



The Sanibel LIGHT

June / July 2023

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Let's Connect

Sanibel Congregational United Church of Christ
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Rev Dr. Mark Boyea
Senior Minister



For Your Consideration

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Hi...

The month of June – Pride month for the LGBTQA+ community that SCUCC is an officially Open and Affirming spiritual community for – also marks the 7th anniversary of the mass murder which took place at Orlando’s Pulse nightclub.

In the aftermath of that violence, the journalist and author Michael Gerson wrote an editorial titled, “After Orlando, Divided We Mourn”. The first line of that piece was: “One of the manifold tragedies of the Orlando mass murder is how difficult it is for us to experience it and mourn it together.”

Gerson goes on to point out that the killings touched on a multitude of issues which produce deep emotional responses and disagreements in our nation (then and now): Terrorism; Gay Rights; Guns. And well before bodies had been identified and families notified, Gerson claimed that many people had already determined that what happened did nothing but confirm their pre-existing beliefs about those issues. Everyone, it seems, had “chosen different battlefields” in Gerson’s words, which makes learning and doing better going forward extremely difficult.

Indeed. But why? Why are we seemingly less and less able to come together now as a society? Gerson didn’t delve into that, and as always with a social phenomenon this large, there are a multitude of factors - too many to suitably identify and explore here. But I will suggest one that is deeply connected to faith and spirituality.

My sense is that part of what keeps us so divided is our inability to balance the dynamic between two foundational biblical and spiritual principles – the importance of both the individual and the community. Perhaps one of the critical factors at the heart of what Gerson describes is that we are in a time when, as a whole, we are “off balance” spiritually, with an unhealthy overemphasis on the individual. Perhaps we struggle as a society to come together because we have been, and continue to be encouraged to see the world and other people largely, and sometimes only through our own individual lens. We need only look at the tone and content of a great deal of current media, advertising and political messaging to see this imbalance exhibited.

And while an emphasis on the individual, individual differences and individual freedoms is necessary in order to avoid the suppression of dissenting views and the oppression of minority populations, too much emphasis on those can lead to the splintering of society into nothing more than a collection of autonomous people sharing the same borders or a collection of single identity based groups – neither of which reflects the complexity of the human condition and experience.

This can lead to a spiritual, ethical and moral worldview of “It’s about me” – a worldview that what is good and true for me must be good and true for everyone. It can lead to verifiable facts being seen as irrelevant compared to individual feelings, resulting in the belief that if I feel it’s right, it must be right for me and everyone else.

Not only is that an intellectually and emotionally immature mindset, it is an unfaithful and spiritually empty approach to living as one of God’s people. The faithful and spiritually mature person recognizes that they are as loved and valued by God as any other person, but never more than any other person. The faithful and spiritually mature person knows it is about them, but at the same time, it’s not about them. Which is all another way of describing the spiritual virtue of humility.

And as one of the most faithful and spiritually mature people I know once said, “Humility may be the most forgotten spiritual virtue of all”. Perhaps, for all our sake, we would do well to start remembering it.

Blessings,

Mark

Rev. Dr. Mark Boyea

Senior Minister

Worship Notes



On the first Sunday of May, we celebrated the Sacrament of Communion together as a spiritual community, and were blessed by the SCUCC choir one last time before their annual summer hiatus. Throughout the rest of May however, we were also blessed by several guest contributors who joined Dr. Albert in leading us musically:

On May 14 - soprano Charlene Gulbrandsen

On May 21 – oboist Ruth Christman

On May 28 – pianist Jameson Moore

So far in June, we celebrated the Sacrament of Communion together on the 4th, as well as being blessed by vocal soloist Fred Nordstrom.

Throughout the rest of the summer, Dr. Albert will be joined by various other guest contributors, including the return of Steve Garrett on guitar and vocals on Sunday, June 18.

Also coming up will be the Sacrament of Communion on July 2, and “Lay Sunday” on July 9. Members of the congregation will lead Worship that day while Mark is on vacation, including Lynda Swart serving as the day’s preacher.

Lastly, Sunday, July 16 will be our next “Ask the Minister Sunday”. On that day, rather than offering a Message, Mark will address as many of your theological, biblical and spiritual questions as possible in the time the Message normally takes up.

