

# The Sanibel



SANIBEL  
CONGREGATIONAL  
**UNITED  
CHURCH  
CHRIST**

DECEMBER 2023 VOLUME  
55 ISSUE 11



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*Seeking to love all people ... growing in faith  
...working toward God's vision of justice,  
healing and joy.*

*Sanibel Congregational United Church of  
Christ*

## FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

Hi...

***“Do not be afraid.”***

Soon, those of us in the Christian spiritual tradition will once again celebrate the Christmas story. Well, *stories*, actually. Plural. Despite the fact that most Christmas pageants, the wider culture, and many Christians recall only a single story with shepherds, angels, wise men, and a manger, there are actually *two* markedly different stories about Jesus' birth in the Gospels – one in Matthew and the other in Luke. For example, there are shepherds and a manger in Luke, but no wise men. In Matthew, it's the reverse.

There is, however, one essential detail they do have in common. In both Christmas stories, the first words spoken by any character are the same: ***“Do not be afraid”***. In Matthew's gospel, an angel speaks those words to Joseph in reference to the coming birth of Jesus. In Luke, they are spoken by an angel to Zechariah in reference to the coming birth of John the Baptist. And for Luke, John's expected birth is actually the beginning of his Christmas story. But the words are the same: ***“Do not be afraid”***.

Yet, as we enter this Advent and Christmas season, as well as the season of Chanukkah for our brothers and sisters in the Jewish tradition, fear seems to be everywhere and growing. As Martha Nussbaum, perhaps the most prominent American moral philosopher of our time, puts it in her book, *The Monarchy of Fear*, fear has ***“suffused”*** our current society due to a combination of extreme polarization and forces such as automation and globalization, which have left many feeling powerless.

Still, the very first words God speaks to us through angels - a word which means “messenger”, are ***“Do not be afraid”***. And the Jesus who is born as the central act of the Christmas story will, as an adult, say ***“do not be afraid”*** to those with him, and to us, more than anything else.

Easier said than done, of course, as science understands fear to be a natural part of the human condition. But my sense is that what first God, and then Jesus, are really pointing to with those words has much less to do with feeling the emotion of fear and much more to do with our *response* to it. As Nussbaum discusses, to respond to fear with the determination to thoughtfully participate in needed change is helpful; to respond with the desire to make others suffer, as is seemingly, and tragically, so prevalent in our time, is not.

The former was clearly the way Jesus responded to, and called others to respond to, the things they feared in their time. And it is the way he and the God who sent him at Christmas call us to respond to what we fear in ours.

Blessings,

Mark  
Rev. Dr. Mark Boyea  
Senior Minister

## WORSHIP NOTES

In November, we continued with our Stewardship season, as well as celebrated the Sacrament of Communion on Sunday, November 5. In addition, we commemorated Veteran's Day on Sunday, November 12 by having veteran Roger Triftshauser deliver the morning's Message while Mark was away.

The following Sunday, November 19, saw us celebrate Thanksgiving Sunday as well as bless our 2024 pledges - the ones already received as well as the ones to come - to God's and each other's service.

On the first Sunday of December, we begin the sacred season of Advent, where we once again prepare to welcome God's greatest gift to those of us in the Christian spiritual tradition - the coming of the embodiment of God's essence into the world in and through Jesus. Our theme for this year is "*It's Better to Light a Candle...*". More on that later in this issue of *The Light*. On that same Sunday, December 3, we will also celebrate the Sacrament of Communion together toward the end of Worship.

The season of Advent will then culminate on Sunday, December 24, with two Worship celebrations. As that is also the Fourth Sunday of Advent, we will gather for our usual 10am celebration. Then, at 5pm we will celebrate Christmas Eve. More on that later in this issue of *The Light*.



## SPIRITUAL GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

Our Latest Spiritual Exploration unit continues!

*“Shepherd, Soldier, Sinner, Sovereign: The Life and Times of David”*

Tuesdays: December 12 and 19

7:00-8:15pm on Zoom only

With the Advent and Christmas season arriving soon, we know that Jesus is described as coming from *“The House of David”*. But what does that *mean*? And more importantly, who *was* David?

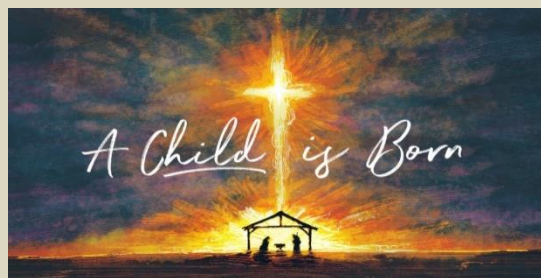
During this unit, we consider what is known historically regarding David, but most vitally, dive into some of the pivotal stories *about* David that are presented to us in the Bible. We are exploring those stories, as well as the deeply complex portrait of David and his relationship with God that they offer us, as a means of better understanding our own.

