



The Sanibel LIGHT

Volume 51 Issue 13

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Let's Connect



For Your Consideration

Hi...

Once upon a time, a troubled seeker traveled to see a renowned spiritual teacher. When they were finally able to meet the Teacher, they asked with a sigh:

"Why is it so hard for people to see God now?"

The Teacher thought for a moment, then answered:

"Maybe because they aren't able to stoop so low"...

Part of the genius of the Christmas story which we have once again recently commemorated and celebrated is that it presents us with a God who comes into the world and into our lives in a different way. It offers us a God who comes, not with pomp and fanfare, not with thunder and lightning like the so many other ancient stories present *their* heroes and gods, but in the stillness of night and in the middle of nowhere.

A God who beckons us, like the shepherds and wise men, to come and find God.

It is an act of great *imagination* on God's part. The act of a God of great imagination...

Throughout the Bible, we are presented time and time again with a God who is deeply imaginative; a God who is constantly creating, showing up in unexpected ways and to unlikely people; a God who through the prophet Isaiah proclaims that "I am about to do a new thing".

We are the people of an imaginative God who calls us to use *our* imaginations in helping to move our lives and the world closer to what God imagines for us – **life in union with God and God's ways.**

And now, we enter a New Year together. A year in which we will be called to use our God-given and God-inspired imaginations to craft who and what we want to be as we move day by day toward the time when we will return to our rebuilt Sanctuary and campus.

What do we want that to look like? How will we use that space in new and creative ways? What new ministries might we engage in that we may not have considered before or believed we had a place for? Who might we be able to welcome for the first time and in what ways?

There has been nothing inherently good about what happened to us this fall. But two things can be, and often are, true at the same time. While it is true that there was nothing good about what happened, it is also true that we *can* create something good from it. In fact, we already *have* in so many ways. And we have because we have tapped into that sacred imagination.

And if we continue to tap into it – the imagination we have been blessed with by our imaginative God?

Well, I can only imagine what we might do together in 2023.

New Year's Blessings,

Mark
Rev. Dr. Mark Boyea
Senior Minister

Hurricane Ian Recovery Update

Update on Hurricane Ian Recovery - December 2022

Our Sanibel Congregational UCC campus is undergoing continued remediation and evaluation. As most of you know, this can be time consuming and frustrating. Many thanks, again, to the faithful Trustees for their tireless efforts. We are currently awaiting a structural evaluation report before we can pursue a permit and begin rebuilding. At that time, the grounds in the rear of the building, and the Memorial Grounds, will undergo a cleanup which will improve access.

As you know, the ground floor was completely wiped out, so we will be rebuilding or relocating the Parish Nurse's office and the classrooms we need. Storage areas will be evaluated, and hopefully we will restock the loaner supplies. No doubt books will also begin to flow back into the Rookery. I encourage you to log into the member access area of the church website, if you are interested, to see the videos taken shortly after we were allowed access to the island. Many thanks to the Craters and to Barbara Cooley for making these available.

There were an estimated 250+ Bibles and 250+ hymnals affected, as well as the pew cushions, and either refurbishment or replacement of the pews will be necessary. In addition, the Music Committee is also being asked to investigate new organ options. There are many opportunities for everyone to be play a role in our rebuilding in some way. Please feel free to offer your thoughts to our lay leaders or Mark.

Diana Day, Assistant Moderator



Education and Exploration Opportunities

BIBLE STUDY IN JANUARY

Bible Study with Mark will take place on Thursdays at 11am, on Zoom only for now.

Each week, we will explore the Scripture passage(s) being used in Worship that coming Sunday. These sessions will be largely “guided discussion” in approach, focusing on your questions and insights from reading the texts ahead of time, with Mark guiding and adding relevant context and detail as needed or wanted.

This approach allows for participants to engage with the Bible creatively, and with an eye toward how the texts speak to us in our time and lives. In addition, they are great prep for getting more out of the Sunday Messages!

We hope you will take the time to join in.
In January, we will meet on the following Thursdays:

January 5, 12, and 19

NEW SPIRITUAL EXPLORATION UNIT BEGINS IN JANUARY

“You Mean That’s NOT in the Bible?”

