

Faithful Follower

FAITH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

OPEN & AFFIRMING



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

| 941-746-8890

| faithchurchucc.com

MARCH 2023

Confronting Reality

The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. – Max Dupree

Some of the feedback I have received from the recent Annual Meeting is that my presentation regarding the options available given the present situation at Faith Church is that it was "doom and gloom."

Yes! You got the message. The presentation struck a chord after months of trying to present a realistic picture of our church and being frustrated that the message wasn't getting through. The information has been available and a brief form of it was discussed at the called congregational meeting in September. Things seemed to go back to business as usual. I came to realize the message needed to be presented in a way that elicited a response.

Recently I went for my annual physical exam. Before

the doctor saw me, he ordered a bunch of tests so he could have data that gave a realistic picture of my health. If something shows up on the tests that is of concern, it is his job to give me the facts, and options for how to deal with reality. It is my right to get a second opinion. Without that initial sobering report, however, I wouldn't know my true condition in the first place. Doom and gloom has its place IF it leads to action. In our case, it has.

We have a new church moderator in Walt Hull. We have a new group of church members who are going to be looking at some specific ways to address the reality we are facing. It's a time for creativity and courage. I'm hopeful that with God's guidance, a viable solution will be reached. After all is said and done, our mission is not to merely survive but to THRIVE as a church. May it be so.

Todd

Faith Church Continues Financial Support of Local Charities!

A few years ago, Faith Church set aside a portion of money for missions when we sold the front particle of land. This money was invested in CD's with five yearly expiration dates in the amount of approximately \$4,000.00.

In the past few years, Church Council has also set aside 10% (tithe) from bequests to the church. A portion of this money is also dedicated for grants.

It has been trusted to the SAM (Social Actions and Mission) team to follow a process whereby this money can be granted to worthwhile local agencies. It is an important component of this grant process that this money be donated to a local 501(c)3 agency that has the support of the members/friends of our church family.

This year, focus for grant awards will be on programs for programs that provide for basic needs (food, shelter, etc) and justice advocacy in our local community.

In the past, grant awards have averaged from \$1,000 to \$2500.00. Past recipients have been Parenting Matters, Manatee Special Olympics, Meals on Wheels, Kiwanis Against Hunger, STREAM, and Manatee Habitat for Humanity.

SAM as created an application and a process and on March 1, **2023**, this cycle begins for the fifth year.

Do you have a favorite not-for-profit that you would like to sponsor for a gift?

Follow these steps to get the application submitted:

1. Request an electronic copy of the application and cover letter from the church office. You can do this starting on March 1. (Or go to our website)
2. Send it to the charity of your choice. (be sure to tell them to put your name on the line for sponsor) Charities can then complete and submit it to the church office themselves. (You are done!)
3. Remind your agency that the grants must be returned no later than at noon on March 31, **2023** and the recipients will be notified no later than April 20, 2023.

If you have any questions at all, please feel free to call or email Babs Brownell (941-747-9643) bgb310@aol.com

This years grant's team is Sylvia Hull, Sue Card, Mary West and Babs Brownell

CHURCH HAPPENINGS

Lenten Season Preview:

April 6- Maundy Thursday (service)
April 2- Palm Sunday
April 7- Good Friday
April 9- Easter Sunday



EASTER LILY ORDERS ARE DUE MARCH 12- LILIES ARE \$10 this year. Please find an order form in your Sunday bulletin.

BOOK STUDY- MARCH 28

The Faith Church Book Discussion Group will meet again on the fourth Tuesday of the month, March 28, at 7:00 pm. "The Secret Life of Bees" by Sue Monk Kidd will be the subject of our discussion. It has also been made into a movie.

Since this popular book was published almost twenty years ago, it should be available at our local libraries. Like our previous books, it is also a coming-of-age novel, this time dealing with racial issues among other timely concerns.

IT'S TIME TO SHARE!!

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) special mission offering of the United Church of Christ involves you in disaster, refugee/immigration, and development ministries throughout the world. When a disaster strikes or people are displaced or made refugees by violence or extreme poverty, you are part of the immediate response and of the long-term recovery.

Through OGHS you engage in holistic development programs including health care, education, agriculture, food sustainability, micro-financing and women's empowerment. Because the UCC relates in mutual partnership to churches and organizations through Global Ministries and worldwide response & recovery networks, your contributions to One Great Hour of Sharing put you in the right place at the right time for the relief, accompaniment and recovery of the most vulnerable. You meet immediate needs and you address the underlying causes that create those needs in the first place. Faith UCC will collect for OGHS during the March 12 and 19 worship services. Donations can also be made on our website or on the national UCC website: UCC.org

FAITH PRESCHOOL

Wendi Steinbach-McKeithen, Director



A NOTE FROM FAITH PRESCHOOL...

