTOR, WINDERMERE UNION CHURCH
MODERATOR, FLORIDA CONFERENCE

When we started the new year I never in my wildest imagination imagined the last time I would see my congregation would be March 15. Six months later I find that I am missing my community of faith more and more. I am still in contact with the members of Windermere Union Church. We are staying connected via e-mail, text, Instant Messenger, phone, Facebook and Zoom. In spite of the fact we miss each other terribly, we continue to be totally committed to doing our part in being the cure for COVID-19 and not the spread of this horrible virus.

Over the last six months we had to learn quickly how to engage with each other without seeing each other. Here is what we have been doing:

- We restructured our weekly worship services to share as an online virtual experience
- We included the same Order of Worship so the virtual experience will be familiar
- We updated our website to accommodate virtual worship in an easy to follow format
- We subscribed and created a Windermere Union Church Zoom account
- Our Official Board meets monthly via Zoom
- One of our members is a certified facilitator for seminars taught through Zoom; she provided a workshop for our leaders on how to make the best use of Zoom as a teaching and meeting tool
- We launched our Windermere University via Zoom; our church offers virtual workshops that take place over four to six weeks with the workshops facilitated by church staff and members
- We contracted with a webpage expert to assist us on making our website more engaging and user friendly
- We are in process of launching our first Stewardship Drive in October and have the great fortune to have **Jennifer Brewer Harris** to lead our campaign
- We are updating our camera and recording equipment



“...we are doing our ministry as usual — just in a different way. In many ways we are serving God better in that we have more tools to reach out to and serve more people.”

so our virtual services will be in HD

- We currently have 15 Stephen Ministers; they divided the church contact list among themselves and make contact with our membership and friends monthly
- Pastor **Rev. LaTrell Harrison** teaches our youth and meets with our young adults via Zoom
- Childcare Coordinator **Chris Stumpf** is providing a virtual “Story Time with Miss Chris” weekly and also provides a Children’s Moment for our virtual worship service
- Music Director **Troy Dolendo** is creating weekly a traditional hymn and a contemporary music video and is also exploring how we can create a virtual choir with Zoom — choir members will record their individual parts at home, Troy will provide them the music and a sound track to assist them with their parts and will later assimilate the individual videos into one large choir video
- Office Manager **Sarah Larenas** has perfected being the communication hub for our entire ministry
- We continue with our homeless ministry, Peace Meals; in the past our volunteers gathered on the third Saturday of each month to create 120 meals while Team Leaders **Ted and Dawn Eckbreth** delivered the meals to homeless people in Orlando and now our members deliver the food to the church and Ted and Dawn create the meals and deliver 60 meals twice a month.
- We are still collecting money through virtual worship to support our Shepherds Fund, The West Orange Christian Service Center, NAMI of Greater Orlando and Dave’s House



Our giving is down. However, our expenses are down, too, and we currently have a budget surplus. We applied

continued on page 17

Words of a 12-year-old, Emphasis on Voting Impress UCC Participants in DC Rally

BY HANS HOLZNAGEL
EXCERPTED FROM UCC NEWS, SEPTEMBER 1

Amid the dozens of distinguished speakers who addressed a march and rally in the nation’s capital Friday, Aug. 28, it was a 12-year-old who caught the ear of two United Church of Christ ministers who were participating — one in person, the other online.

That speaker was Yolanda Renee King, granddaughter of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. She spoke from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial during “Commitment March: Get Your Knee Off Our Necks,” organized by the Rev. Al Sharpton and his National Action Network. Sharpton had issued a call to the event during the funeral for George Floyd, killed by Minneapolis police officers May 25....



Guillaume said she had strong support for her trip from the Just Peace Church congregation she pastors, **Union Congregational UCC/West Palm Beach** — and once arriving in Washington, was glad to see she was not alone in taking pandemic precautions. All the people she saw at the event “were trying to be careful to socially distance,” she said.

“Masks were required. People were honoring the precautions.”

“I felt like I was there on behalf of so many people who could not come because of the pandemic,” she said. The event was an important way to show “that our quest for justice for all people remains a priority — it’s not something we’re ignoring. We’re saying that we still believe in this dream that Dr. King had those years ago, that one day we will all be able to live together in justice,

peace and equality.

“Even though it’s heartbreaking to continue to see that police officers are shooting Black people, these marches give us hope that one day this type of policing will end and that we will have a justice system that is for all of the people.”

“Impassioned Call in These Troubling Days”

Guillaume was back in Florida in time to weave a mention of young Yolanda King’s speech into her sermon during Union’s August 30 Facebook Live worship service...



continued from page 16

for the Federal PPP loan in order to keep all of our staff and preschool employed. Because we have used the funds per the Federal Guidelines, we expect the loan will be forgiven.

Now that we are feeling confident with our online worship, our next adventure will be creating an outdoor Christmas Eve Service using all social distancing and mask wearing guidelines. We are also exploring doing an outdoor worship service once a month when the weather is cooler and drier.

Yes, we miss each other. We all desire to be worshipping together again. We are tired of the Shelter in Place. However, we know one day we can gather together again to celebrate our faith. In the meantime, we are learning new skills and acquiring new tools that we will continue to employ when the COVID-19 scare is over. We are discovering that our audience is expanding and geography is no longer a barrier. We have new friends who are tuning in from outside our community and state. We are making new local connections who have tuned in to our worship services and workshops. We look forward to meeting them in person one fine day.

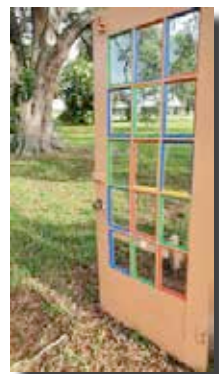
In other words we are doing our ministry as usual — just in a different way. In many ways we are serving God better in that we have more tools to reach out to and serve more people. I hate what COVID-19 has done to the world and the suffering it has caused. As the old cliché goes, “When a door closes, God opens a window.” The cliché as a reality now. Using our imaginations and wits, we are finding new and innovative ways to serve our community and world.

We are in this “wilderness experience” together. One day we will emerge from it as stronger, more resourceful. The wilderness of COVID-19 is teaching us how to be more effective servants while fulfilling God’s purposes in the world.

Peace and health to you all.

Faith Family UCC/Brandon recently had a sing-along worship service but has decided it can use a bunch more. Members have been encouraged to send in their list of top 10 favorite worship songs — old hymns, contemporary Christian music, traditional Gospel.

As part of Lakewood UCC/St. Petersburg's summer "Corona Sabbath" series of weekly meditations on the theme "Grounded," the "Doors Open to All" installation on church grounds by member artist **William Owen III** was posted with a special music video from Music Director **Hilton Kean Jones**.



There was a small group Zoom celebration at the **United Church of Gainesville** of the late poet Mary Oliver's birthday on Thursday, September 10. A Pop Up Zoom Frame Drum class took place Thursday evening, September 17. **Leigh Baker** and the UCG drum circle gave an introductory Frame Drum class, learning the strokes in the lap style on a Tar Frame Drum, history, resources and self care. Participants could use a frame drum, or a native American drum, a pizza box, a book – whatever.

Tenor Javier Abreu and pianist Jeremy Reger recorded a special virtual concert, "My Favorite Things," for **Naples UCC**, to launch the 2020-21 season of the church's Music Ministry. The concert was livestreamed and on Facebook Live on Sunday, September 13.

Dr. John Sinclair, the Director of Music at **First Congregational UCC/Winter Park**, led a Zoom presentation on Saturday

evening, September 12, on the role and scope of a conductor. In addition, he played some music clips and engaged in talking about music.

It was "Homecoming Sunday" on September 13 at **The Community Church of Vero Beach** with the Blue Cypress Bluegrass Band using Bluegrass music in exuberant worship in the Sanctuary. The weekly "Wednesdays @ 1:00" delve deeper into music and the fine arts at the church and around the Treasure Coast. These livestream-only events feature special guest interviews, musicians' roundtables, gallery and studio tours, interviews with poets and local musicians and more. An example was on Wednesday, September 9, at which **Andrew Galuska** (Director of Music and Fine Arts) led a studio tour with local artist Travis Blanton. "Musical Moments" are weekly recitals and concerts on Thursday mornings at 11:00am, livestreamed-only concerts that feature local musicians, music staff and special guests and may be viewed by visiting the church's Facebook page or church website. On Thursday, September 10, pianist Rochelle Sallee presented a concert of "Waltzes Without Dancers and Songs Without Words" that featured the music of Chopin, Mendelssohn, Strauss and Tchaikovsky.



