



First Congregational UCC, PO Box 135, Lake Helen, FL 32744

MAY 3, 2021

NO LABELS – JUST LOVE!

Facebook: Lake Helen First Congregational UCC

Website: <https://www.lakehelen-ucc.com/>

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Monday, May 3
 2:00 on Zoom –
 Reopening Task Force

Tuesday, May 4

6pm – Friendship Gathering behind Caryn and Lewis's house
NOTE: *Due to the warmer weather and the anticipated re-opening of the church, this will be the last meeting of the Tuesday night friendship gathering at Lewis and Caryn's. They do plan to resume the bonfire gatherings in November on a twice monthly schedule.*

Wednesday, May 5

Council Meeting on Zoom at 7pm. For connection information contact Dora.

Friday, May 7

Scripture & Prayer
 7 PM – ZOOM
 For connection information email Cindy at ckcasey56@gmail.com

Saturday, May 15

10 am- 1 pm Gift and Go on the Parish House Porch for Outside the Gates Food Pantry

Sunday, May 23 - Pentecost Sunday

10:30 am - Worship in the Sanctuary with Rev. Vonshelle Beneby
(See article on page 2 for more news about our return to the sanctuary.)

Wednesday, May 26

7:00 – Book Club -This will be a hybrid meeting in the Parish House and on Zoom. The book is Three Hours Late by Nicole Trope.

From the Moderator

Moving ever closer to reopening, we are working very hard to have this exciting day be very meaningful to us all. The task force is working on keeping us safe and the worship committee is working to keep us all spiritually connected. Our friend, Rev. Vonshelle Beneby will be our pastor for this event. It will be wonderful to have a familiar face in the pulpit.

If you are not comfortable making the service in person, we are doing our best to have the sound system functioning at its best so that we can provide a live service via the internet. We are testing this system this week to see how best to do this. Stay tuned for developments.

The Council meets this week both in person in the parish house and on zoom. This will be a first for us. Wish us luck!! Please keep us in your prayers as we make decisions for the good of our church community.

Remember that we also have a beautiful dedication happening on May 23.

With love in Christ,
 Dora Miletic, Moderator
 Phone: 407-227-0232 Email: dora.miletic@outlook.com

Return to the Sanctuary

This is the third in the series of articles outlining the plans and expectations for returning to use of our buildings.

At the April meeting of the Church Council the following recommendations were approved by the council to be the standard when the sanctuary is reopened to in person worship. The task force feels it is important for us all to know what to expect and what is expected of each of us. Again, if you have any questions or concerns about any of the information presented, please email the church at LakeHelenUCC@cfl.rr.com with a subject line reading: **Attention Reopening Task Force.**

- Temperatures will be taken of all who enter
- Everyone must wear a mask while inside the building
- Hand sanitizer will be available at entrance/exit
- Reservations are required (we can only seat 38 people)
- Seating will be assigned
- The back narthex area will not be used
- There will be no paper order of worship except Pastor, Liturgist and Music Director
- There will be no singing, unison responses or unison prayers
- We will dismiss by row starting at back using both doors
- Offering plates will be available at both doors
- Trash cans with bags will be available at both doors
- Communion: prefilled juice/wafer packets distributed at entrance
- There will not be an indoor fellowship hour. Those who wish are invited to gather in the park across the street.



Prayer Requests

You are asked to remember those listed below in prayer.

Aliceann Marshall
Helen & Leslie
Aurial
Barb's Family
Bruce
Diane Carter
Lydia Castro
Cindy
Paul Concannon
Connie C.
Phyllis Flibotte
Francis

Janice Hess
Jody
Jason and Kristy
Ted Kays
Jim Marshall
Mary
Maureen
Joanne Muir
Rachael
Joshua Ruiz

Jenny Russell
Teresa Sanchez
Sally
Julie Ulmer
Tom Wilson
Betty Whitaker
Vern Whittenburg
Ephesiéns and all
those at Brit's Home
in Haiti
Those affected by
acts of violence

33rd General Synod of the United Church of Christ

from UCC in Florida e-Celebrate for April 28, 2021

The 33rd General Synod of the United Church of Christ, held virtually this year rather than in-person and on-site, will take place over eight days from July 11-18, 2021. Registration will open soon. The General Synod website can be found at <https://www.generalsynod.org/> and will preview the agenda, the business to be undertaken, the worship to be shared, and so much more in this first ever virtual event for the whole church.



The Florida Conference will "send" 13 voting delegates to the meeting, and those delegates are preparing to meet and strategize how we will participate on behalf of the Conference when we won't be physically together. Our typical morning meetings won't happen; our time at table in the plenary hall won't happen. How will we be a delegation rather than just a baker's dozen of delegates? This remains to be seen.

Looking at the agenda, one quickly sees that most of the big events will take place in the later afternoon and evening in order to accommodate attendees from Maine to Hawaii and the time zones in between. This provides us on the East Coast with a wonderful opportunity to register as a visitor and share in time together with UCC folk from all over the country. Good preaching and worship, good keynote addresses, a good spirit in the life of the church; these will all be gifts to those who attend from home and gain a deeper feel for what it means to be UCC.