Tuesdays: January 17, 24, and 31; February 7
7:00-8:15pm on Zoom only

You know them - the sayings and aphorisms so many Christians and non-Christians alike have learned, passed on and trust in. Ones like:

“God helps those who help themselves.”
“Everything happens for a reason.”

Many Christians and non-Christians are certain those sayings come directly from the Bible.

But they, and other commonly shared ones, *don’t*.

During this four-week unit, we will explore some of those common sayings and aphorisms which people of faith are often strongly invested in, but are only partly or minimally rooted in the biblical literature. We will also examine both the elements of spiritual truth to be found in them, as well as the ways they inhibit our spiritual growth.

Each session will be self-contained, so you do not need to be concerned if you are unable to attend them all.

Join us for what promises to be a series of lively and insightful conversations.

You will receive reminders and details regarding dates and times for participating in all our offerings from the Church Office on the day of and day before each gathering.

Worship Notes

During Sundays in the month of December, we continued our Advent theme, "*The Family Christmas Tree*", a look at characters from the Bible who are presented to us as members of Jesus' "family tree".

Unfortunately, the Message intended for Sunday, December 18 focusing on Jesus' adoptive father Joseph and his ancestor Ruth was pre-empted by the accident Mark had that Saturday which left him with a lacerated and broken big right toe. Enormous thanks to lead Deacon Kathy Monroe and Dr. Albert for so capably leading Worship that day in Mark's absence.

Mark was able to return to lead the annual Shell Point Christmas Communion celebration on Tuesday, December 20 with assistance from Dr. Albert, Parish Nurse, Linda Convertine, and Deacon Joan Burns.

Then, on Christmas Eve, we celebrated the birth of Jesus with our hosts from Refuge Church. Refuge blessed us with spirit-filled vocal and instrumental music, and their Pastor, Brian Culbertson, offered a meaningful Message, while Mark presented a Dramatic Reflection. Finally, on Christmas Day, we celebrated as a single congregation, with the morning featuring moving and uplifting vocal solos from Henry and Annabel Crater.

In January, we will start the New Year off with Worship on Sunday, January 1, featuring vocal solos from Henry Crater and Caitlin Bogart.

On Sunday, January 8, we will continue to greet the New Year by celebrating the Sacrament of Communion together for the first time in 2023.

Then, on Sunday, January 29, Annual Meeting Sunday, we will join in the first of what will be a regular series with Rev. Mark:

"Ask the Minister"

On that morning, rather than delivering his usual Message, Mark will spend this part of Worship answering as many of your biblical, theological and spiritual questions as time permits.

So get those questions ready! Either come that Sunday ready to ask them, or email them to Mark ahead of time if you wish.

Over the years, this has proven to be an enjoyable, insightful and popular event at the church's Mark has served, and hopefully will be here too!

To the Members of the Congregation of SCUCC

The Annual Meeting of the membership of SCUCC is scheduled for January 29, 2023 at 11:15 am at Refuge Church, both in person and on YouTube. The Annual Meeting will follow the 10am Worship service that morning.

At least two weeks before the Annual Meeting, the Church Office will be sending out a formal notice to membership of the meeting with the agenda included. The agenda will consist of the election of officers and committee members, as well as the normal business items.

In addition to those, members will also receive a copy of existing Bylaws and a copy of proposed revised Bylaws that Church Council has approved and recommends passage of by the membership. Church Council will also be requesting that, due to our current circumstances, members approve allowing Church Council to have flexibility in 2023 related to committee assignments throughout that year, particularly as it relates to extending terms of service for committee members and required/recommended number of committee members.

To conduct business at the Annual Meeting, a quorum of members (20% of the membership) is required. Please make all reasonable efforts to attend, either in person or on YouTube.

Ron Periard, Moderator

FROM the MISSION and BENEVOLENCE COMMITTEE

On behalf of the congregation, the Mission and Benevolence Committee made year-end distributions to three charities. The first two are Sanibel based and concerned with helping the island's recovery.

FISH received \$5,000 and Community Housing and Resources received \$4,000.

Since we were unable to have food drives this fall, \$2,000 was also donated to the Gladiolus Food Pantry to help support their efforts.

It's a great blessing that our congregation supports generous giving beyond our own needs.