UCC/Fort Lauderdale recently initiated a Weekly Artist series to showcase members' talents. Recent displays included:

- an oil-on-canvas painting by **Bill Face**, which was inspired by his studies of Renaissance paintings of Christ being crucified
- a vision of the "Pathway to Paradise" begun 40 years ago by **Marcia Mahaffey**, which was stuck in a closet and only recently finished
- "Coy Koi" by **Susie Alvey**, whose observations of koi made her think about how God created such pretty creatures with their brilliant colors and graceful movements as they glide through the water



He has always been drawn to watercolor and so **Gary Hill** wants to be surrounded by watercolors. He began learning about painting in 1977. Here is a favorite scene from southern from a photo he took on a fall day and painted a couple of years later.



The film "Loving," which tells the case of a mixed race couple defying Virginia's prohibition against interracial marriage that went before the Supreme Court, was discussed at a Zoom gathering at **UCC/New Smyrna Beach**.

"Movies That Matter" are shown in the Sanctuary at **The Community Church of Vero Beach** on the evening of the third Wednesday of each month. These began in September hosted by **Rev. Dr. Anna Copeland** and Director of Music and Fine Arts **Andrew Galuska** with "Tous Les Matins du Monde" ("All the Mornings of the World") in French with English subtitles.



Greg Chestnut, the Minister of Music at **First Congregational UCC/Sarasota**, was a participant in a recent UCC webinar featuring members of the UCC Musicians Association discussing "Strengthening the Bonds Between Us."

Greg serves on the board and will be its president next year.



Legal Injunction Filed on Behalf of PAG Beach Church

Pass-a-Grille Beach Community UCC/St. Pete Beach has engaged a religious property and land use attorney at Michigan-based law firm Dalton & Tomich in filing a preliminary injunction against the City of St. Pete Beach. The filing came in late August in response to the City's efforts to stop the church's youth group from evangelizing, praying and seeking donations from members of the public who park on the church lot.

As part of its ministry, the church has always allowed community members to use the parking lot for free when church is not in session in order to access the public beach. In 2016, the church began accepting a free-will donation for non-patron parking, with the money collected used to fund the church's youth ministry global mission trips. Church youth also hand out spiritual leaflets and share their faith with those interested in learning more.

A court reviewed the City's objection in 2016 and rejected it, citing that seeking donations by a church youth group to help pay for mission trips is protected activity and consistent with the Church's religious beliefs to "welcome the stranger and show hospitality."

The City has persisted in overruling the decision by assessing code violations and insisting that parking on the church lot can only occur for the "intended purpose" of the

church – as defined by the City. As a result, parking on the property to go to the beach is prohibited.

In speaking against the recent fine and growing pressure from the City, Pastor **Rev. Dr. Keith Haemmelmann** expressed his frustration at attempts to restrict the church's mission. "The City does not consider the many youth whose lives have been changed because of the donations that people freely give to support our mission endeavors. The church is not the church if ministry and discipleship are defined by entering a church building, then leaving, because the church will be penalized if you visit a friend, walk the beach, or break bread with a neighbor," Rev. Keith said.

"The church is not a commercial operation, no matter what codes a municipality adopts. Our calling as followers of Christ is to build the Kingdom of God on earth, not a fiefdom on the beach. Without the ability to reach a workable solution with the City to continue using our parking lot as we have for many years, the only viable option was to ask the court to confirm our rights under federal law."

Here is a link to this story: <https://www.dalton-tomich.com/st-pete-beach-to-church-youth-group-thou-shall-not-use-your-parking-lot-to-pray-evangelize-and-solicit-donations-from-the-public/>



A Richness of Opportunities

Your Invitation to be Informed – Inspired – Transformed

October 7-10 Annual Gathering (virtual) of the Florida Conference p1
 Election/vote resources pp1-2
 "All Are Welcome Here: Becoming an Anti-Racist Church" – Zoom presentations led by Rev. Dr. Sheila Guillaume p22
 Yard signs p29

UCC "Thursdays in Black" p23
 UCC "Tuesdays for Nurture" p23
 Racism/justice resources p24
 Small group read of Part-Time is Plenty: Thriving Without Full-Time Clergy p5
 Clergy community of practice ("COP") groups p5

BE THE CHURCH

Protect the environment. Care for the poor. Forgive often. **Reject racism.** Fight for the powerless. Share earthly and spiritual resources. Embrace diversity. Love God. Enjoy this life.

In the summer of 2016 we asked if it was *Time for Conversations on Race, Religion, Violence, Tolerance, Justice, Inequality.* We have asked you to share with our Florida churches how you as a church family have, are now, or are planning to have such conversations.

As you read through these brief descriptions, do you note any which sound like programs or opportunities you would like to consider for your own congregation? If so, please feel free to contact our Conference Minister, Regional Ministers or the Pastors and staff of those churches to learn about people, curricula, materials and other resources that could be available to you. We will continue to share as we learn more from you. Here are a few more happenings. Please continue to participate in this conversation by contacting us at celebrateflorida@uccfla.org.

Time for Conversations...



Coral Gables Congregational UCC hosted a recent PACT (People Acting for Community Together) Drive-In Rally at the end of July in the church parking lot in support of affordable housing. Attendees were able to drive up and park (with no need to leave their cars) and listen to the presenters broadcast over FM radio. Congregations from across the county were invited to join the rally. Over 85 cars showed up along with over 600 views on Facebook to hear testimonies and stories of those in need of affordable housing in the community.

Because everyone has concerns and worries about our lives and our community, PACT provides an opportunity to gather and share with each other what matters most in these difficult times. In September, the church's PACT Team hosted five Zoom "Listening Sessions" as a chance for church members to come together, voice concerns and begin the work of changing the community for the better.

In its continuing Sacred Conversation on Race, interested church members heard from Sue Gallagher via Zoom on Tuesday, September 15. She has done extensive research on racial bias and leads workshops on the local history of racism and resistance. A White educator, she piloted a Reparations Pilgrimage for Christians last year.

The Board of Justice and Witness is inviting congregants to take part in its Social Action Challenge. Even during this time of social distance we can still remain socially active as we do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God. Participants downloaded a link to the guide and then completed as many actions as they could over two months, sending photos and reflections to Associate Pastor Rev. Aaron Lauer by November 6. Prizes to winners!



The Leadership Team at Congregational UCC/Punta Gorda has been having discussions as to appropriate responses to various social justice issues. The team decided to begin by studying one particular issue: the Poor People's Campaign. They agreed to meet virtually each Monday afternoon for five weeks to study the history, issues and "demands" of the Poor Peoples Campaign using materials from the organization's web site and then one week examining how they as a congregation might support the proposals.

Deeper relationships are being formed through the Caring/Calling Friends Ministry. Zoom groups have been formed to keep in touch with church families scattered across the U.S. One group has watched the movie, *I Am Not Your Negro*, and had an engaging discussion about James Baldwin and the civil rights movement. Another group read *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo.

First Congregational UCC/Winter Park is offering 21 Wednesday evening Zoom "Conversation on Race" dialogues on race and White privilege that began in early August and will run through the end of December.

Early on guest speakers shared their experiences with law enforcement.

Various links to articles and videos are being provided as additional resources.

Robert Britt-Mills and Peter Butzin at the United Church in Tallahassee led a six Wednesday evening Spiritual Formation Zoom discussion beginning in early September about racism within law enforcement. The program included documentaries about the 13th Amendment, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from the Birmingham Jail," a film about the Central Park 5 and sharing of how personal experiences can inform responses to racism in our communities and law enforcement. Also the Grateful Threads have created a queen-sized quilt, "Dreams for Tomorrow," which, in line with restorative justice efforts, will be donated for a drawing to benefit Connection First, a local nonprofit working to stop the cycle of trauma and violence. The drawing will be held on November 7 at the church's Artisan Market.



