

FEBRUARY 26, 2024

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A Message From Pastor Joe



Lent and Easter 2024

The history of Lent goes back to the first years of Christianity. It was originally a time of preparation for baptism, consisting of fasting and repentance by candidates to be baptized at the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday. The practice was then taken up by the whole Christian community after the legalization of Christianity in the Roman Empire. The 40 days of Lent and fasting was practiced in imitation of the forty-day fast of Jesus (Matthew 4:1-11).

Lenten Practices Around the World:

There is no one-size-fits-all description of Lenten practices because they vary so much from culture to culture and between Christian denominations. In some Eastern Orthodox countries, such as Greece and Russia, the Lenten season is characterized by strict fasting from all animal products and intense prayer. In Italy fasting, confession of sin and penance are practiced devoutly.

In Latin American countries, Lent is a time of brightly colored religious processions and dramatic reenactments of Christ's journey to crucifixion. These events bring the community together and are a reminder of Christ's sacrifice for our sins.

In India, Christians observe Lent with prayer, fasting, and acts of charity, while also incorporating practices from the local culture.

In Spain there are processions during Semana Santa (Holy Week), where elaborate floats depict scenes from the Passion of Christ. In the Philippines, devotees participate in penitential rituals that include self-flagellation and being nailed to a cross as part of a crucifixion reenactment to demonstrate their intense faith and devotion.

Secular Easter Traditions:

Easter has become increasingly commercialized, with a focus on secular traditions and festivities. The commercialization of Easter can be seen in the abundance of chocolate eggs, bunnies, and other items that flood store shelves during this time of year.

Egg hunts have become a popular Easter activity for children around the world. This tradition is believed to have originated from the practice of decorating eggs and served as a symbol of new life.

The Easter Bunny, a beloved character associated with Easter, has its roots in German folklore. It was believed that the Easter Bunny would bring eggs to well-behaved children.

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Join the Church!

Are you thinking about joining the church? We want you to be part of the family so it is very easy to do.

1. Fill out a membership form (forms are on the blue table in the Narthex)
2. Give the form to Pastor Joe
3. You can now join online! Simply go to our website, click on 'About Us' or the "Become a Member" icon.

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While these modern Easter traditions may seem disconnected from their religious origins, they still hold value in bringing families together and creating a sense of joy and celebration. They serve as a reminder of the hope and new beginnings that Easter represents.

While Lent is predominantly observed by Christians, there are elements of fasting, self-denial, prayer and self-reflection can be found in other religious and spiritual traditions as well.

1. Ramadan (Islam): Muslims observe Ramadan, a month of fasting, prayer, reflection, and community. It commemorates the first revelation of the Quran to Prophet Muhammad.
2. Navaratri (Hinduism): Hindus celebrate Navaratri, a nine-night festival of fasting, prayer, and dance. Each night is dedicated to a different aspect of the divine feminine.
3. Yom Kippur (Judaism): Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement, is a Jewish observance involving fasting, prayer, and repentance, seeking forgiveness and reconciliation with God.
4. Vassa (Buddhism): Some Buddhist traditions observe Vassa or Buddhist Lent, a three month period of increased meditation, reflection, and monastic retreats.
5. Diwali (Sikhism and Hinduism): Diwali, the Festival of Lights, involves spiritual cleansing, prayers, and rituals aimed at dispelling darkness and welcoming light into one's life.
6. Paryushana (Jainism): Paryushana is an annual period of spiritual reflection, fasting, and increased religious study in Jainism. It focuses on self-discipline and self-control.

What if we make Lent about Spiritual Renewal to New Life and New Beginnings. We can embark on a profound spiritual journey of reflection and renewal. This period, lasting forty days, is an opportunity for us to delve deep within ourselves and seek a closer relationship with God.

Happy Lent and Easter,

Pastor Joe and Janice

LENT/EASTER CALENDAR

DATE	TIME	EVENT
March 10	10am	Worship/ One Great Hour of Sharing offering
March 24	10am	Palm Sunday Worship w/procession
March 20	5:30pm	Good Friday service
March 31	8:30am	Easter Breakfast
March 31	10am	Easter worship service

Invite friends/family to join you!

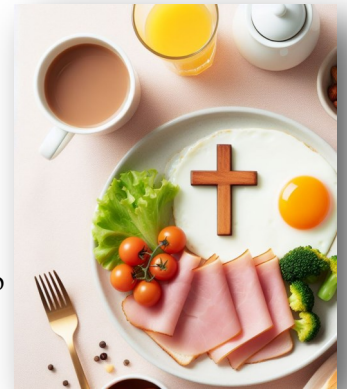


Buy a Lily

Each year we offer congregants the opportunity to purchase an Easter Lily in the name of a loved one. This can be in honor of someone or in memory of someone. Lilies are \$15 each. Please complete the form (found in the Narthex) and include it with payment. Checks may be made to UCC at The Villages and note "lilies" on the memo line. The deadline for ordering is March 17. The lilies will decorate our sanctuary on Easter. Following that service, you may take your lily home or leave it to be donated.