From the Stewardship Committee

Our church has a written covenant which states what we, as a spiritual community and as individuals, agree to do to support each other and the world. But what is a covenant? In a secular sense, the Latin roots of the word "covenant" are the same as for the word "convene." With a covenant, people come together to put beliefs into action. It reflects the truth that we can do so much more together than we can as individuals.

In the language of the Bible though, a covenant is even more. It is a promise – a sacred promise – that one party makes to another in order to move God's story and purposes in the world forward. Our Christian ancestry begins with the covenant God makes with Abraham that he will be the father of both a people – the ancient Israelites – and a great spiritual tradition. God then goes on to make a covenant with the Israelites as a whole – a sacred promise to be their God and for them to be God's people. And of course, Jesus is often referred to in Christian theology as the embodiment of "the New Covenant" God makes with our spiritual tradition.

At the Sanibel Congregational United Church of Christ, our covenant reflects our part of that sacred promise, the "why" of our reason for being:

to glorify God, to serve all people with mercy and justice, and to promote God's kingdom here on earth through greater love and understanding

It also states what we promise to do to fulfill that "why":

serve and support each other, and do all we can to protect as well the birds, animals and plants on this fragile barrier island

And, to give of our time, our talents and our treasure to these purposes.

We fully realize that this is not a "normal" year or ideal time for our Stewardship campaign. We do not take asking for your continued financial support lightly when so many of us have experienced so much difficulty in the aftermath of Ian. But the need to support our vital efforts on behalf of each other and God's people and purposes – to support our covenant with God and each other – remains.

We pray that throughout this New Year you will stay as *Connected* with, *Included* in, and *Committed* to our spiritual community as possible. And we invite you to pray and reflect on how we can continue to help each other through this time of recovery as we move toward building back even stronger.

By now, you should have received a Pledge Card in the mail. You may also make your pledge electronically by going to our website and doing the following:

There is an electronic pledge card on the website (www.sanibelucc.org) homepage. Click the button labeled **"CLICK TO MAKE A 2023 PLEDGE"**. **As we have been delayed in starting our pledge drive this year by Ian, we ask** that you please make your pledge through the mailed card or electronically by January 6, 2023.

Our covenant is meant to remind us of why we exist and guide us in putting our beliefs and commitment to God's service into action. Toward those ends, please give as generously as you are able when making your pledge to SCUCC this season. Despite all that has happened to us this fall, we have continued to be as vibrant and thriving a congregation as possible, and with your help we will be even more so in 2023!

May God's Grace Be With You,

The SCUCC Stewardship Committee

FROM OUR PARISH NURSE

"Write a Good One"

The notation on my December 31st calendar page was enlightening. It stated, "Tomorrow is the first blank page of a 365-page book. Write a good one." A blank page reminds me, first of all, of what God did for us by sending Jesus Christ to save us, to give us a new beginning with a clean slate, a blank page on which to write our story with Him. What an exciting adventure!

Contemplating the blank page also brought thoughts of the first days of school with new notebooks never written upon, a new bike not yet ridden, a new friend or love with whom to share a life. I could go on and on and I believe most of you could too. These blank pages are possibilities and opportunities. As we fill them they become the books of our lives. And don't we all want to write the best book we possibly can?

What are your hopes and dreams for this new year? Do you have any new year resolutions? After all the holiday celebrations many of us are thinking about diet and exercise with a new zeal. Am I right? I know I am. My usual routine has become spotty at best and I need to start again with a blank page. A healthy diet and exercise routine is something we all have to find in our own way. There are so many diet plans out there. The important thing is to find a healthy one which concentrates on fruits, vegetables, and whole foods and limits processed and sugary foods. Determine your goals, write a plan, and once again, take baby steps toward your goals. Reward your progress and readily forgive your failures and be ready to start again. Make up your mind and determine to stick with it.

The same goes for exercise and activity. Do what you can and do it consistently. If you have some kind of disability, check with your physician who can help you with a plan or refer you to a physical therapist. Water aerobics is a great way to socialize and move your body at the same time. Walking is stress reducing, enjoyable and good for your health. It strengthens your bones and improves your cardiovascular system. A daily brisk walk can help you live a healthier life. Weight training is very important as well, especially as we age and lose muscle mass. Any movement or activity is conducive for health.

I would be excited to work with you on an individualized plan for a healthy lifestyle. Please call or email me.