So get those questions in ahead of time to Mark at mark@sanibelucc.org , text them

to 908-477-5426, or just be ready to ask them that morning. These quarterly Sundays have proven to be informative and enjoyable for our spiritual community.

Biblical and Exploration Opportunities

Biblical and Spiritual Exploration Opportunities

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

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 texts ahead of time, with Mark adding relevant context, detail and explanation 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 June and July, we will meet on the following Thursdays:

June 15, 22 and 29

July 20 and 27

Please Note: These will be the final Bible Study sessions until mid-September.

OUR LATEST SPIRITUAL EXPLORATION UNIT HAS BEGUN!

“The Original Biggest Loser: The Book of Job”

Tuesdays: June 13 and 20; July 18 and 25

Wednesday: July 5 (due to July 4 being on Tuesday)

· Please note revised schedule since this unit was first announced

It has been described as both one of the most quoted and least read books of the Bible. But it is also considered to be one of the most vital in terms of engaging us in the difficult theological and spiritual subject of suffering, especially God’s and our connection and response to it. Part biblical analysis, part theological exploration, and part character study, this five-week unit will focus on the actions of God, Job, and the other most prominent characters in the book as a way of exploring those important themes.

· Please Note: this will be our last Spiritual Exploration Unit until mid to late September. We will then resume regular units throughout the year until the following August.

THE RETURN OF THE (NEWLY RENAMED) DEACONS BENCH!

We are pleased to announce that the weekly listing of those we wish to hold in prayer for various reasons has returned. Now named “In Our Hearts, Minds and Spirits”, it is planned to go out to our congregation most weeks.

However, we need your help. It is impossible for Mark and Linda Convertine, our Parish Nurse, to know of everyone who should or should not be listed. So please let Mark or Linda know of people who should be included or whose circumstances should at least be looked into for inclusion.

From the Moderator

Greetings to my SCUCC Family.

While I'm not in Florida right now, and not able to see all of you in person, I am feeling “connected” and blessed to count you all as friends. I pray all of you are feeling connected as well. Rev. Dr. Mark continues to challenge my thoughts and actions each Sunday and during Spiritual Exploration discussions on Zoom.

Tom Lisle and the Trustees amaze me with their commitment and determination to rebuild better than ever. Kathy Monroe, the Palaia and Hallerans and other heroes in our midst make our gathering experiences special every time. And our new Administrator, Jenny Chacon, has maintained and enhanced our office environment.

Each week, Tom Lisle, with Frank Palaia now that John McBroom is remote like me, has been presenting great summaries of our rebuild process, and it continues to be great news. Be on the lookout for an in-depth summary of the rebuild process in the next week or two. I hope many of you get a chance to see and hear this at the end of our Worship celebrations.

There is also a team working on the aesthetics of the rebuild, including floor styles, colors, acoustics, pew orientation, and use of the balcony. The elevators are a priority but we are experiencing long lead times on parts. The grounds are cleared and ready for some fresh designs. We are also thinking of how to incorporate solar options into our upgraded campus.

We have risen to the challenge of this time, using our considerable skills and resources to be better. And we have sadly said goodbye to many friends, wishing them a blessed next chapter. So, a huge Thank You to ALL who have offered Time, Talents, and Treasures to support our...dare I say “resurrection”? Sometimes it feels like too much; but God has given and will continue to give us the fortitude to carry on.

Diana Day

Hurricane Ian Recovery at SCUCC



Hurricane Ian Recovery at SCUCC

Here are some of the recent rebuild highlights, most of which have been presented by Tom Lisle, Frank Palaia and John McBroom during regular updates on many Sundays. Once again, we can't express enough appreciation for the dedication of our rebuilding team.

An elevator replacement contract has been drawn up, and we hope to have elevators in 12-15 weeks. The hope is that one can be completed sooner to accelerate church activities on the main (elevated) floor. Pews and chairs are still scheduled for Fall arrival.

Primary Contractor selection is complete - Stevens Construction of Ft. Myers has received a permit and will begin initial work in the second week of June. Their early analysis of the roof structure and windows will be important in determining our overall damage cost. We still anticipate the basic roof repair to be covered by wind insurance. We are going to upgrade the roof to increase hurricane resistance, and we also believe it will improve the appearance.

