

# Faithful Follower

FAITH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

OPEN & AFFIRMING



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Faith United Church of Christ 4850 SR 64 E, Bradenton, FL 34208

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## JANUARY 2023

### FROM OUR MISSIONARY PASTOR IN HAITI

I want to greet you in the precious name of Jesus. I am heartbroken by the situation that our country Haiti is experiencing. I think it is difficult to explain to you how our country is terrified by armed men who kill children, women, babies, etc... In this situation, we need your prayers and support to face a hunger crisis. Life here is so hard and I don't know how to explain it. The necessities are expensive in the market. Schools have been closed due to the violence in the country. I don't know how we are going to make it work. The teachers ask us a lot and they were right. I am writing to you to see how you can help us to continue the education of the children. Education is the key to a country. Last week they stole our church and took things. We are happy because God is still with us in such a situation. Please accept my words that came out from the bottom of my heart.

May the Lord bless you and guide you.  
Pastor Gesner

**Please consider what you can do to help Pastor Gesner during this crisis in Haiti.**

### Winter Book Study

**First Book Group Discussion Scheduled for January 24 at 7:00pm**

We will kick off our monthly meetings at the church with a discussion of "Where the Crawdads Sing" by Delia Owens. We'll also include comparisons with the movie version. You might want to come even if you've only seen the movie.

Please come prepared to share your impressions and opinions. Some editions of the book include an interview with the author and discussion questions, which we could refer to. We're hoping for an informal, relaxed opportunity to talk about any aspects of the books we we read each month and look forward to suggestions on what books we read in the future.

If you have any questions, please contact  
Janis Groth  
or  
Judy Cramer

### FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

#### Your North Star for 2023

Astronomers have labeled the star Polaris, the North Star because it is the one that stays in approximately the same place in the sky. Other stars appear to rotate around an imaginary pole in the sky. Because of that we can use the North Star to orient ourselves when we are lost. It helps us get back on track.

I have found that in the same way, choosing a single word for the year orients me to grow in an area of my life that was previously neglected or forgotten. Every year for the last ten years or so, I've chosen one word as my word for the year. It helps focus my reading, my discussions, my thinking and my relationships. At the beginning of each year I ask myself, "What is the most important thing that I want to be intentional about this year?"

You have been doing something similar when you received "star gifts" from the church the past few years. You were assigned a word at random and asked to place the star somewhere you would see it.

You will be receiving star gifts in the mail again this year. You'll notice that the star does not have a word on it. This year, we are experimenting with a different way of doing things. You are invited to choose your own word so that you can personalize your intentions for 2023.

When we focus on the most important thing, it clears out the distractions and the clutter in our spiritual life. My prayer for us is that we would give our energy, love and time to the things that matter most.

May God bless you in the coming year.

**Todd**

# FROM YOUR MODERATOR

Dear Faith UCC family and friends, may the gifts of peace, hope and joy be yours this season and throughout a blessed New Year.  
PJ Widerman

## CHURCH HAPPENINGS

### Bah Humbug! UNDECK THE HALLS

Join us Saturday, January 7 at 10 am as we un-decorate the church and put away all the Christmas decorations until next year. We will have a good time as we clean up. The more people the less time it will take. We will have snacks!

### ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Sunday, January 29 after the service. Please plan to attend this important meeting.

### CHURCH COUNCIL 2023

If you are interested in participating on the church council for next year, please contact Moderator, PJ Widerman.



### SAM (Social Action and Missions):

#### January is: Pet Food

Our local food pantries are critically low on food, and we still want to be a help in any way.