Members of the United Church UCC-DoC/St. Augustine were encouraged to contact U.S. Senators (especially Marco Rubio) in support of more funding for SNAP (a.k.a., food stamps) to help during the COVID-19 pandemic. They also were invited to show their support for postal workers by tying a ribbon on their mail boxes and provided a "We love our Postal Service" tag to use.

On Friday, August 8, 11 members from the church rallied in support of Black Lives Matter and the removal and relocation of the statue of a Confederate soldier from the county-owned land at the entrance to the Putnam County Courthouse.



Church members continue their Ministry of Presence in support of Black Lives Matter through their Saturday morning witnessing along the highway in front of the church. Their Burma Shave-style signs spell out "Treat Others As You Want To Be Treated - Black Lives Matter." The assembled pray together beforehand and afterward share their feelings and experiences.



Lakewood UCC/St. Petersburg has continued its Black Lives Matter and Peace and Justice Demonstrations on Sunday evenings along the busy street in front of the church.

On August 9 there were 22 participants, which included five young people from the Quaker Meeting.



BE THE CHURCH

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The Sunday Summer Seminar Series at Sanibel Congregational UCC began on September 9, entitled "The Other Big Six Leaders of the 1963 March on Washington plus One".

With the death of Congressman John Lewis, those often referred to as the "Big Six" who were responsible for the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom have all passed. The contributions to the March by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and John Lewis are widely celebrated. But what about the other four of the Big 6: James Farmer, A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young? Or Dorothy Bright who is included by some historians as one of the Big 6 responsible for the march?

Associate Pastor Rev. Deb Kunkel led the Zoom discussions, sharing about their lives, how they became part of the March, where they agreed and where they diverged and their impact today. The five session seminar will conclude on October 11.

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OPPORTUNITY

All Are Welcome Here: Becoming an Anti-Racist Church

A Zoom gathering led by Rev. Dr. Sheila Guillaume (Union Congregational UCC/ West Palm Beach)

This is an opportunity to learn what it means to be an anti-racist church. Contact Rev. Sheila for info on how to schedule a presentation (Sheila@unionucc.net)

Tammy Jackson and Ruthann Richwine at Faith UCC/Dunedin were in the church garden on two occasions for interested church members to pick up bracelet bands that read "Black Lives Matter."



Witness Wednesdays have resumed in front of the church with positive messages of love, hope, inclusion and justice.

Christian Education at UCC/ Fort Lauderdale prepared a course dealing with the issues surrounding racism, the Black Lives Matter movement, police and community and White privilege among other related issues.

These sessions began in mid-August on Tuesday evenings on Zoom and met every Tuesday for six weeks, concluding September 15.

Guests from the community were part of the dialogue.

First Congregational UCC/ Sarasota has continued its sacred conversations dialogue through September.

Its SURE Team – one from among 23 churches in the area – has maintained contact through phone calls, Zoom meetings, e-mails and all other ways to communicate that technology allows.

Subjects being addressed include issuance of civil citations instead of arrests and the need for affordable workforce housing in the county.



Members of UCC/New Smyrna Beach were encouraged to wear yellow tee shirts on Sunday afternoon, August 16, at a peaceful Black Lives Matter protest to stand in solidarity with the "Wall of Moms" group protecting protesters in Portland, Oregon.



On almost every recent Sunday afternoon, from 4-5pm, some church members stand at a busy intersection with Black Lives Matter signs and others with justice messages.

Across the street are Trump demonstrators.

Let Black People – and Others – Breathe, Say UCC Youth

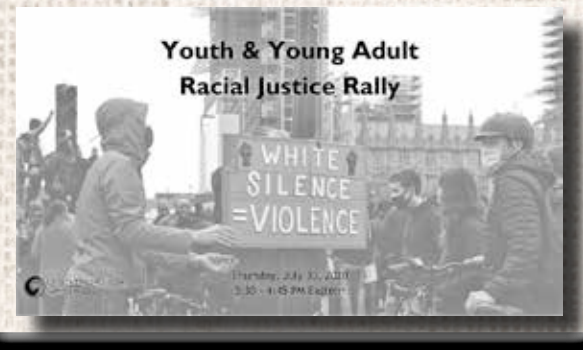
Saying the names of Black people slain by police and vigilantes, more than 100 United Church of Christ youth, young adults and youth ministers began a conversation online July 28 about how to dismantle racism.

"We are here as a first step in determining what we individually and collectively can do to heal the brokenness of our community and call out the ideology and belief of white supremacy, so that our black and brown children can grow up and live out their God-given purposes and potential," said Rev. Trayce Potter, UCC Minister for Youth and Young Adult Engagement, at the start of "No Justice No Peace" – the first of a two-part UCC virtual youth rally.

Offered live on Zoom and simulcast via YouTube, the event was a special edition of the UCC's "Tuesdays for Nurture" webinar series. It was recorded and can be viewed on the UCC YouTube channel, [here](#)

[Read more](#)

From e-Celebrate, August 5



Members from Hope UCC/Rockledge demonstrated on August 15 in front of the Cape Canaveral Post Office.

Interested members of Pass-a-Grille Beach Community UCC/St. Pete Beach had the opportunity on Thursdays in September to engage in a Zoom session on "Thy Kingdom Come" led by Associate Minister Rev. Dr. Guillermo Marquez-Sterling. They considered what God's "kingdom" means to us today.

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OPPORTUNITY



"Tuesdays for Nurture" and More

"Tuesdays for Nurture" is a Tuesday webinars series on Zoom in which the United Church of Christ faithfully focuses on education for the people of God. Topics from faith-filled politics, to interviews of key leaders, to "how to"s in congregational life, to the impacts of current realities on the life of the church will be featured. Each webinar will include clear suggestions on what YOU can do to change the church, and the world, towards the world God imagines for us.

"Tuesdays for Nurture" and "Thursdays for the Soul" are offered by Faith Education, Innovation, and Formation and Justice and Local Church Ministries of the National Setting of the UCC. This, and all webinars, are available to replay on the UCC YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL6VgfHt6zEy7yDgdSE-fLLYEVaNBm2943>

One of the recent "Tuesdays for Nurture" was "Building Bridges of Faith Across Political Divides" offered on August 18. It asked "In a time when our nation is becoming increasingly more socially, politically, and spiritually divided, what does our faith require of us?" Other recent topics were titled: "Supporting Your Pastor so They Can Support You," "No Justice, No Peace," "Congregational Lay Leadership During Time of Crisis" and "Pastoring in a Pandemic."

The Community Church of Vero Beach began "Tackling Tough Questions Through the Eyes of Faith," a small group conversation in mid-September that will run for eight weeks on Monday afternoons on Zoom. The dialogue looks at "racism" in the light of our Christian faith. Participants are asked to read and respond to different articles and to watch some on-line videos, plus interact with folks of different ethnic backgrounds who will be joined on Zoom.

The church also offered "Race Matters: A Compassionate Conversation" with Dr. David Anderson Hooker (Prof. University of Notre Dame) and Dr. Allen Hilton (Executive Director of House United). These were offered via Zoom on September 30 and October 7.

With race as a freighted topic among us, now after a long history of slavery and racism in the U.S. the time has come to get better at it. But what does better look like?

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3 GREAT LOVES



3 Great Loves is a denomination-wide story telling initiative, collecting and lifting up the stories of our local churches and affiliates about how we are living out God's love and expressing love of neighbor, children and creation — the 3 Great Loves.

From knitting clubs making hats for newborns, collecting food for food pantries, starting a recycling program at your church, standing together against social injustice — these are the stories of 3 Great Loves and no story is too insignificant to share!



Conference Call: How Long?

BY REV. JOHN VERTIGAN

I went to a concert at the Dr. Phillips Center in Orlando on March 11, 2020. We shared a wonderful evening on the town and reveled in the privilege of listening to live music in a fine venue. Two days later, the Phillips Center cancelled their calendar of bookings as Florida went into lockdown over concerns with the Corona virus.