## BIBLE STUDY

Bible Study continues to meet on Thursdays at 10:30am. Please note that Bible Study will take place from 10:30am-Noon from now on.

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

In December, Bible Study will meet on the following dates: December 7, 14 and 21



## STEWARDSHIP SEASON

We concluded this year's Stewardship season campaign, with the theme, ***Rising Up, Returning Home***, on Sunday, November 19 with a blessing of all 2024 pledges already received and those still to come.

If you have not already made a Pledge for 2024, Pledge Cards are available each Sunday at Worship. And of course, you can always make a Pledge electronically by going to the main page of our website.

Please do what you can to help us continue to carry out our call to be a vibrant spiritual community serving God's people and world.

## Advent Begins Sunday, December 3!

We begin the sacred season of Advent on Sunday, December 3. During these weeks in which we prepare to once again welcome the birth of Jesus – the embodiment of God and God's ways for us in the Christian spiritual community – our theme for this year is, ***"It's Better to Light a Candle..."***

Borrowing from the quote attributed to people as varied as Confucius and Eleanor Roosevelt, ***"It's better to light a candle than to curse the darkness"***, during each of the four Sundays of Advent, we will explore one of the theological and spiritual concepts identified with the four candles of the Advent Wreath: Hope, Peace, Love and Joy, as it relates to our call from God to light candles in the dark spaces and places of our own and others' lives.



## Christmas Eve at SCUCC!

We are blessed to be able to once again celebrate Christmas Eve here at SCUCC! As this Christmas Eve is also the Fourth Sunday of Advent, we start the day with our usual 10am Worship time.

Then, as there is no Christmas Eve Beach Service again this year, we will celebrate the birth of Jesus at 5pm on December 24 with a time of readings from Luke's Christmas story, inspiring music, the sharing of light, and a "*Dramatic Reflection*" from Mark.

It is possible we may be able to gather in the Sanctuary for this blessed time. But if not, we are grateful to still be able to come together in Fellowship Hall.



## HEALTHY HAPPENINGS

### Gratitude

I propose that being intentionally grateful, choosing gratitude as a way of life, leads to joy. So why is the Parish Nurse writing an article about gratitude and not about some issue related to health? Because gratitude is actually something that has the potential to change our lives if we make it a daily practice. It benefits us emotionally, physically, spiritually, and psychologically.

Let's take a look at the positive benefits of gratitude and how you can learn to cultivate gratitude in your daily life.

Scientific evidence has shown that gratitude has far-reaching effects on our health. When people are thankful and are content with things as they are, their physical health reflects that. Research points to lower stress, reduced pain and improved immune systems as a result of being thankful. Even better, blood pressure and positive effects on the heart have also been linked to gratitude. Some research connects increased gratitude with [higher quality sleep](#) and fewer sleep disturbances.

Gratitude might also make it easier for you to focus. If you begin to view the task in front of you in a more positive light, you spend less energy feeling stressed about it. Acknowledging gratitude also decreases stress hormones. The short-term result is a reduction in anxiety and an improvement in mood. Because gratitude can boost your mood, perhaps it's no surprise that it can also improve your overall mental health. As you practice gratitude, you may notice a decrease in symptoms of depression and anxiety. While gratitude alone may not be a magic cure for mental health issues, it can be one part of a broader treatment plan.

In the long-term, regularly practicing gratitude may also lead to lasting changes in your brain, priming you to be more grateful going forward. When you practice gratitude, you shift your thoughts away from negative emotions and uncomfortable sensations. Instead, you begin to focus on good things that you may have overlooked.

I read a book by a psychologist and a researcher which made quite an impression on me, and I've thought about it many times since then. It is called ***The Power of Bad: How the Negativity Effect Rules Us and How We Can Rule It***. Through extensive research studies, it was found that negativity is relentlessly stronger than positivity. It was revealed that those with "normal functioning" in life averaged 2.5 positive feelings for every negative one and those with "optimal functioning" averaged a little over 4 positive feelings for every negative one. They called this the "Rule of Four".

Our lives are full of blessings, but we also experience lack, sorrows and disappointments. Our default, many times, leads us to focus on the negative things in our lives. That is why we have to focus intentionally on the many blessings in our lives. The simple habit of directing our focus on the good things in our lives has the most incredible power to create joy. This truth is validated throughout Scripture and directs us to always be thankful and to think on the positive. For example, (Ephesians 6:3) "Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you", and (Philippians 4:8) "Finally beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

The great thing about gratitude is that anybody can do it. It's not dependent on having great circumstances. If you can't think of anything to be grateful for, start with your breathing. Each breath is a gift. Many times it can be a simple thing like a warm shower, sunlight reflecting on the water, the smile of a friend or a stranger, a church that accepts and loves you, or any kind of happy memory.