#### PICK UP

1. We will be happy to come to your home and pick up your items!

#### DROP OFF

2. You can deliver to church during office hours.

#### SHIPPED

3. You can purchase groceries online and have them delivered right to the food bank address. Call Meals on Wheels for more info at: 941-747-4655

#### MONETARY DONATIONS

4. You can send contributions directly to Meals On Wheels at 811 23rd Avenue East, Bradenton 34208. And through this link:

<https://securepayment.link/mealsonwheelsplus/one-time-donation/>



# WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS for JANUARY

JAN 1, 2022

Scripture: PJ Widerman

JAN 8, 2022

Scripture: Available

JAN 15, 2022

Scripture: Available

JAN 22, 2022

Scripture: Joan Sheehan

JAN 29, 2022

Scripture: Available

If you would like to read scripture, please let us know! You can sign up by emailing: [faithchurchucc@verizon.net](mailto:faithchurchucc@verizon.net)

## Financial Snapshot

### Nov 2021

Income

Expense

Net Ordinary Income

## 2023-PER CAPITA

Per Capita is \$15 per person donation for members which is sent to support the National and State Conference. It is a new year and we are committed to 100% paid membership. Thank you for your prompt attention to this conference responsibility.

**FAITH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 19, 2022**

**Present:** Donna Blakey, Barbara Brownell, Sharon Cohoon, Dorathy Gallo, Janis Groth, Sylvia Hull, Todd Weber, PJ Widerman

**Absent:** Matt Lepinski, Sheryl Overheidt-Smith, Faith Quici

**Guests:** Peter Cohoon, Judy Cramer.

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm

**Opening Prayer:** Todd Weber gave the opening prayer.

**REVIEW OF CALENDARS:** In January Donna added the Faith Care/Prayer meeting for Monday, January 9th at 11:00. Janis Groth added an organizational meeting for the book study will be held immediately after church on Sunday, January 8th. There will be a sign-up sheet for all those interested. The book study group will meet on Tuesday, January 24th at 7:00 pm. Ash Wednesday service will be held on Wednesday, February 22nd at 7:00 pm.

**APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER MINUTES:** A motion was made by Dorathy Gallo and seconded by Sharon Cohoon to approve the minutes. Motion passed.

**APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL REPORT:** Tabled to January meeting.

**MODERATOR COMMENTS:** PJ Widerman said the January Council meeting will be devoted to the preparation for the Congregational meeting.

**PASTOR'S REPORT:** Todd Weber stated that both the Wednesday, December 21st service as well as Christmas Eve service are set. He also reported that the theme for January will be Taking Care of Yourself. A 5- or 6-week Lenten Study will be scheduled for March and each week will present a different topic.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**PROPERTY PURCHASE:** PJ Widerman spoke with John Wentz who has done a great deal of work for us to help us decide about the recent request to purchase a parcel of the church property. He has had difficulty in obtaining needed information and requests for information go unanswered. Both PJ Widerman and John Wentz agree that there are too many red flags. PJ asked if the council for their decision on this project. Barbara Brownell made a motion to turn down the proposal of the land sale. Donna Blakey seconded

the motion. Motion passed.

**CHURCH INSURANCE:** PJ Widerman reported that she has been working with John Keller, Director of Risk Management & Client Advisor with Gulf Shore Insurance to obtain a proposal for more affordable coverage. He has provided a formal proposal that will save the church an estimated \$6,000 in premiums while including other benefits not currently available under our current policy. Council asked PJ to contact John Wentz and Scott Brownell for their opinions. If they think this is a solid quote and policy then she is to move forward.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**DISCUSSION TO HIRE PART-TIME PASTOR:** Barbara Brownell stated that the council should review the decision. She felt that it would be best to keep a full-time pastor. Sylvia Hull agreed and stated that this church really needs to find someone younger with the skills to build the church. After discussion of this issue Barbara Brownell made a motion and Sylvia Hull seconded it to revise the budget to increase the salary for a full-time pastor. Motion carried. Barbara Brownell made another motion that was seconded by Sharon Cohoon to revise the budget to increase the salary amount for a 20 hour per week office administrative position. Motion carried.

**PROFILE COMMITTEE PROGRESS:** All the work should be completed by early February.

**SEARCH COMMITTEE:** Following review of the Profile Document by the Florida UCC Conference, a search committee will begin their process in early March.