That blissful evening seems so long ago given all we've experienced together these last five months, and it's both fair and predictable that we might lament with cries of "How long?" We humans are not built for the isolation we've been living in, and our desire to gather is stronger than ever as summer turns to fall and a season we all likely thought would be post-COVID-19. But here we are; we continue to endure, to count new cases, to socially distance, and to worship and be church in new and creative ways.

That particular question of "how long?" has no immediate answer and demands instead that we live to the fullest now in being the people of God in a strange land. The better question for these days might be "How shall I live faithfully in the meantime?" I'll be working with that in the weeks to come.

But there's another "How long?" being asked in the land, and it surrounds questions of racism, justice for communities of color, and rampant white supremacy that is holding our nation back from being who once we declared ourselves to be: a bastion of hope for all people. We've never achieved that aspiration; just ask any group of immigrant people from the last centuries or the African-American community who didn't immigrate but were stolen from their homeland for the sake of economic largesse.

The same question applies here, church; "How shall I live faithfully in the meantime?" I pray that our churches will be a place where we can openly and honestly enter into self-examination around issues of race, justice and white supremacy. To that end, I invite you to locate and use resources offered at https://www.ucc.org/justice_racism and continue a journey toward answering that lingering question of "How long?" As our isolation continues, may we nevertheless be about the business of building a more just world for all, beginning with the places where we live, play and worship, in Jesus' name.

Be at peace, and be in touch, won't you.

From e-Celebrate, September 2



The GROW committee at **Fort Myers Congregational UCC** hosted a three-part book study during August on *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nehisi Coates. The discussion took place over Zoom.

On Friday evening, September 4, there was a Zoom presentation with **Rev. Dr. Bernice Powell Jackson (First United Church of Tampa)** and special guest Rev. Dr. Rickey Anderson (founding pastor of Followers of Christ Fellowship Ministries).

They led a discussion on criminal justice organizing among people of faith as law enforcement agencies come under greater scrutiny following more documented instances of police misconduct and abuse.

Members of **Church on the Hill Congregational UCC/Boca Raton** have been able to take a journey, a *30-Day Journey with Martin Luther King Jr.*

Starting Wednesday, September 9, Pastor **Rev. Tom Lacey** led a weekly Wednesday morning Zoom get-together that took participants through writings of MLK, Jr. and reflections of editor, Jonathan Chism, to read, listen and share reflections, challenges and changes.

It is the "Listening Process" time for HOPE – the Hillsborough Organization for Progress and Equality – and the gathering of small "house" groups to discuss community concerns.

It was done virtually this year at **First United Church of Tampa** via Zoom or Google Hangouts that were hosted by church members over the course of several days in September.

The virtual HOPE convention will be held on October 26 to vote on what problems to tackle this year. The church is also encouraging its members to contact Governor Ron DeSantis to take action to protect Immokalee farmworkers from COVID-19 ahead of the harvest.



REV. DR. SHEILA GUILLAUME,
 EASTERN REGION AMBASSADOR
SHEILA@UNIONUCC.NET



LYNN JONES,
 WESTERN REGION AMBASSADOR
HONICKYL@GMAIL.COM

The Endowment Team at **Congregational UCC/Punta Gorda** has recommended and the Leadership Team approved a distribution of \$1,000 to the Peace River Botanical & Sculpture Gardens.

First United Church of Tampa had a socially-distanced garden work day on Saturday morning, August 22, to help weed, mulch and compost and generally get the Seeds of Peace Community Garden ready for fall planting.

At the **United Church in Tallahassee Peter Easton** will be leading a Zoom study on climate change and creation care that is being sponsored by the church's Climate Change Task Force. Topics will include: sources of global warming, climate change and environmental degradation; their likely course in upcoming years, with and without effective counter-measures; promising strategies to reverse course or at least to mitigate these threats and avoid disaster; policy targets to promote change here in Florida; our religious vocation of creation care. Coming up will be a **Bill Phelan**-led Zoom study on birds, nature and the Bible – exploring what Scripture's bird imagery reveals about God and about the people of God along with an inquiry into what nature reveals through birds.

The Green Team at **First Congregational UCC/Sarasota** invited church members to hike on their own at a specified local preserve between September 10-17. Then on that Thursday afternoon at 3pm they could join a Zoom discussion to share what they noticed, what they learned about God and themselves and what responses might be appropriate.

Reversing Climate Change Urgent "But Not Beyond Us," UCC Leaders Say

BY HANS HOLZNAGEL
 EXCERPTED FROM *UCC NEWS*, AUGUST 14

Emphasizing the burden that climate breakdown places on poor people and people of color, and calling for action now, two United Church of Christ speakers took prominent roles in early sessions of this year's online American Climate Leadership Summit, which took place every Thursday in August.

"We refuse to believe there is no hope, no pathway to a healthy earth and a common bond between all races of people," said the Rev. John Dorhauer, UCC General Minister and President, in his opening prayer for the national event. "We accept our responsibility as active participants in the unfolding future of green living and liberation from oppression. We embrace our agency as stewards of your handiwork and crafters of your justice."

"Our old normal was oriented to the way things were," said the Rev. Michael Malcom, a UCC minister who heads Ala-

bama Interfaith Power and Light. "Our systems were terribly corrupt and broken. COVID has come along and disoriented us," as have this summer's uprisings against police brutality, he said – and the church can play a role in reorienting society to a new world of environmental and other forms of justice.

Organized by the nonprofit [ecoAmerica](http://ecoAmerica.org) and now in its ninth year, the normally in-person event has been moved online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Its three-hour webinars were at 2pm EDT on Thursdays and were open to the public.

The summit gathers faith, health, higher education, business and community leaders, who, as [ecoAmerica's](http://ecoAmerica.org) website puts it, "have the power to inspire tens of millions of Americans on climate change."



Please send your 3 Great Loves story to Lynn and Sheila.

Food, Glorious Food



During the months of July and August, **Hope UCC/Rockledge** conducted a drop-off food drive to benefit the Central Brevard Sharing Center. By mid-August, almost 500 non-perishable food items and \$378 in monetary donations had been collected. On Sunday, August 16, several members from the church participated in the Tailgate 2 Mile Walk/Run fundraiser to benefit the Sharing Center. While this was a virtual event for most, a small representation of Hope participants gathered at the Larry Schultz Park across from the church.

The monthly "Fill the Food Basket" Sunday at **Port Orange UCC** in August collected more than 12 bags of food for the Halifax Urban Ministry.

Arlington Congregational Church/Jacksonville was able to contribute food, gift cards, personal hygiene items and more to Arlington Community Services that helped enable the agency to feed 257 and help 48 financially in August.



There is always something to be done at the food pantry at **Good Samaritan Church/Pinellas Park** — from greeting donors and sorting donations to packing bags for clients and keeping the pantry clean. In June the pantry was open for 14 days for 291 client visits, serving 598 adults and 173 children 173. Through June the pantry had served 3,124 individuals. The pantry has a community from outside the church that has stepped up to donate food including **Trinity UCC/St. Petersburg** and two United Methodist churches.

First Congregational UCC/Sarasota continues participation helping provide take-way meals for the local Community Meals program.

Fort Myers Congregational UCC sends a monthly check to Abundant Grace to assist supplying food for the lunches they make on Wednesdays and Sundays. The church continues its collection for the Florida Food Pantry at Cypress Lake Presbyterian Church. The colorful container located at the front church entrance at FMCUCC is being filled generously every week. Along with the spaghetti and pasta, other items most in need are peanut butter, jelly, dry cereal, spaghetti and sauce. Cash donations are happily accepted as they can fill in needs at great prices and bulk purchasing.

UCC/New Smyrna Beach threw a drive-thru spaghetti dinner fundraiser on Sunday afternoon, August 23. At their last similar fundraiser, participants were asked to bring containers of bug spray to donate at the same time for Colors of Hunger, the community-sponsored feeding program for SE Volusia County. This time, in response to another need, donations were requested of men's tank tops, shorts and shoes.



A "socially distanced" food pantry kick-off took place at **First Congregational UCC/Winter Park** on Sunday afternoon, September 13. Participants entered the drive-through in the parking lot, received an ice cream treat and exited to drop off food for the Ward Chapel Food Pantry.