The goal should be to intentionally keep this up until it becomes habitual and instinctual, cultivating a continual stream of gratitude in a heart that flows upward to God without effort or planning, almost like breathing.

Gratitude leads to joy. Try it, you'll like it!

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

***(Nehemiah 8:10) The joy of the Lord is your strength.***





## **FROM THE STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE**

### **“Rising Up, Returning Home”**

**In the aftermath of the crisis and chaos that was wreaked by Hurricane Ian, our church has been rising up and moving forward, and now it is returning home.**

**After a crisis, a community can sometimes be a harsh place, but our spiritual community remained, and remains, a place that stands for and offers others God’s mercy, justice, love, and understanding. We remained, and remain, a people and place dedicated to giving of our time, talents, and treasure to these purposes.**

**To borrow the words God spoke through the prophet Isaiah, though our church home was heavily damaged by the storm, we are, thanks to the efforts of many, “about to do a new thing” at SCUCC. Just as our church building is becoming renewed through our efforts to rebuild it, we are and will continue to be renewed as we come together to put our faith into action in this new chapter of SCUCC’s life. The past year has only reinforced the life and spiritual truth that we can do so much more together than we can as individuals. We have, and will continue to, turn crisis into triumph with God and each other’s care, commitment, and support.**

**Your giving will make it possible for us to continue to move forward, discovering who and what God is now calling us to be. Please give as generously as you can when donating or making a pledge to SCUCC this season.**

**Peace.**

**Barbara Joy Cooley**

**Member, SCUCC Stewardship Committee**



## **THE GREEN TEAM**

**Benediction: A Prayer for This Planet by Micah Bussey**

*For the beauty, for the love, for the joy,  
We raise hymns of grateful praise,  
As we add our contributions to the landfill,  
A chorus singing, an environment ringing,  
Earth, sky, hill, vale pleading amongst the plastic.*

*O, for the will to re-wild ourselves!  
What would you give up to get back to the garden?  
What tree or flower will convince you?  
What sun, moon, star will shed some light  
And stir a song that can actually change keys?*

*For the brightness and the beauty,  
For creatures great and small,  
When will wisdom blossom and wonder take wing?  
When will gratitude grow from distraction to action?  
For delight is duty and our ditties are for none if not for all.*

*If you are hoping for hope,  
Hold the hymnody and listen for the alarming lullabies alerting us to care for the  
cradle that has never failed to carry us.*

*Allow yourself to be rocked.*

*Amen*



## FROM THE RABBI

**Chrimukkah???!!**

**About twenty years ago a new word and practice was coined in the seemingly endless commercialization of our winter solstice holidays**

**An interfaith couple - Ron Gompertz, a Jewish man from New York City, and his midwestern Protestant wife Michelle - launched Chrimukkah.com, a Montana-based company credited with popularizing Chrimukkah and catapulting it into a new international tradition. Over the years the company has expanded its Chrimukkah offerings to include greeting cards, sweaters, a gift line, tree ornaments, and even a cookbook.**

**This would be funny if it wasn't so sad. Combining the two holidays creates an event that is the antithesis of both holidays. For Christians, December 25th is an observance with deep spiritual meaning, the birth of the awaited Messiah who will turn the pursuits of humankind from profane to holy.**

**For Jews, Hanukkah is a celebration of our ancestors who successfully maintained their Jewish identity in a predominantly non-Jewish world. Chrimukkah would turn that pride in our unique identities into a homogeneous blob. Instead of raising peoples' spirits, the commercialism, already rampant in the season, finds a new low. The danger of Chrimukkah is that both holidays lose all meaning except for the cash they can bring retailers.**

**For people of faith, the synergy of both Christmas and Hanukkah is an opportunity to express a true appreciation of the gifts inherent in the spiritual journeys and family memories provided by both religions. It is an opportunity best understood as two great faiths standing side by side in devotion and mutual respect, not as a chance to sell kosher fruitcake or eat *latkes* (potato pancakes) cut into the shape of Christmas trees.**

**What's next Easterssover?**

**As my *zayde* (yiddish for grandfather) would say, Oy! Only in America!**

**May you enjoy a distinctive and distinctly Merry Christmas and a Happy Hanukkah.**

**Rabbi Sunny Schnitzer  
Bat Yam Temple of the Islands  
(703) 362-2679**



## ANNOUNCEMENTS



### INTERESTED IN JOINING SCUCC???

Despite our ongoing displacement, energy, enthusiasm, and participation on Sundays remains high, including the regular presence of visitors. In that regard, if you are considering becoming a member of SCUCC, please let Rev. Mark know. After you and he discuss the expectations and, as the old commercial says, “the benefits of membership”, you and he can schedule a Sunday that works best for you to become an official part of the SCUCC community.