Donna Blakey asked about continuing the Stars of Encouragement that has been done in past years. Todd Weber suggested giving members a blank star so that people can choose the word that is more meaningful to themselves and their lives.

Sylvia Hull, will be conducting service on January 1<sup>st</sup>. With the possibility of few people attending church on New Year's Day, Council agreed to postpone communion from Sunday, January 1<sup>st</sup> to Sunday, January 8<sup>th</sup>.

The next meeting will be January 16<sup>th</sup>.

Barbara Brownell closed the meeting with prayer

Meeting was adjourned at 8:55 pm.

# Our Christmas Season



On Sunday, Dec. 4th, our church family celebrated Floy Peterson's 95th birthday with a reception after the service. We enjoyed mini gourmet cupcakes and a delightful sherbet punch. Floy received beautiful flowers and many lovely cards. Thanks to Lisa Crocker and Janis Stone (Floy's daughters), Earleen Nutting and Sheryl Overheid-Smith for organizing and hosting this celebratory event.



Here is Connor Felix looking festive during the Christmas season, at the Holiday Potluck.



Sheryl Overheid Smith is pictured above here with a birthday cake as we celebrated December birthdays together on December 11. She is our Christmas birthday baby and has done an amazing job for years facilitating many fellowship and events! Thank you Sheryl for all your years of hard work!

## Faith's Potluck returns!!!

Twenty seven members and friends enjoyed a delicious holiday potluck after the service. We feasted on so many wonderful, homemade dishes and an array of delightful desserts and beverages. It takes many hours of work and time to organize, set up, decorate and clean up for an event like this. My thanks to Earleen Nutting, Connor Felix and Jeff Felix for helping me. Sheryl Overheid-Smith, Fellowship and Events Chair



# FAITH PRESCHOOL

Wendi McKeithen, Director



A note from Faith Preschool...

The children enjoyed performing for their families during their holiday program. It was wonderful seeing their smiling faces on stage.

On our last day of preschool before our winter break the children had a surprise visit from Santa! He read 'Twas the Night Before Christmas to the VPK class. The children were very excited to see him!

We hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas with their family and friends.

*Blessings to all of you in 2023!*

Wendi McKeithen  
Faith Preschool Director



# JANUARY 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 New Year's Day 10:30am Service  2:30pm BAC	2	3	4 8am Fire Sprinkler Inspection  7pm BAC service	5 6:30pm-8:15pm NarAnon- in Sunday School Classroom  7:30pm NA- in	6 Epiphany  7-9pm Prayer Mtg BAC	7 <b>10am Undecorate the Church</b>  10:15am NA- in multipurpose
8 10:30am Service <b>Communion</b>  2:30pm BAC	9 11am Prayer/Care team meeting	10 Preschool Resumes	11 Spirits and Spirituality 6pm – Beef O' Brady's LWR  7pm BAC service	12 6:30pm-8:15pm NarAnon- in Sunday School Classroom  7:30pm NA- in multipurpose room	13 7-9pm Prayer Mtg BAC  <b>All Annual Reports Final Deadline</b>	14 10:15am NA- in multipurpose room  Living Waters Women's Group full day event (Sanctuary)
15 10:30am Service  2:30pm BAC	16 No School – Martin Luther King's Birthday  6:30pm Council Meeting	17 HOA San Lorezno 6pm	18 7pm BAC service	19 6:30pm-8:15pm NarAnon- in Sunday School Classroom  7:30pm NA- in multipurpose room	20 7-9pm Prayer Mtg BAC  <b>Follower Articles Due!</b>	21 10:15am NA- in multipurpose room
22 10:30am Service  2:30pm BAC	23	24 7pm Book Study	25 7pm BAC service	26 6:30pm-8:15pm NarAnon- in Sunday School Classroom  7:30pm NA- in multipurpose room	27 7-9pm Prayer Mtg BAC  BAC conference	28 10:15am NA- in multipurpose room  BAC conference
29 10:30am Service  <b>Annual Congregational Meeting after service</b>	30	31 7pm Book Study				<b>BAC= Bradenton Apostolic Church</b>