The Community Action Committee at the **United Church in Tallahassee** has authorized donations to the Kearney Center from its Food Ministry at \$300 per month from April through October

The weekly Thursday Ruth Ministry Outreach on-site meal service at **UCC/Fort Lauderdale** has been on-hold while the church roof was being replaced and during the pandemic, as well. Thanks to two whole turkeys donated to the program, they were roasted to make homemade turkey sandwiches and along with P&J sandwiches were distributed downtown through the ministry's food sharing outreach program in partnership with Hope Outreach. During the pandemic, Ruth Ministries prepares sandwiches and "to go" bags of nutritious goodies and delivers them to the homeless.



Above Tom Marino and Nick Meyer (photo credit Suzie Alvey) and Pastor Perry Canan and Ricardo Antonio

Church member **Rev. Joel Slotnick** was one of 10 recipients to receive a proclamation from the City of Wilton Manors in recognition for his contributions to providing free meals to those in need during the COVID-19 pandemic. Joel and the other honorees were noted to have helped provide more than 1,600 free meals to residents in the city over the past few months.



2020 to support food distribution to the homeless. These donations replace the church's volunteers and food donations for the Kearney Center because of social distancing concerns. The Church Family Life Committee hosted its first ever Breakfast-on-the-Go on Saturday, September 5. Members got to pull up in their cars, see some smiling faces, laugh about how the new normal really isn't so normal and take off with a yummy breakfast box — filled with casseroles, quiches, sausage, bacon, muffins, croissants, fruit, yogurt and baked goods. Breakfast boxes were delivered to members who were unable to attend in person, and 20 extra boxes were handed out to hungry folks at the Greyhound bus station and around Lake Ella.



Sanibel Congregational UCC scheduled a no-contact drop-off food drive on August 6 in conjunction with Temple Bat Yam and were

able to donate over 80 bags to benefit F.I.S.H. and the Gladiolus Food Pantry. In September over 70 bags were collected.

The Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry at **Spring Hill UCC** was featured in an article in the September 5 Hernando Sun newspaper. Church member **Chance Martinez-Colon** is quoted: "We started the pantry in April to help families and individuals who struggle with food insecurity. We knew COVID would cause added stress

and we see people every week who are asking for help that have never had to seek help before. We do not require any proof of need, income, or residency. We just want to help as many people as possible." Each family benefiting from the Pantry receives a \$10 Publix gift card to purchase needed perishable items. Chance noted, "We average helping 10-20 families a week but we have capacity to help so many more." The Social Justice & Community Engagement Ministry at the church began a partnership in February with Spring Hill Elementary to provide healthy snacks for teachers to distribute to children to give them a much needed boost to focus on learning. This "Food for Thought" program is being resumed with the school with single-serving snack items such as applesauce, fruit snacks, goldfish pretzels, cereal etc. being dropped off at the church.

Emmanuel UCC/Sebring challenged the community to raise awareness of the church's Shepherd's Pantry and how important it has been, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The community has answered the call and it has been truly heartwarming. The Pantry has received many online donations including one from out of state. Boxes of peanut butter have been purchased from donors and directly shipped to the church and donations received from partners in mission. The Pantry continues to feed its neighbors by drive-thru service to keep volunteers and guests safe. This ministry continues to grow as the needs of the community continue to rise.

North Port Community UCC along with the Salvation Army held a food drive and delivery on July 20-21.



Hearts, Hands & Hugs Across the Waters

Members of **Christ Congregational UCC/Miami** and **Sanibel Congregational UCC** were encouraged to respond to the destructive explosion in Beirut, Lebanon, on August 4 by giving to relief efforts that have commenced through the national UCC's Global Ministries partners in Lebanon. In an e-blast to members at **Sanibel Congregational UCC**, members were provided background about the explosion and how they could contribute to recovery efforts. The **Church on the Hill Congregational UCC/Boca Raton** invited donations (including to UNICEF and Doctors Without Borders) in its September newsletter. www.globalministries.org/

Participants and the interested at **Good Samaritan Church/Pinellas Park** involved in the Kiva program that provides micro loans to the underserved abroad joined a Zoom discussion on September 6 to discuss their experiences. Through Kiva's



work, students can pay for tuition, women can start businesses, farmers are able to invest in equipment and families can afford needed emergency care. By lending as

little as \$25 on Kiva, an individual can be part of the solution and make a real difference in someone's life with 100% of every dollar lent on Kiva going to fund loans.

David and Carol Christensen, missionaries in Ghana, have thanked members of **Christ Congregational UCC/Miami** for donations to their ministry. They report that financial support over the past two years has helped two more girls graduate school, for a total of three graduates. Education is the means of success for these girls, their families and communities. **Christ Congregational and Coral Isles UCC/Tavernier** are regular supporters of this ministry.





REV. ALAN COE, MAYFLOWER UCC/NAPLES COORDINATOR, DISASTER RESPONSE & RECOVERY MINISTRY



Loving God and Helping Neighbor

Hurricane season is well underway, and the storms are working their way through the alphabetical names at a record pace. We must monitor the weather forecasts to see the latest developments of potential storms and where they may head. For those of us who have lived in hurricane prone areas, we know what to do and are well-prepared, right?

One of the things each of us can do in this pandemic time with proper precautions is to reach out to newer residents in our areas and offer them some advice and lessons learned from our own experience with disaster preparedness and planning. The new folks that move here are not used to the Florida weather patterns or by the intensity and frequency of our afternoon thunderstorms, let alone a hurricane. If they have never experienced a hurricane before or mandatory evacuation, we can be good neighbors and share our knowledge with them.

It was a big learning curve for my wife and I when we moved to south Texas 20 years ago. The weather was just one of the things we had to adjust to in our move from New England. The intensity of thunderstorms and rain there was more intense than it is here. One afternoon, a storm rolled through and we had over 11 inches of rain in a couple of hours.

Our nearest neighbor in Florida moved here from New Jersey shortly before Hurricane Irma. In the days prior to Irma, they were always asking me questions and even today they are still adjusting to weather and life in Florida. Be a good neighbor and friend and share your storm stories and planning expertise with those who recently moved to the Sunshine State.

Disaster Ministry Update

The United Church of Christ Disaster Response Ministry always works ecumenically nationally and regionally. The denomination is part of the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD). Florida has the state equivalent: FLVOAD. I represent the denomination by serving with both organizations.

NVOAD began in 1970 after Hurricane Camille. Volunteer organizations came together to better serve an affected population by sharing knowledge and resources. NVOAD continues to grow and change as society and disasters change. NVOAD now has over 100 organizations under its umbrella and FLVOAD about 60 participating organizations.

One of the ways the UCC in Florida assists others is by having tool trailers available for use following a disaster to aid in reconstruction efforts. The tool trailer pictured was loaned to the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) for their hurricane recovery work after Hurricanes Hermine and Irma north of Tampa. It was returned to **Mayflower UCC/Naples** on August 26. This trailer was purchased with funds from **Naples UCC**.

The Florida Conference has three other tool trailers. One is in use in Bay County for recovery work after Hurricane Michael; it is housed at Messiah Lutheran Church in Panama City. The other two are in Holly Hill in Volusia County and being used by the Volusia Interfaith Networking in Disaster (VIND) working on recovery efforts from Hurricanes Matthew and Irma. These trailers are housed at **Union Congregational UCC/Holly Hill**.



I received this note from the people who were using the trailer when the trailer was returned to Mayflower.

“On behalf of the Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church Disaster Recovery Team, let me express our gratitude for your giving spirit and the use of your disaster trailer. I believe we have used this trailer for over four years, and it has been put to great use. With the use of it we have been able to help over 165 families recover from the tornados of hurricane Hermine and Hurricane Irma.”

As this is written Hurricane Sally made landfall in Alabama and the Panhandle of Florida [see page 29]. It will be one more disaster to recover and rebuild from. The United Church of Christ Disaster Ministry is the place to send donations; here is the link to the donation page www.ucc.org/disaster_2020_hurricanes. The UCC always works in long term recovery efforts helping people rebuild their homes alongside other denominations and non-profit organizations.