Our next event coming up is our "School Wide Art Show and Silent Auction Fundraiser". It will be held on Thursday, March 30, 2023, from 6:00 – 7:30 PM. **All are welcome to join us!**

The preschool will be closed for Spring Break from
March 13 – 17, 2023.

Wendi McKeithen
Faith Preschool Director

WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS for MARCH

MAR 5, 2023

Scripture: Barbara Brownell

MAR 12, 2023

Scripture: Jean Cox

MAR 19, 2023

Scripture: Joan Sheehan

MAR 26, 2023

Scripture: Judy Cramer

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

Financial Snapshot

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
FEBRUARY 21, 2023**

Present: Donna Blakey, Barbara Brownell, Sharon Cohoon, Dorothy Gallo, Janis Groth, Sylvia Hull, Matt Lepinsky, Faith Quici, Todd Weber, PJ Widerman

Guest: Walt Hull

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:00 by Barbara Brownell

Opening Prayer: Sylvia Hull gave the opening prayer.

Review of Calendars: The Lenten study only has 5 people signed up as of this date. A discussion was held if the day or night groups should be combined into just one night group. Donna Blakey reported that the Faith Care/Prayer group will meet on Monday March 13th as well as Monday, April 10th at 11:00 AM. The order for Easter Lilies will start on Sunday, February 26th. The cost is \$10. They will be available to take home after the Easter Service on Sunday, April 9th.

Barbara Brownell reported that March 1st is the start date for the Mission Grant notice applications to be distributed. Barbara also stated that she will report on One Great Hour of Sharing Mission on Sunday, March 12th and that collection for this mission will take place on the following two Sundays, March 19th and 26th.

Approval of January minutes: A motion was made by Donna Blakey and 2nd by Dorothy Gallo to approve the minutes. Motion passed.

Approval of Financial report: Dorothy Gallo reported that the church received an anonymous gift of \$15K. A discussion was held on the reports. A motion was made by PJ Widerman and seconded by Janis Groth to approve the financial report. Motion carried.

Moderator report: Barbara Brownell made a motion and PJ Widerman 2nd it to name Walt Hull as Moderator. Motion passed. Walt Hull stated that there are only 2 options available to the congregation. 1) close or 2) stay open. All other options do not matter at this time. He said that 100% commitment to change what is currently being done is needed in order to stay open and grow. The church needs a revitalization project. The plus side with the current situation is that the church owns the building with no debt, good facility in relatively good condition and has a strong faith-loving congregation.

After comments from Walt Hull on what is needed, Donna Blakey made a motion to formally approve Walt Hull as moderator. Motion approved. At the next congregational meeting the members will be asked to vote to affirm Walt Hull as moderator.

Pastor report: Todd Weber reported that on Tuesday, February 28th he, along with 3 other local ministers, will be at New College for a demonstration. There will be a Board of Trustees meeting on that date.

OLD BUSINESS:

Moderator position. Walt Hull has been named and approved as moderator.

Per Capita collection: Dorothy Gallo stated that everyone needs to pay their \$15 per capita fee and council discussed ways to improve participation.

Conference Committee Report. Barbara Brownell reported on the meeting with Rev. LaTrell Harrison who was upbeat and optimistic. She had asked where does Faith UCC want to go.

NEW BUSINESS:

Walt Hull stated that he thought it best to table the discussion regarding Todd Weber's contract until he had the opportunity to have talks with Todd. Walt called for a special meeting on Monday March 6th at 6:45 to discuss the contract and revitalization/renewal.

Walt appointed that following Scott Brownell, PJ Widerman and Matt Lepinski to documents review committee. The Articles of Incorporation as well as other legal documents which need to be updated.

Walt stated that the revitalization committee is an ad hoc group. This group is to obtain feedback and directions for church growth. Barbara Brownell, Sylvia Hull, Donna Blakey, Pat Followell, Sabrina Prather, Todd Weber and Walt Hull will be on the committee.

Profile committee. A discussion was held on decision made to have it work through the conclusion and then work on revitalization. A Motion was made by PJ Widerman and 2nd by Barbara Brownell to suspend the work of the profile committee.