Easter Breakfast

Peter Winnen is again offering everyone breakfast on Easter morning before worship! The Breakfast includes sliced baked ham, scrambled eggs, baked goods, orange juice and coffee. A free will offering will be requested to help cover the costs of the meal. There is a sign up sheet in the Narthex if you'd like to attend (so we'll know how many to prepare for). We are also looking for volunteers to bring baked goods and/or to help with set up and clean up. If you can help, please sign up in the Narthex. The breakfast will take place from 8:30am—9:30am before worship on March 31.



Wear Your Easter Bonnet



There is no better time than Easter to wear your favorite hat. Come to worship on Easter and show off your Easter bonnet! Yes, even you men can join in the fun.



One Great Hour of Sharing

Each year during Lent our church along with many other churches and organizations, participate in One Great Hour of Sharing. This fund is a pillar among the United Church of Christ's special mission offerings. This Lenten offering provides crucial support to the disaster, refugee, and development ministries within Love of Neighbor ministries. Special offering envelopes will be available on March 3 & 10th for your donations.



News From the Office

Just last week many of our congregants received a fake text or email message that seemed to be coming from our Pastor or our choir director. This isn't the first time someone has attempted to get a response from one of us. The messages typically start by asking for help or assistance. Then when you reply, they will ask for money or gift cards, etc. Please note that this isn't the way our Pastor would ask for donations, and he has never asked any individual for money in this way. If you receive a message from our Pastor, a church leader, or the church office that looks or sounds suspicious, please do the following BEFORE you respond:



1. Don't open the message
2. Look at the source of the message—is it an email address or phone number that you recognize?
3. Call the church office and ask if this is a legitimate communication.
4. If you see that this is an unknown source or if the office tells you that this is a scam, delete the message and block it.

Unfortunately, this is an ongoing problem in communications today and we all must stay vigilant to protect ourselves from these con artists.



The Yard Sale Cometh!

The success of the *Yard Sale* depends on each of us helping out. Below is a list of the many ways you can help:

- Gather your gently used belongings that you no longer need (no clothes, books or large furniture).
- Drop-off at the church Sunday Mar. 3rd 11:30am – 12:30pm. Or Monday through Wednesday (Mar. 4th – Mar. 6th) from 9am to 4pm. Or Thursday (Mar. 7th) from 9am – 12noon.
- Volunteer to sort and price donations Monday (Mar. 4th) 12noon – 4pm. Or Tuesday – Wednesday (Mar. 5th – Mar. 6th) 9am – 4pm. Or Thursday (Mar. 7th) 9am – 12noon. *Sign-up sheet is in the narthex.*
- Volunteer to be a cashier or customer assistant Friday (Mar. 8th) 8am – 1pm and/or Saturday (Mar. 9th) 8am – 11am. *Sign-up sheet is in the narthex.*
- Also needed, volunteers with muscle to help move furniture out of the narthex and set-up tables following the church service on Mar. 3rd. The same will be needed on Saturday Mar. 9th following the close of the sale to return the church to its normal state.
- Anyway you can spread the news of the sale through social media, neighborhood signs, or any other means is greatly appreciated.

Questions contact: Barbara Teel bteel5151@verizon.net

In Case You Missed It...The Birthday Social

Thank you to all who helped and participated in the Fellowship Birthday recognition of UCC at The Villages and all members and friends! (Penny Zwicker)



Shamrocks & Shenanigans Potluck

Join us on St. Patrick's Day, Sunday, March 17th, for our Shamrocks & Shenanigans Pot Luck Luncheon, fun and dancing from 11:30-2:30. There is a sign-up sheet in the Narthex to bring a dish for the event and remember to wear green! Hosted by Doc & Romeo and the Social Event Committee



Happy Birthday To: Happy Anniversary To:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Frank Magrone (2) | Kathy Nichols & John Stavesky (6) |
| Nancy Burbank (3) | Michael Lapin & Fred Wallace (7) |
| Pat Moore (3) | John & Millie Allen (16) |
| Barry Davis (5) | Mike & Sandy Condon (26) |
| Cliff Cable (7) | Glenn & Jane Foster (26) |
| Clarence Witt (8) | |
| Joanne Lefevre (9) | |
| Michael Lapin (11) | |
| Ruth Giesebrecht (15) | |
| Carolyn Withrow (20) | |
| Sue Bodenner (23) | |
| Melissa Bednarski (24) | |
| Larry Beam (25) | |
| Jack Chandler (29) | |
| Marvin Henkel (31) | |

Did we miss your birthday or your anniversary? Help us update our files by emailing us the information or by calling the church office.

January 2024 Financial Report



	Current Month	Year to Date	Per Cent of Annual Budget
Total Income	\$69,995	\$69,995	21%
Total Expenses	\$25,284	\$25,284	8%
Audio-Visual Fund	\$5,193		

1. You may support your church by placing your donation in the offering plate on Sunday OR by sending in your pledges/offerings to our mailing address: **United Church of Christ at The Villages, PO Box 194, Oxford FL 34484. If you are giving through a corporation that requires a street address for mailing, you may use this address: PO Box 194, 3974 Co Rd 201, Oxford, FL 34484.**
2. You can pay through our online donation system on our website, www.VillagesUCC.org. Make a one-time or recurring donation to the fund of your choice.
3. You can use your own bank/credit union's Bill Pay systems which are usually free and easy to use! If you aren't using one, call your bank/cu for information.