Aftermath of Hurricane Sally in Pensacola Beach

By REV. JIM COYL
THE BEACH CHURCH (PENSACOLA BEACH COMMUNITY UCC)

Hurricane Sally made landfall on September 16. Since that time,

life around here has mostly been about cleanup, repair and reorientation. Our damaged possessions line the streets awaiting pickup by sanitation workers, sand is being removed from roadways and buildings, electrical service has been restored to most of the community and water is flowing from our taps. All of this recovery effort began even before the winds diminished and the rain stopped falling. Folks around here are pretty good at this sort of thing.

Among these talented people, I lift up our friends at Upper Room Church. Several months ago we entered into an agreement and welcomed this new and growing faith community onto our campus. From the time of their arrival they’ve blessed us with their faithfulness, energy and their ability to get things done. Through their partnership with Convoy of Hope they

have made drinking water, food, cleaning supplies and personal care items available to anyone in the community who has need. They’ve sent volunteers into the neighborhood to help clear debris, shovel muck and generally assist in the work that needs to be done. On campus they have led the effort to dry out the buildings and secure the services of contractors where they are needed. We are blessed to call them friends.

The year 2020 has proven how beautiful life is when we love each other and how brutal it can be when we don’t. Our future as a species and indeed the future of the world depends on our unwavering commitment to love as Christ loves. The Beach Church is changing in many ways, but we will always aspire to be a place where heaven and earth meet, and where the community encounters God’s generosity and healing presence. Peace be with you!

Editor’s Note: In a September 17 e-message, Rev. Jim wrote: “Upon first inspection the church building and grounds are fully intact, with evidence of a roof leak in Randle Hall and some minor water intrusion at the Sanctuary doors.”

West Coast Fire Evacuations Take Toll on UCC Churches, Camps

As wind-whipped wildfires continue to take lives and destroy forests, homes and businesses on the West Coast of the United States, United Church of Christ congregations are in stages ranging from evacuation to recovery to post-traumatic stress syndrome.

In the two hardest-hit UCC Conferences — Central Pacific and Northern California-Nevada — several congregations and church camps await word on the fate of their buildings. Others, evacuated days or weeks ago, are ministering to families and communities that escaped damage or are returning to inspect it. Daytime skies range from smoky gray to eerie orange to black as night.

“It feels like the whole coast’s on fire,” said Pastor Kimberly Williams of Grace Community UCC in North Fork, CA, which got evacuation orders on

NATIONAL



Sept. 6, her first official Sunday as pastor. In affected areas, “it’s terrifying,” she said. “Everybody is looking out their windows with this look of horror, but then realizing, OK, this is the reality, we’ve got to keep on going.” [Read more!](#)

From e-Celebrate, September 16

Have Your Church “Be the Church” At All Times With This Yard Sign

10 bold statements that describe what it means to “Be the Church”:

- ✓ Be the Church
- ✓ Protect the environment
- ✓ Care for the poor
- ✓ Forgive Often
- ✓ Reject Racism
- ✓ Fight for the powerless
- ✓ Share earthly and spiritual resources
- ✓ Embrace diversity
- ✓ Love God
- ✓ Enjoy this life

Click [here](#) for all **Be the Church** merchandise.





In "Across Florida" our intent is to share with you what is happening at our 90+ churches throughout the state. It is obvious from these entries that there is an exciting vibrancy evident within our congregations.

This energy is making a decisive difference in the lives of congregation members and the communities in which they are located while also touching the lives of strangers in far away places.

Through this sharing, you can learn about innovative ideas, creative outreach and stimulating ministry, some of which might be adaptable within your own congregation.

See something that catches your eye or brings a smile to your face? If an idea sounds good and you'd like more information about what they're doing, contact that church.



Sally Cash – member of **Pass-a-Grille Beach Community UCCC/St. Pete Beach** and member of the Conference Board – is one proud parent. Son Scott appeared in the bright lights of Broadway on Saturday, September 12, as part of the National Down Syndrome Society's annual Times Square Video presentation. The featured photographs highlight children, teens and adults with Down syndrome, reminding the world in a very big way about the contributions and milestones of people with Down syndrome. The photo of Scott was selected as one of 500 photographs that has appeared in the video, streamed on NDSS social media from the heart of Times Square. The presentation kicks off Down Syndrome Awareness Month in October.

On Saturday, October 17, **Hope UCC/Rockledge** will be hosting a community blood drive with One Blood with The Big Red Bus parked in the circle in front of the church.

Christ Congregational UCC/Miami served as a polling place for two precincts on Tuesday, August 18. Said Interim Pastor **Rev. Candy Thomas**, "I think it's great that CCC is a polling place, for more than one reason. It's nice, of course, to be financially compensated for the use of the building, but, perhaps more important, it's a way for our church to be seen as part of the community. It's also a way for poll workers and voters alike to get a glimpse of what we value as people of faith, through our posters and signs."

What do you do if your Pastor is stuck at home, learning to master a knee scooter as she recovers from foot surgery? If she is **Rev. Kim Wells**, members of **Lakewood UCC/St. Petersburg** surprised her with a Sunday afternoon drive-by to bring her some gifts and good cheer. On her September 19 birthday a surprise Zoom birthday party was held.



Because of the pandemic, the annual Artisan Market at the **United Church in Tallahassee** will take place online starting

on Thursday, October 1, when an online store will be available on the UCT website. Favorite Artisan Market items such as canned goods, Christmas ornaments and homemade soups will be available to purchase online until November 4. On Saturday, November 7, there will be a drive-through at the church where purchased items can be picked up.

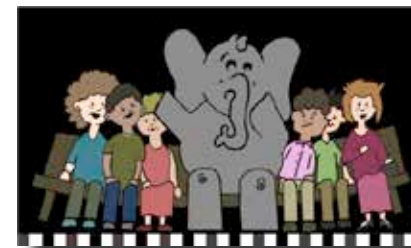
Compassionate St. Augustine is offering signs that people can put in their yards or elsewhere to thank people who are helping others during the COVID pandemic. The **United Church UCC-DOC/St. Augustine** is a community partner with the group, and church member **Rev. Dr. Warren Clark** created the design. The signs are being sold for \$5 each, which is the cost to produce.



Jonathan VanSteenburgh at **Eternal Hope UCC/Fort Walton Beach** is revamping the church website and is seeking to create a section that contains personal testimonials about people's experiences with the church -- any experience either with the church as a whole, **Rev. Booth Iburg** or a member.

The Thrift Store at **Port Orange UCC** has gotten back into the swing of things, having brought in close to \$12,000 in income in June thanks to the generosity of church member volunteers and donations from the community. They were hoping to hit \$22,000 year-to-date by the end of August.

Although there aren't parishioners in the pews now at **Coral Gables Congregational UCC**, that didn't stop **Rev. Dr. Laurie Hafner** from conducting her annual Elephant in the Pew sermon on August 2. It is an opportunity to respond to questions about faith, ethics, the church, theology and so forth -- the kind of questions that puzzle, annoy or even keep us awake at night. Pastor Laurie took questions submitted by members and in turn provided honest and personal answers describing where she sits on the question and how she connects the question to her own personal faith.



The **United Church in Tallahassee's** Community Action Committee cut a \$500 check to support Survive and Thrive, an agency that help the victims of human trafficking. Members at **Pensacola Beach Community UCC** were invited to register for a virtual 5K walk/skip/run on September 18 to benefit Street Grace, a faith-based anti-sex trafficking organization.



A new meditation group is now underway at **Faith UCC/Dunedin**. Limited to no more than 10 and following safety guidelines, it meets once-a-week on Friday mornings in the church Butterfly Garden. It is led by church member **Diane Feldman**, an experienced meditation practitioner and teacher.



New Birth Apostolic Church is now meeting on Sunday afternoon in Crimson Hall at **First UCC/Orlando**.

Faith Family UCC/Brandon will be holding a yard sale on Saturday, October 10.