Committee Reports:

SAM Grants: Barbara Brownell gave her report during the review of the calendars.

Property: PJ Widerman reported on the fire inspection. \$3500 work is needed to correct two major issues: The backflow valve could not be inspected because the inspectors were unable to turn it on nor were they able to open the drain valves. There is currently no schedule of work that needs to be done on an annual basis. This needs to be done.

Other issues include the parking lot needs to be redone. The current cost is \$45K to repair and pave the lot. The dumpster enclosure needs to be done. Curb appeal is very important and helps with

first impressions. Matt Lepinski will contact a carpenter who does this type of work.

Faith Care/prayer team Donna Blakey reported that Marge Hooie is now in Hospice care. She also spoke about MR Lambright and Marge Kirchner.

Christian Ed. Janis Growth stated that no children have been coming to services. The Church does not have credentials for Sunday school. Janice has prepared bags containing books, toys, etc. to be given out in the event that children attend the service. The Book study group is reading Ordinary Grace and will be meeting on Tuesday, February 28th to discuss. Lenten Study will be starting in March. Spirits and Spirituality is ongoing.

Worship: Sylvia Hull reported that she has been continuing to prepare the altar for each season of the church as well supplying communion elements and preparing the communion table each month.

Music: PJ Widerman talked about her discussion with Janis Dove regarding the music.

Manatee Pride: Dorathy Gallo stated that she paid the fee to have a table at Pride. Sharon Cohoon reported that Pete Cohoon will be the lead and is looking for volunteers as well as pamphlets to hand out.

Next Meeting: Monday March 6th will be the special meeting to concentrate on Todd Weber's contract and the revitalization/renewal.

A motion was made by Dorathy Gallo and 2nd by PJ Widerman to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 pm

Closing prayer: Todd Weber gave the closing prayer.

In Loving Memory



In loving memory of Marge Hooie who passed on Feb 25, 2023. She would have been 89 years old in May. She will be missed and we honor her for all diligent work of service as a member of Faith over so many years. Her celebration of life service will be on Sat., March 25. More details TBA.

SAM (Social Action and Missions):

MARCH is: Baby food, formula, baby cereal

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! (call Babs at 747-9643).

DROP OFF

2. You can deliver to church during office hours. (Call Faith for info on those hours 941-746-8890)

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:




CRITICALLY NEEDED ITEMS

<input type="checkbox"/> CANNED VEGETABLES	<input type="checkbox"/> CANNED MEAT
<input type="checkbox"/> CANNED FRUITS	<input type="checkbox"/> 100% FRUIT JUICES
<input type="checkbox"/> MAC 'N' CHEESE	<input type="checkbox"/> BREAKFAST BARS
<input type="checkbox"/> PEANUT BUTTER	<input type="checkbox"/> OATMEAL
<input type="checkbox"/> JELLY	<input type="checkbox"/> POWDERED MILK
<input type="checkbox"/> BOXED RICE	<input type="checkbox"/> APPLESAUCE
<input type="checkbox"/> BOXED PASTA	<input type="checkbox"/> DRIED BEANS
<input type="checkbox"/> CANNED SOUPS	<input type="checkbox"/> TRAIL MIX

Donations can be dropped off or shipped directly to:
Meals on Wheels PLUS of Manatee
811 23rd Avenue East, Bradenton, FL 34208

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

MARCH 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
HAPPY BIRTHDAY			1 Grant Apps Active 7pm Lenten Study 7pm BAC service	2 6:30pm-8:15pm NarAnon- in Sunday School Classroom 7:30pm NA- in multipurpose room	3 7-9pm Prayer Mtg BAC	4 10:15am NA- in multipurpose room
5 10:30am Service Communion 2:30pm BAC	6 6:45pm Special Council Mtg	7	8 7pm Lenten Study Spirits and Spirituality 6pm – Beef O’ Brady’s LWR 7pm BAC service	9 6:30pm-8:15pm NarAnon- in Sunday School Classroom 7:30pm NA- in multipurpose room	10 7-9pm Prayer Mtg BAC	11 Manatee Pride Event 12pm-5pm Riverwalk- See Pete Cohoon if you want to help out 10:15am NA- in multipurpose room
12 10:30am Service Mission Moment- OGHS Last Sunday for Easter Lily Orders 2:30pm BAC	13 11am Prayer and Care Team Mtg Preschool Spring Break March 13-17	14 Last Day to order Easter Lilies	15 7pm Lenten Study 7pm BAC service	16 6:30pm-8:15pm NarAnon- in Sunday School Classroom 7:30pm NA- in multipurpose room	17 St. Patrick’s Day 7-9pm Prayer Mtg BAC	18 10:15am NA- in multipurpose room
19 10:30am Service OGHS- Collection 2:30pm BAC	20 6:30pm Council Meeting	21	22 7pm Lenten Study 7pm BAC service	23 6:30pm-8:15pm NarAnon- in Sunday School Classroom 7:30pm NA- in multipurpose room	24 7-9pm Prayer Mtg BAC Follower Articles Due!	25 Marge Hooie’s Memorial Service 10:15am NA- in multipurpose room
26 10:30am Service OGHS- Collection 2:30pm BAC	27	28	29 7pm Lenten Study 7pm BAC service	30 6pm-7:30pm Preschool Art Show and Silent Auction Fundraiser <i>(all other groups cancelled this night)</i>	31 Grant Apps Due 7-9pm Prayer Mtg BAC	<i>BAC= Bradenton Apostolic Church</i>