And now, as we enter into this new year, with all our beautiful blank pages, let's fill some of those pages with a healthy lifestyle and determine to stick to it!

Caring for you and your health,
Linda Convertine, Parish Nurse

Lamentations 3:22-23 The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.

From the Green Team

Working Together for Environmental Protection in Southwest Florida

It is very exciting that environmental groups in our area are working together more and more.

A new SWFL Interfaith Climate Actions Network (<https://fl-ican.org>) is starting, convened by the Florida Council of Churches. Its impetus was from a synagogue in Naples. Its purpose is

- to nurture a culture of preparedness and climate resilience in Florida; aligning spiritual, religious and civic commitments.

- to convene, communicate and collaborate throughout the year, foster bio-regional nodes to address current and urgent issues, and assemble annually.

- to promote dialogue, foster relationships, catalyze collaborative efforts, and increase civic engagement.

As a learning community, its guiding question is: How do we live well together in our environment so that everyone thrives?

On January 17 at the SWFL Climate summit, a solar collective in Lee and Collier counties will be launched. It is the result of the Sanibel-Captiva Renewable Energy Working Group collaborating with Solar United Neighbors, and it intends to take advantage of the new federal grants available to non-profits through the Inflation Reduction Act for energy efficiency and renewable energy installation.

The Shell Point Green Team will be giving a class through the Academy in January on regenerative gardening. Speakers and other resources for it were found through the SWFL RESET Center's Plant and Seed Fest in November. The RESET Center is located on the campus of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fort Myers.

The RESET Center is also collaborating with other organizations including the Florida Rights of Nature Network and the Calusa Waterkeeper to try to get the Right to Clean Water on the ballot as a citizen initiative to amend the Florida constitution. 223,000 petitions are needed by March 1 to get a Florida Supreme Court review of the constitutionality of the proposed amendment. Please sign at <https://www.floridarighttocleanwater.org>. If you would like to help get more signatures at the Cape Coral Art Fair on January 14 or 15, please contact Mary Kay Kralapp at 517-898-8781 or mkkralapp@gmail.com.

Bob Moore of the Climate Reality Project, John Cassani of the Calusa Waterkeepers, Matt DePaolis from Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation, and Greg Tolley from the Water School at FGCU will discuss the impacts of climate change on the region and needed solutions on January 25, 6-8 pm in person at FGCU or on Zoom.

The Climate Reality Project of Lee County, the Citizens Climate Lobby of Fort Myers and Naples, and the Climate Action Team of All Faith UU Church in Fort Myers are collaborating on a holiday potluck on January 7. For more information and to RSVP contact Tami Renkoski by January 1 at mrcgroup@aol.com.

You can see that in January alone, there are many opportunities to participate in environmental collaborations. What is your New Year's resolution to do or learn more about and for the environment?

Bits & Bobs

The SCUCC Shell Point Men's Club will meet, as always, on the second Tuesday of the month, January 10th. We will again meet at The Crystal Restaurant at noon.

Reservations should be made to Jim Atchison: jjmatch@aol.com

The Shell Point Women's Luncheon will meet January 13th. We will again meet at The Crystal Restaurant at noon. Please contact Emily Kletzien at (239)432-9185, for more information or to RSVP.

Giving is Easy:

1. PayPal link is available from the church's homepage (www.sanibelucc.org)
2. Automatic Payment Program (ACH) is available. To sign up email sandy@sanibelucc.org to receive the authorization form.
3. Checks payable to SCUCC can be mailed to:
[Sanibel Congregational UCC 2050 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel FL 33957.](http://www.sanibelucc.org)

Our mail is being forwarded to and picked up on a regular basis from a USPS annex in Fort Myers.

The church staff are working from home. Please use their email addresses to reach them:

Mark Boyea

mark@sanibelucc.org

Sandra Simmons

sandy@sanibelucc.org

Jordan Jones

office@sanibelucc.org

Church Campus Access

Currently, the campus is open only to authorized personnel and commercial vendors. For the safety of all, please do not walk, ride or drive on the church campus.

Need a ride to Worship Celebrations? If you would like a ride from Shell Point or Cypress Cove, please contact the office by emailing:

office@sanibelucc.org

In order to get on the list. We must receive your reservation by noon on Thursdays.