The co-Moderators at **St. Andrew UCC/Sarasota** presented Interim Pastor **Rev. Mary Alice Mulligan** with a new liturgical stole on September 13 – striped with rainbow colors and the UCC comma on each lapel – a reminder that *God is Still Speaking*. (Photo Credit: Maria Salling)



UCC/Fort Lauderdale has partnered with FACT (Fight Against Cancer Thrift Store), a local organization that is accepting items donated to the church's Ruth Ministry that it can't use.

Emmanuel UCC/Sebring celebrated Women's Equality Day and the Ratification of the 19th Amendment by wearing white, highlighted with yellows and purple on Sunday, August 30

The **Church by the Sea/Bal Harbour** is offering a four session interactive Zoom "Re-Employment Workshop" on four Tuesdays in October (four Thursdays in Spanish). The sessions are: "Career Exploration," "Job Search Strategies," "Networking Skills" and "Behavioral Interviewing." Also being offered are four "Self Care Lunch & Learn" Zoom sessions on Friday afternoons with interactive presentations and Q&A: "Science Based Principles for Living a Happier Life," "Happy Food,

LGBTQ

LGBTQ members and friends of **Coral Gables Congregational UCC** enjoyed a Zoom brunch on Sunday afternoon, August 23, while catching up with one another, playing a few games and sharing resources and concerns. Two conversations on "The Bible and Homosexuality: What They Didn't Teach You in Sunday School" were led in September by **Rev. Dr. Laurie Hafner**.

COVID-19 has delayed the discussion at **First Congregational UCC/Orange City** about becoming ONA. The church recently mailed a brief survey to its members to

The **UCC/Fort Lauderdale** is involved in the Adopt-a-Street program and on Saturday morning, September 26, cleaned three blocks on a local street. The clean-up is done quarterly with all supplies provided.

The Justice and Community Engagement Ministry at **Spring Hill UCC** spent the morning of Saturday, August 29, picking up litter on its adopted road and doing some cleanup around the church campus.



Happy Mood (with cooking demo)," "Just Be 101: Mindfulness (meditation to center, focus and restore the body)" and "Deliciously Healthy Desserts (with cooking demo)."

The **United Church of Gainesville** has a Young Adults Sunday Lunch Group, which had its fall kickoff on Sunday, September 20. To "qualify" one is older than high school and younger than 30ish. Discussions were on various topics including spiritual practices that can help with stress.

The **United Church of Gainesville** received a \$112,900 loan from the Payroll Protection Program to help keep staff on the payroll and cover other approved expenses. It does not need to be repaid if it has been used appropriately, but as some members have suggested reasons it be re-paid the matter was discussed at a Sunday Seminar on September 6.

A congregational meeting on October 4 will make a decision. **Lakewood UCC/St. Petersburg** was approved to receive a PPP loan for \$5,000 that will need to be paid back beginning in one year. The church also received an "advance" of \$6,000 that does not need to be paid back.

This is intended primarily for payroll and utilities, and it will allow the church to keep paying all of its employees, even if they are not able to perform all of their normal duties because of the shutdown.

determine where the church is on this journey.

To celebrate PRIDE at the **United Church of Gainesville** on October 18, the Sunday service theme will be "History of Pride." Members are being asked share stories about their own lives as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community or as a friend or family member that has been on this journey. These could be about an experience at a live PRIDE festival, a personal story of finding PRIDE in oneself or a loved one or something else that this theme brings to mind. These 2-5 minute recorded reflections/stories will be virtual.

DISCUSSIONS/SEMINARS/PRESENTATIONS WE'RE HAVING...

via Zoom, or other livestreaming

The Democratic and Republican Conventions," "Ladies and Gentlemen This Is The Plague, featuring Laurie Garrett," "The Search For Racial Equity: The 1619 Project featuring Nikole Hannah Jones and Dr. Kamau Bobb" and "Tree Canopy in St. Johns County: Death by a Thousand Cuts" (UCC/New Smyrna Beach)

"Media in the Age of Misinformation with Frank Bruni," "The Meaning and Impact of Spirituals with Andre Thomas," "Thy Kingdom Come: A Look at the Teachings of Jesus Regarding the Kingdom of God," "Hackers, Terrorists, Russians and Fake News with Clint Watts" and "David Brooks, Author of *The Second Mountain: The Quest for a Moral Life*" (Pass-a-Grille Beach Community UCC/St. Pete Beach)

"Artful Prayer, Part 1," "Artful Prayer, Part 2," "Foundations of Faith" and "Racial Theory" (First Congregational UCC/Sarasota)

"The UCG Three-Year Plan," "Getting to the Roots of Climate Change," "Our Paths to the Ministry," "Emergency Hurricane Preparation," "Climate Change and Health: Understanding and Action," "Mental Health Awareness and Suicide Prevention," and "Back-to-School in an Age of COVID" (United Church of Gainesville)

"A Rosh Hashanah Lesson," "Three Influential Black Figures You Should Know" and "The Other Big Six Leaders of the 1963 March on Washington plus One". (Sanibel Congregational UCC)

"Grace, Gravity and Getting Old," "*The Bible and Homosexuality: What They Didn't Teach You in Sunday School*," "Reflecting on The Word: What is The Gospel?" and a TheoEd Talks theological lecture (Coral Gables Congregational UCC)

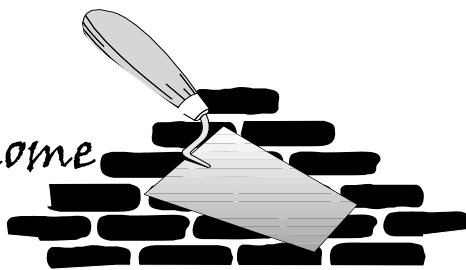
"The Enneagram Under Pressure: Who Do We Become When We are Stressed?" (Good Samaritan Church/Pinellas Park)

"Unique Approaches to Leadership" and "Clergy Sexual Misconduct" (United Church in Tallahassee)

"Parenting Small Groups: Listen and Growing Compassionate Kids" (The Community Church of Vero Beach)

"Sacred Rhythms: Spiritual Practices for Living in These Times" (First United Church of Tampa)

Build It...
and they will come



The steeple atop **St. Andrew UCC/Sarasota** had to be removed to prevent further leaks and water damage to the roof and Sanctuary. Because the steeple was not in good shape due to rotted wood, rust and its heavy weight, it could not be salvaged to be re-used. The steeple – its beloved oculus, spire, cross and crown – came down on Tuesday, August 11. That morning a time of remembrance was held led by Interim Pastor **Rev. Mary Alice Mulligan** with prayers and thanksgiving for the years the steeple had graced the building.

There's a new air conditioning unit to cool Randle Hall at **Pensacola Beach Community UCC**.

In preparation for the return to the **Naples UCC** campus, all toilets and sinks will become touchless to better protect against COVID-19 transmission.



Share The Good News

If you are not mailing us your church newsletter or placing us on your e-mail list to receive it, then we can't share your good news with our other churches.

Please send your electronic newsletters, Facebook posts and e-blasts to celebrateflorida@uccfla.org.

Build It...
and they will come



By the end of August the ambitious program to re-roof the three buildings that make up **UCC/Fort Lauderdale's** complex came to a successful conclusion. Workers — most immigrants from Central America — installing the metal roof on the Sanctuary moved with grace and confidence up and down the roof with no fear.

One young man, under 20 years of age, was from Guatemala, and his previous work was carrying bags filled with coffee beans for three days to deliver them to market.

He then trekked the three days home back up into the mountains, all to help support his family.

He was so excited to have this job with this crew, and he sends 30% of his salary every month back to his family in Central America.



UCC WOMEN



UCC Women Across the State

Women Engage! at **Naples UCC** addressed the upcoming election with a session on "Our Faith, Our Vote 2020" on Thursday morning, September 17. It was led by Assistant Minister **Rev. Dr. Sharon Harris-Ewing**.

The Anam Cara Women's Circle at **Faith UCC/Dunedin** has as its "Dining for Women" October Zoom event a focus on programs lifting up women and their children living in poverty in Uganda and Kenya through the donations it has collected. This includes programs for widows facing exploitation and treating antepartum/postpartum depression.

Photo by Hanna Morris on Unsplash



BOOKS WE'RE READING AND DISCUSSING TOGETHER...

via Zoom, or other livestreaming

Accidental Saints by Nadia Bolz-Weber (St. Andrew UCC/Sarasota).