We continue to work with an Architect to help with the modifications to the Sanctuary, improving accessibility, technology, sound and sight lines.

Considerable work has been done to clean up the much vegetation debris behind the Memorial Garden.

The kitchen and pantry area has been given a general organization and additional cleaning. Our Library has also been organized and made ready.

Much gratitude for the continued efforts of all those who continue to volunteer.

MEET OUR LAY LEADERS

Our Church Clerk- Jim Winn

I was raised in the United Methodist Church in a small Missouri town. I received a B.S. Electrical Engineering degree from the University of Missouri, where I met my wife Linda, and a J.D. degree from the University of Michigan Law school. After two years in the army, including a tour in Korea, Linda and I returned to Kansas City, where Linda grew up.

In my law practice, I was the President of Gilmore & Bell, P.C., a 50 –lawyer nationally-recognized public finance law firm, where I was involved with municipal bond capital financings for state and local governments nonprofit healthcare and educational institutions. I retired in 2014. (One of my former clients, a **New York City, based bank, was the lender for the city of Sanibel's \$15 Million capital improvements financing** a few years ago. I also was bond counsel for many Midwest continuing care retirement community financings underwritten by Ziegler Securities, the investment banker for Shell Point and Cypress Cove financings)

I am active in the Keystone United Methodist Church in Kansas City, where I have held numerous positions, including Lay Leader and Administrative Council Chair. I have served as the SCUCC Clerk since 2018.

Linda and I bought our condo on Sanibel in 2012, and Sanibel became our primary home in 2019. I am the President of The Atrium Condominium Association. I am also a certified Advanced Florida master Naturalist, a Sanibel-**Captiva Audubon Society board member, and a volunteer with the “Ding” Darling** national Wildlife Refuge, SCCF, and the Shell Museum.

Jim Winn



MEET OUR LAY LEADERS

Pam Rothmann Cokes-Chair of Health Committee

I moved to Ft. Myers when my husband, Solomon, was promoted and transferred to SW Florida in 1987, a totally new area to us. We found SCUCC when Rev. Dr. Gabe Campbell, the Minister at my home Church in Akron, Ohio, told us his best friend was Rev. Dick Stein. Rev. Stein was the Pastor at SCUCC at that time and Dr. Campbell “informed” us we would be attending the Church. He assured us the congregation was ready to great us with open arms and help us navigate this new territory. No truer words were ever said. We are still welcomed and loved by this wonderful congregation, 36 years later.

I was raised outside of Akron, Ohio and attended Kent State University High School and earned my B of A at Wells College in the Finger Lakes Region of New York State. After graduation, I stayed in the area and co-managed the Aurora Inn on Lake Cayuga.

A life change led me back to Cleveland, where I managed restaurants, moving to Springfield, VA on the DC beltway to become a Hotel Manager. Sol and I met at a hotel where we both were employed and we married 3 years later. Sol’s two youngest children, Sean and Corey lived with us full time. The two oldest children, Lisa and Tony had graduated from college and lived near us. We have four grandchildren, 19-year-old twins, Zion and Zora, who attend college, and Bela, age 10 and Corrine age 9. We are blessed to enjoy a close relationship as a family. as well as with my family.

I became a condominium manager with rental responsibilities when we moved to Florida, working on Sanibel. I retired, early allowing me to become more active in our Church. I was honored to be asked to join the Deacon Board and became Chairperson after a few years. Next, I was elected to the Vice Moderator position followed by Moderator. I then became the Chair of the Preschool Committee and currently I am the Chair of the Health Committee. It is a privilege to serve our wonderful Church.

Sol and I settled in Estero in 1989. At that time, the development where we live, a liquor store and a Post Office was the entirety of Estero. We have watched major growth in the area and still love it here.

SCUCC is a special blessing to us.

Pam Rothmann Cokes

MISSION AND BENEVOLENCE COMMITTEE



One of the responsibilities of the Mission and Benevolence Committee is to recommend an allocation of the approved budget dollars to various organizations and charities. In the past four years, over 30% of the budgeted amount has been allocated to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM). You may ask, "What is OCWM, and why does so much of our money go there instead of to familiar local charities?"