### SHELL POINT WOMEN’S GROUP DECEMBER LUNCHEON

The Sanibel Congregational UCC, Shell Point Women’s Group will have its next monthly luncheon meeting on Friday, December 8 at 11:30am at the Palm Grill in the Woodlands Common. Please make reservations with Emily Kletzien at [emily.kletzien@gmail.com](mailto:emily.kletzien@gmail.com).

### SHELL POINT MEN’S GROUP DECEMBER LUNCHEON

The Sanibel Congregational UCC Shell Point Men’s Group will have its next monthly luncheon meeting Tuesday, December 12 at noon at the Palm Grill in the Woodlands Common. Please make reservations with Candy Atchison at [JimAtch@aol.com](mailto:JimAtch@aol.com) or 561-714-4655.

### SCUCC SINGLES and FRIENDS

The SCUCC Singles and Friends group *will not meet for lunch after worship* again until the weekend single lane closures on the Causeway have ended.

They are, however, planning a *Christmas Buffet lunch at the Crystal at Shell Point at 1 PM on Christmas Day*. The cost is \$42.

To make a reservation, contact Eleanor Miller *by December 18* at [eleheamiller@gmail.com](mailto:eleheamiller@gmail.com) or call or text her at 860-318-1557.

### ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

The men’s Big Book meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous has resumed. It takes place every Thursday at 12:00 noon in Fellowship Hall.

Anyone who thinks they may have a problem with alcohol is welcome.

## CHURCH OFFICE SCHEDULE

The Church Office is now open Monday-Friday, from 9am-3pm.

Mark is normally on the campus Tuesday-Thursday pending pastoral visits or off-site meetings. Please feel free to just “drop by” or make an appointment directly with him by email: [mark@sanibelucc.org](mailto:mark@sanibelucc.org) or text/phone call: 908-477-5426.

**Please note that the Church Office will be closed on Monday, December 25 and Tuesday, December 26 in celebration of Christmas, and again on Monday, January 1 and Tuesday, January 2 in celebration of New Year’s.**

## LIKE A RIDE TO WORSHIP??

If you would like a ride from Shell Point or Cypress Cove, please contact the Church Office at [office@sanibelucc.org](mailto:office@sanibelucc.org) by Noon on Thursdays.

## **JANUARY 2024 SANIBEL LIGHT DEADLINE**

Please note that the deadline for submissions to the January 2024 edition of the *Sanibel Light* is **Friday, December 22, 2023.**

Please send all submissions, as a Word document, to Jenny Chacon, Church Administrator at [jenny@sanibelucc.org](mailto:jenny@sanibelucc.org)

## **YOU'VE GOT PLANS: SANIBEL & CAPTIVA**

### **2023 FISH 10K/5K**

#### **DATE AND TIME**

**Saturday Dec 2, 2023  
7:00 AM - 12:00 PM EST**

**Dec. 2, 2023, 7:00am**

#### **LOCATION**

**Sanibel Community House  
2173 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel, FL 33957**

**Virtual option also offered**

#### **FEES/ADMISSION**

**Registration Fee: \$45 through Sept. 25, 2023;  
\$50 Sept. 26 through Dec. 1, 2023  
Youth Fee: \$35 through Dec. 1, 2023  
Day-of-Race Fee: \$55**

### **Holiday Wine Tasting**

#### **DATE AND TIME**

**Monday Dec 11, 2023  
5:00 PM - 7:00 PM EST**

#### **LOCATION**

**Captiva Civic Center  
11550 Chapin Lane  
Captiva**

#### **FEES/ADMISSION**

**Ticketed Event. Information about purchasing tickets coming soon.**

#### **WEBSITE**

**<https://cccaptiva.org/events-classes-meetings/>**

## **GIVING TO SCUCC IS EASY:**

1. PayPal link is available from the church's homepage ([www.sanibelucc.org](http://www.sanibelucc.org))
2. Automatic Payment Program (ACH) is available. To sign up email [Jenny@sanibelucc.org](mailto:Jenny@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.**

**Mark Boyea**

[mark@sanibelucc.org](mailto:mark@sanibelucc.org)

**Jenny Chacon**

[jenny@sanibelucc.org](mailto:jenny@sanibelucc.org)

**Tammy Flatley**

[tammy@sanibelucc.org](mailto:tammy@sanibelucc.org)

[office@sanibelucc.org](mailto:office@sanibelucc.org)

**Office Hours**

**Monday – Friday**

**9:00-3:00pm**