Believe It or Not

By: Maggie Shaw and Andrea Andres, 4Gals4Peace

If you were one of the 113 million people who watched the Super Bowl on Sunday, you probably saw the "He Gets Us" ads that aired twice during the show, wedged between your chips and dip and the beer and new car ads. What an apt time to show these Christian ads as this Super Bowl was the third most-watched television program of all time. The conservative, pro-life Christian group, Servant Foundation, based in Kansas, thought it was worth \$20 million to run the two ads recasting Jesus in a contemporary light. But, many conservative Christians, not surprisingly, are angry because they say it doesn't carry their message nearly as far as they would like it to.

The Servant Foundation, with a total fiscal 2020 revenue of \$405 million, prides itself on conservative Christian values. It is partially supported by Hobby Lobby as they are one of the main donors behind the ad campaign which had an initial budget of around \$100 million.

You remember Hobby Lobby, the arts and crafts store that won a case on religious grounds to refuse to cover contraceptives and the morning after pill in their employee health plan. And, to note in full Christian-like behavior, the Servant Foundation has also donated \$50 million to the Alliance Defending Freedom, an organization that is designated as an anti-LGBTQ+ hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Now that's Christianity at its best, isn't it!

At this point, we must note that not everyone in this country is Christian. As evangelical and far-right groups try to take over a small college in Florida and other diverse organizations throughout our country, you would think that their numbers were trending upward. The truth is that church attendance is going down and the number of

church-going Christians are decreasing. All the while, a desperate move is being made to maintain and increase far-right Christian influences in many sectors of our country, including on television.

A study by the Pew Research Center shows that the US Christian majority has been decreasing for years. Fifty years ago, the number was 90% and in 2020 this dropped to 64% and is still trending downward. It is projected that the number of Christians in the future could make up less than half of the US population within a few decades.

Why is this the case and why are the number of people who identify as "religiously unaffiliated" rising and projected one day to be the majority? Some say

it is because of conflicts between their faiths' teachings and their personal identity. They are leaving to follow their values. What does that say about religion and its values?

Could the exodus from churches be due to the turmoil religion is creating in the name of Jesus? Could it be because, in the name of God, some evangelical Christians have chosen to condemn and are in opposition to various segments of our population? Is it because Christianity is being used by some today as a political tool and its true teachings are being abandoned? Could it be because religion is being politicized and weaponized?

Religion is tricky to write about because some see it as not of the real world and some remain real believers. Whatever your beliefs, everyone should have the right to practice their own faith. But the negative and discriminating religious teachings of today don't make sense to us and couldn't be any more far-wrong in concept. Yes, religion is tricky and man has made it that way.

For us, we are going to stick with the teachings of Kindness for Kindness is our religion. We know many of you attend wonderful churches and synagogues where peace and compassion are taught. We honor those places of worship that teach love, equality, and the importance of accepting a higher power that embraces all.

In the ideals of Hindu wisdom, ahimsa symbolizes love, genuine care, and compassion towards all living beings. This extends into avoiding physical harm and any harm imposed by speech and thought towards any creature. One does not have to be Hindu or go to church to practice this. The cool thing about ahimsa is that it is totally transportable and can be exercised anywhere no matter what faith you practice. We say "Amen" to that...

"The whole purpose of religion is to facilitate love, compassion, patience, tolerance, humility, and forgiveness." -- Dalai Lama

Article submitted by PJ Widerman