Registration for delegates and visitors opens May 1, 2021, at the synod website. You will also find links there for the resolutions that will come before the body.

Please accept this invitation to become active in the life of the General Synod by exploring the General Synod website and considering registration as a visitor to this biennial event, which, by its nature as a virtual gathering, should prove to be quite special.

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

Rev. John Vertigan
Conference Minister



Upcoming Celebrations

It is our custom to recognize those celebrating birthdays and anniversaries each week. Here's a list of those who are celebrating in the coming weeks. You may want to congratulate them with a card, phone call or email.

Happy Birthday to:

Kristina Cawthon – May 16

Ross Cawthon – May 30

We have no anniversaries on record for May





New Covenant

The Strengthen the Church Offering supports congregations making crucial adaptations. During the last year, several congregations sought help updating their technology to be able to connect with people when not worshipping in person.

Sarah Hugus of the Florida Conference struggled with the virtual services at her congregation. "In the beginning months of watching Facebook Live services, it was usually a big miss. Week after week, the quality was poor, which was not encouraging." Thanks to a grant from the Strengthen the Church Offering, Sarah's congregation invested in new technology to create an engaging virtual worship experience. The technology also worked for enhanced outdoor services with appropriate COVID protocols in place.

Outside of Chicago, Plainfield Congregational faced a similar problem. The church's high risk members could not come to worship, but the congregation wasn't prepared to produce online worship. A grant made the difference. As church member Sharon explained, "2020 pushed everyone beyond their limits on so many different levels, but thanks to the push to learn and gift to purchase new technology, we have expanded our reach beyond the doors of our sanctuary to the greater local and world community. We have grown, and the financial boost has allowed us to minister to more than we had imagined." New Covenant Community UCC in Baltimore used grants to support a meal program and technology improvements. The church reports that a couple living in two different cities nurtured their relationship in part through shared weekly worship and Bible Study. The online church gatherings helped their relationship, and now the couple plans to marry in the coming months. Renewal happens because of these grants.

Gifts to the Strengthen the Church Offering Renew the United Church of Christ. Please add an amount to your regular offering this month designated to STC.



**WE ARE THE CHURCH
TOGETHER**

To All Veterans



Whether At Home Or Abroad

Active Duty ~ Reserves ~ Retired

All Americans Say:

THANK YOU!

“COMMUNITY COOKOUT FOR VETERANS”

DATE: SATURDAY, MAY 15, 2021

TIME: 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM

LOCATION: MASSEY-JAMES YOUTH CENTER

364 CHURCH STREET

LAKE HELEN, FLORIDA 32744

“JUST AN OLD-FASHIONED COOKOUT WITH LOTS OF FUN,
FOOD AND FELLOWSHIP”

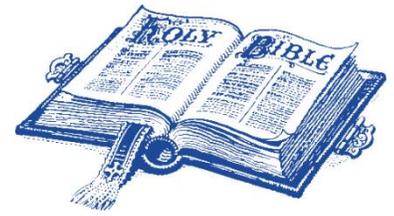
Reaching Out To Our Military To Show:

LOVE • RESPECT • APPRECIATION

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL (386) 747-2814

Reflection for the Week

Wanting to Want To



DAILY
DEVOTIONAL

Created by the StillSpeaking Writers' Group April 27, 2021 written by Mary Luti

If anyone is in Christ, they are a new creature; the old things passed away.
– 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NASB 1995)

In the early church, some bishops believed that Christians who sinned post-baptism (especially The Big Sins, like fornication, fraud, apostasy, and murder) were not Christians at all. Baptism made you a new creature, so if you were still sinning like an old creature, clearly it didn't take. Big Sinners got excommunicated. No way back in.

Pretty soon the bishops realized that a church of the perfect was doomed to extinction. Christians were going to sin, even if they knew they shouldn't, tried not to, and didn't want to. So church leaders began thinking of baptism not as a one shot transformation, but as a life-long unfolding, a grace that recreates us over time.

And because people grow and change better inside community than outside, they also developed reinstating rituals of forgiveness and healing for whenever people needed them. Good thing, too, because to this day most Christians still don't stop sinning cold turkey, even if we try to, even if we want to, or want to want to.

Saint Teresa of Avila once came upon a moving image of the suffering Christ. Falling to her knees, she determined not to rise until Jesus healed her moral carelessness, which she believed was wounding him. Her pious biographers claim she was immediately converted. But Teresa knew better. She wrote, "From that moment on, I began to begin getting better."

No perfection, instant or otherwise. Just the good news that we're not done; that grace never runs out; that beginning to begin and wanting to want is not deficiency or failure, but a holy path; and all the way to God is God.

Prayer

Give me the grace to want to, O God. And to want to want to. And to want to want to want to...



About the Author

Mary Luti is a long time seminary educator and pastor, author of *Teresa of Avila's Way* and numerous articles, and founding member of The Daughters of Abraham, a national network of interfaith women's book groups.