OCWM is part of our covenant as a member church in the United Church of Christ. It supports wider UCC ministries at the Conference and National levels of the UCC. 80% of our donated funds remain in the Florida Conference of the UCC and 20% is forwarded on to the National setting. These funds are used for programs, resources, tools, and ministries that benefit all our member churches.

The programs support youth, clergy, churches, and national and global ministries. No church can serve everyone, but working together we can multiply the effect so that the United Church of Christ can remain relevant in today's changing world.

It would be easy to disregard our relationship to the wider church and use those same resources locally. But by strong OCWM support we acknowledge our covenantal relationship to the UCC as stated in our Bylaws. Sanibel Congregational United Church of Christ is blessed with resources which support a high level of giving to OCWM. We should give thanks that we as a congregation understand what OCWM is, how the funds are used, and that we are members of the United Church of Christ.

Blessings ,

Candy Atchison



Alzheimer Updates

Last week my sister came home from seeing her ophthalmologist and reported her results to me. She stated happily, **“The good news is, I don’t have Alzheimer’s disease.” I questioned that statement and she replied that the doctor had done a retinal scan and could ascertain from the scan that she had no sign of Alzheimer’s. I hadn’t heard of this before so I did a little research and this is what I found.**

The premise is that the eye is used as a window into the brain. You can see directly into the nervous system, by looking into the back of the eye, toward the optic nerve and retina. According to new research by scientists at the UCSF Weill Institute for Neurosciences, retinal scans can detect key changes in blood vessels that may **provide an early sign of Alzheimer’s disease. “Alzheimer’s disease begins in the brain decades before the first symptoms of memory loss”, said Dr. Richard Isaacson, an Alzheimer’s preventive neurologist, who is also at the Institute for Neurodegenerative Diseases. If doctors are able to identify the disease in its earliest stages, people could then make healthy lifestyle choices and control their “modifiable” risk factors, like high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes. Recent studies have revealed specific lifestyle changes can affect the course of Alzheimer’s disease. (See UCLA study)**

It’s still a pretty frightening diagnosis to live with. There are medications on the market that help slow or manage memory loss, improve quality of life, and day to day function, but don’t cure the disease. These treatments boost the performance of chemicals in the brain that carry information from one brain cell to another. However, these treatments don’t stop the underlying decline and death of brain cells.

New treatments on the horizon are targeting the clumps of the protein beta-amyloid, known as plaques in the brain. These medications may prevent beta-amyloid from clumping into plaques as well as removing beta-amyloid plaques that have formed. They do this by helping the body clear them from the brain. These **medicines mimic the antibodies your body naturally produces as part of your immune system’s response to foreign invaders or vaccines. These treatments work best with early identification of Alzheimer’s disease.**

An exciting study just published on May 15, 2023 states that researchers have found a gene protective against **Alzheimer’s. For three decades they have studied an extended family of 6000 people in Columbia who carry the Paisa mutation, a genetic variant known to significantly increase risk of early onset Alzheimer’s. Impairment of most family members would start at age 44 and by age 49 they would have full blown dementia. But, one member of this ill-fated family showed no signs of impairment by the age of 67. Imaging scans taken at age 73 showed his brain riddled with the amyloid plaques and tau tangles that are hallmarks of Alzheimer’s. So, what protected his brain from the ravages of Alzheimer’s?**

Research revealed that he carried a specific mutation in a gene that regulates reelin, a protein that serves a pivotal role in brain cell development. The mutation enhances the function of reelin, and reelin naturally hampers the process that causes tau proteins to stick together in tangles and impede brain function. Specifically, the **reelin mutation appeared to have diminished the number of tau tangles that accumulated in the man’s entorhinal cortex, an area of the brain that serves a critical role in memory and learning. The identification of this reelin gene and the specific brain region it most benefits should break open a new front on the war against Alzheimer’s.**

The information I have provided is very general and limited in scope, but I hope it leaves you with a more optimistic **and hopeful view for the future. I believe there will be significant breakthroughs in both Alzheimer’s disease and Diabetes in our lifetime.**

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

2Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

GREETING FROM THE NEW SPIRITUAL LEADER OF BAT YAM TEMPLE

Shalom!