A Man Called Ove by Fredrik Backman (First Congregational UCC/Lake Helen)

The Fire Is Upon Us by Nicholas Buccola and *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson (UCC/New Smyrna Beach)

The Freedom Artist by Ben Okri Akashic (Spring Hill UCC)

Keepers of the House by Shirley Ann Grau and *Finding Water: The Art of Perseverance* by Julia Cameron (First Congregational UCC/Sarasota)

30-Day Journey with Martin Luther King, Jr. by Jonathan Chism (Church on the Hill Congregational UCC/Boca Raton)

Ayesha at Last by Uzma Jalaluddin, *The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You* by Dina Nayeri and *Immokalee's Fields of Hope* by Carleen Thiessen (Hope UCC/Rockledge)

How to be An Antiracist by Ibram X. Kendi (Good Samaritan Church/Pinellas Park)

Little Fires Everywhere by Celeste Ng and *An Altar in the World: A Geography of Faith* by Barbara Brown Taylor (Christ Congregational UCC/Miami)

Barracoon by Zora Neale Hurston (First United Church of Tampa)

Big Little Lies by Liane Moriarty (First Congregational UCC/Winter Park)

The Fall Clergy Roundtable at **Naples UCC** will be exploring (via Livestream and Facebook Live) *Forgive to Live: How Forgiveness Can Save Your Life* by Dr. Dick Tibbets and Steve Halliday, Ph.D.

It will be discussed on Wednesday evenings between October 14-November 4.

Youth Ministries



Youth Around the State

Because the two youth groups (R) at **Pass-a-Grille Beach Community UCC/St. Pete Beach** are unable to go on their annual summer mission trips, the youth began a mask-making ministry. They have been making masks for All Children's Hospital in St. Petersburg and local public schools. While undertaking this project, they can only have five at a time in the youth room while they wear masks and practice physical distancing.

Youth United and Middle School Together at the **United Church of Gainesville** kicked off their year together with a virtual Team Trivia Night hosted by GNV Entertainment on Sunday afternoon, September 13.

Four Zoom sessions of high school Sunday School at **Coral Gables Congregational UCC** in late September and early October explored the lives of several Biblical women (Eve, Sarah and Hager, Miriam and Rahab) and reflected upon patriarchal systems that were in place in Biblical times and still today. The "Biblical Female Voices #1" series was led by **Rev. Megan Smith**. A Zoom program for Middle School youth titled "Think. Believe. Do" on four Sunday afternoons in September and October was led by **Rev. Aaron Lauer**. The sessions featured video, small group discussion and journaling on how prayer is an important part of our faith to be lived out each day.



Children and Youth Speak: Your Vote Matters – A UCC Webinar

With the climate crisis and the struggle against inequality, the younger generations have served as today's prophets in provoking a global reckoning of the dire situation faced.

As the November 3 elections approach, children and youth are raising their voices again with a moral urgency as they

awaken us to how much is at stake.

This September 19 webinar presented children and youth from ages 10 to 18 who have a message and perspective that needs to be heard before those older than they vote.

Adapted from e-Celebrate, September 2



Clergy in a growing number of our Florida congregations have created blogs, which are discussion or information sites on the web offering posts on various topics.

Here are a few of them you may wish to check out. If you know of others, contact *Celebrate Florida* (celebrateflorida@uccfla.org) and we'll include them in future issues.

Rev. Dr. John Danner (Sanibel Congregational UCC): www.periwinkleponderings.blogspot.com/

Rev. Dr. Keith Haemmelmann (Pass-a-Grille Beach Community UCC/St. Pete Beach): www.pagchurch.org/news/pastors-blog/index.html

Rev. Dr. Wes Bixby (First Congregational UCC/Sarasota): www.gracetraces.blogspot.com/

Rev. Shawn Garvey (First Congregational Church/Winter Park): www.fccwp.org/blog/

Rev. Mike MacMillan (Faith UCC/Dunedin): www.faihuccdunedin.blogspot.com/2015/12/faith-uccs-new-blog-site.html

United Church of Gainesville: (www.ucgainesville.org/sample-page-2/)

Rev. Jim Coyl (Pensacola Beach Community UCC): (www.Jamescoyl.com)

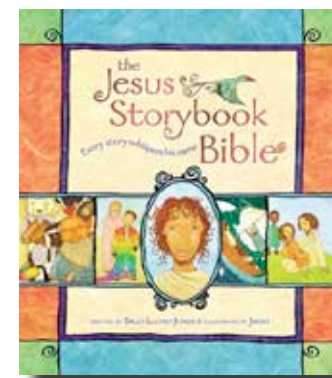
New Sacred – A United Church of Christ blog www.newsacred.org/

Rev. Dr. Anna Verlee Copeland (Community Church of Vero Beach) <https://ccovb.org/rev-dr-anna-verlee-copelands-blog/>

Kids Corner



Children and youth (and children at heart) had the chance to join a four-part series "Learn to Knit" offered at **Church by the Sea/Bal Harbour**. The YouTube videos were available on the church website.



According to **Karen Kelley**, Sunday School at **Fort Myers Congregational UCC** has been Zooming since shortly after the pandemic changed "church," encountering challenges along the way but learning how to make it work. Beginning in July they created a routine doing a Bible study using *The Jesus Storybook Bible*. Teachers made sure each child has their own Bible,

taking turns to read along having started right from the beginning in the Old Testament. The classes look for similarities and difference that may relate our lives today.

The Middle School Youth Adventure Club for grades 6-8 at **The Community Church of Vero Beach** kicked off on Wednesday, September 16, from 5:30-7pm. They began the year hanging prayers in trees, building temporary labyrinths, baptizing stuffed animals and doing outdoor karaoke. Pizza and snacks were available for purchase.

The Christian Education Committee and the Community Outreach Committee at the **United Church in Tallahassee** are working together to host a first-ever Drive Through Community Trick or Treat. The event will be on October 31 from 6:30-8pm. It will provide a safe, free way for the kids in the community to celebrate Halloween. Volunteers will be filling bags with candy to distribute, dress in fun costumes to hand them out and direct traffic.

Rally Day was held virtually via Zoom at **Christ Congregational UCC/Miami** on September 13 with teachers and kids receiving a "Be the Church" tee shirt.

Frolic Preschool with music and Sunday School for pre-K3 and pre-K4 at **Coral Gables Congregational UCC** runs from September 20-December 6 on Zoom. The activities are based on the New Testament stories of Jesus' teachings using Frolic Preschool: Little Steps, Big Faith! Beginning Sunday, September 20, **Rev. Megan Smith** met via Zoom with Sunday School children exploring The Beatitudes using an illustrated curriculum.



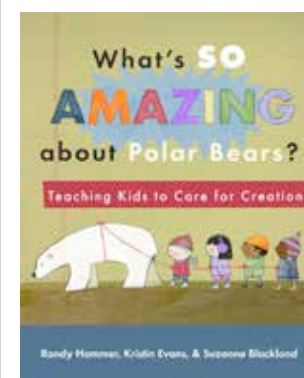
Trunk or Treat with Learning Center students and families



is tentatively being planned by **First United Church of Tampa** (depending on the coronavirus) for Friday evening, October 30. If it is a "go," decorated cars will be in the church parking lot where goodies will be distributed.

The Prophet Abel thanks Joey for coming to Sunday School at First UCC/Orlando

Resources For Children



What's So Amazing About Polar Bears? (Hammer, Evans & Blokland) is an interactive, ready-to-go resource for teaching creation care to elementary school-aged children. Each of the six lessons includes gathering time, sharing time, and activity time with an ecology theme,

verse of the day, fun facts, and activities. \$14.00 www.thepilgrimpress.com/products/what-s-so-amazing-about-polar-bears-teaching-kids-to-care-for-creation-hammer-hammer-evans-blokland



Randy Hammer and Suzanne Blokland explain important ecological and faith concepts through fun activities in *God's Blue Earth*; each lesson is based on Biblical texts. \$16.00 www.thepilgrimpress.com/products/god-s-blue-earth