It is the sweetest pleasure and a privilege to introduce myself to you as the new spiritual leader of Bat Yam Temple of the Islands. My name is Rabbi Elchanan 'Sunny' Schnitzer. Everyone calls me Sunny, and I hope you will too. My Hebrew name Elchanan means "Gods compassion." I pray that my words and actions in holy community arouse compassion in each of us, in each of you, for each other, our planet, and all humanity. We have been brought together as partners in faith to serve as an example for all who walk through our doors, who read about our deeds, who experience our work. We can do so much better together what we cannot do as well alone.

A few words so that you know a little about me before I share with you a little about Bat Yam. I hold dual ordinations. I was ordained in 1996 as a Cantor (in Hebrew a Chazzan) focusing upon leading prayer and music as a pathway to the Divine. In 2011, after many years of additional study, I obtained ordination as a Rabbi. Serving in these roles were third careers for me. I will share with you some other time stories from those other vocations. Suffice to say, I am a poster child for career change. Nothing was wasted.

I "retired" last year, after 21 years, as the Rabbi of a congregation in Bethesda Maryland. That congregation has shared a campus with a Presbyterian church since 1967. In 2019 we added a third congregation to our alliance, The Maqam Ibrahim Islamic Center. Three Abrahamic faiths - spiritual siblings sharing sacred space. Word spread and other communities from around the world came to our door to learn more about how they might do the same in Germany, Great Britan, and Uzbekistan. Holy work indeed.

After a mere three months, I "unretired" to take on the role as Cantor for Bat Yam Temple of the Islands. I expected to arrive on Sanibel in November of 2022. Then Ian happened. My wife Yaffah and I thought that this would be the end of our Sanibel dream. We were more than a little surprised when the leadership of Bat Yam called two weeks later to ask if we would still come for the season while the congregation met in temporary quarters in Ft. Myers. We quickly and enthusiastically said YES!

With Rabbi Fuchs' retirement I have now moved, once again, into the dual role of Rabbi and Cantor. We have been greatly moved by the spirit and determination of the members of both Bat Yam and Sanibel Congregational United Church of Christ as you rebuild your homes and maintain connections among members. I and my wife, and certainly the members and the leadership of Bat Yam, are excited by the news that Reverend Mark Boyea and Jenny Chacon are back in the office on Periwinkle Way. It is our fondest wish that soon we will be able to worship again in this holy space. But no matter where we meet, it is the people who make a place special. The space that truly matters is in our hearts. As the Jewish tractate known as Pirkei Avot, The Sayings of the Fathers, teaches; "When two people meet in holy study, the Divine Presence resides between them."

I look forward to meeting everyone in the Fall.

Rabbi Elchanan 'Sunny' Schnitzer



Bits & Bobs

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 MEN’S GROUP

The Sanibel Congregational UCC Shell Point Men's Group will have its monthly luncheon meeting on Tuesday, July 11th, August 8, September 12, at noon at the Palm Grill in the Woodlands Commons. Please make reservations by July 7 to Jim Atchison at jimatch@aol.com or by phone at 561-714-4346.

SHELL POINT WOMEN’S GROUP

The Sanibel Congregational UCC Women’s Group will not meet over the rest of the summer. They will resume their gatherings in the fall. Stay tuned for that announcement.

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER SANIBEL LIGHT DEADLINE

Please keep in mind that the months of August and September make up the second of our two summer combined newsletters. In that regard, the deadline for submissions to that edition of the Light is Tuesday, July 25.

Please send all submissions to Jenny Chacon, Church Administrator at jenny@sanibelucc.org Please submit in (Microsoft Word Documents Form)

The Church Staff is working mainly from home. The campus is open two days a week. Please use their email addresses to reach them:

Mark Boyea

mark@sanibelucc.org

Jenny Chacon

jenny@sanibelucc.org

office@sanibelucc.org

Church Campus Access

Currently, the campus is open
Tuesday's and Thursdays
9:00 am To 3:00 pm.

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.

*Our mail is currently being held & picked up at the Sanibel Post Office.

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