Administration Team



**Cherie Harrold,
Admin Chair**

The end of January got off to a big bang requiring two immediate fixes:

Irrigation System/Well Pump

On Jan 24, the Admin Chair was notified that there was NO water coming from the faucet in the Community Garden - and we had to get that fixed ASAP. That Garden uses well water as does UCC's irrigation system -

neither were working. A call was made to Earl's Well and Drilling to investigate. The pump installed by Earl's had failed. The pump was replaced within that week. Because the original pump was under warranty, there was no cost except their initial visit to diagnose and make sure the pump was indeed dead - \$142 for labor only. A new pump was installed on January 29th and is working well. Earl's is taking this issue up with the pump manufacturer as a pump generally lasts several years before wearing out. The installer was asked if there is anything we can do to make sure all is well with the well before something like this happens and the answer was "not really."

Septic Tank/Pump

On January 25th, Penny got a call from Sumter County Emergency Services saying our septic alarm was going off. No one was at UCC to check it out so Sumter County sent someone out to reset it. They thought all was well.

On Sunday, January 28th, three of the four toilets in the women's bathroom overflowed at the very end of coffee hour. Flushing them to make the water go down did nothing but cause more overflow. All were shut off at the water input and Bill Richter mopped up the water on the floor.

Wildwood utility company was called - they have a number for weekends - and sent someone out to look early Monday but he stated that our agreement with Wildwood is that UCC owns the pump and controls and piping until it reaches the street in which case Wildwood then owns it. Any break of problem before the street is ours to have fixed. No one on the committee knew we had a septic pump because there was no mention of one in the Admin files and it never needed repair during our stay on the committee. Wildwood suggested we call a plumber to pump out the septic tank first - and then the septic pump inside the tank could be checked to see if it was repairable.

Well Pump

Earl's well returned on January 29th to install the new pump - no cost to us - and ensure it was working properly. Admin chair alerted the Community Garden so they could check it out - and all worked just fine.

Septic Tank Issue

Monday, January 29, Mike Scott Plumbing came to drain the septic tank - and it was full to the top. Nothing was draining out of it down the line because of the flatness of the land that needs the pump to move things along the pipeline. When full, and toilets are flushed inside UCC, that water has no place to go - which is why it overflowed on Sunday. The septic and in-ground pipes were well-drained to buy us time until we could have the pump looked at. The cost was \$360 for draining it out. The plumber pulled out the old pump and checked to see if it was fixable - and determined it was in too bad a shape to spend money on repairing. It was 15 years old - probably the original. He gave us the name of a local company to call to replace the pump.

We are just thankful it happened on Sunday when people were there and before everyone left the building to go home - so we knew.

The name given to the Admin Committee to call in our area talked to the plumber who recommended them and ascertained the pump was beyond repair. They put in an order for a new pump for us. On Wednesday, January 31, a local service man who happens to live in Oxford was sent to UCC by WASCON, INC - the company that sells E/One pumps and controls. It took him a bit over 2 hours to pull out the old pump, make sure it was totally dead and not fixable (it was not) and install the new pump. Because the plastic box covering the controls/switches for the pump was disintegrating and in pieces (held together with duct tape), it was suggested we needed a new box, too - to prevent moisture from getting inside the cracked plastic and weaken the switches. Total cost for both the pump and new control box was just under \$3,000.

This service man was asked if there is something we can or should do to prevent this from happening - maybe quarterly maintenance of the pump - and his answer was "no - it either works or it doesn't!" And he pointed out it had worked for 15 years!!

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Fire Sprinkler Annual Inspection:

American Fire came out on February 6 for our annual inspection of the total fire sprinkler system. We passed - no issues. This was the big inspection which checks water pressure, fire hoses, pressures, etc. as well as the controls. The inspection takes two plus hours; the cost was \$525.

The other three that will happen in 2024 are in the \$125 range each and not as labor-intensive.

Electrician Search:

Pete and Denny met with a contractor for a bid on installing the new septic control box and running power from the outside electrical closet to the shed. Lights/wiring are all set in the shed but need to be connected to power. Because several switches for the pump are contained in the control box, an electrician's expertise is needed.

February Garden Day:

Garden day was Saturday, February 24 from 9 to 11. Good progress has been made in the front areas against the weeds. But the rest of the areas need some serious help. The area around the big sign needs as much as anything as well as a few dying shrubs removed. Pete Winnen picked up 40 bags of black mulch from Ace in his truck for our use on gardening day. It was on sale for 4 bags/\$10 which is a good price.

Dry wall repair in ceilings:

Doc's Restoration is aware we are waiting for them. This is a busy season and they will let us know as soon

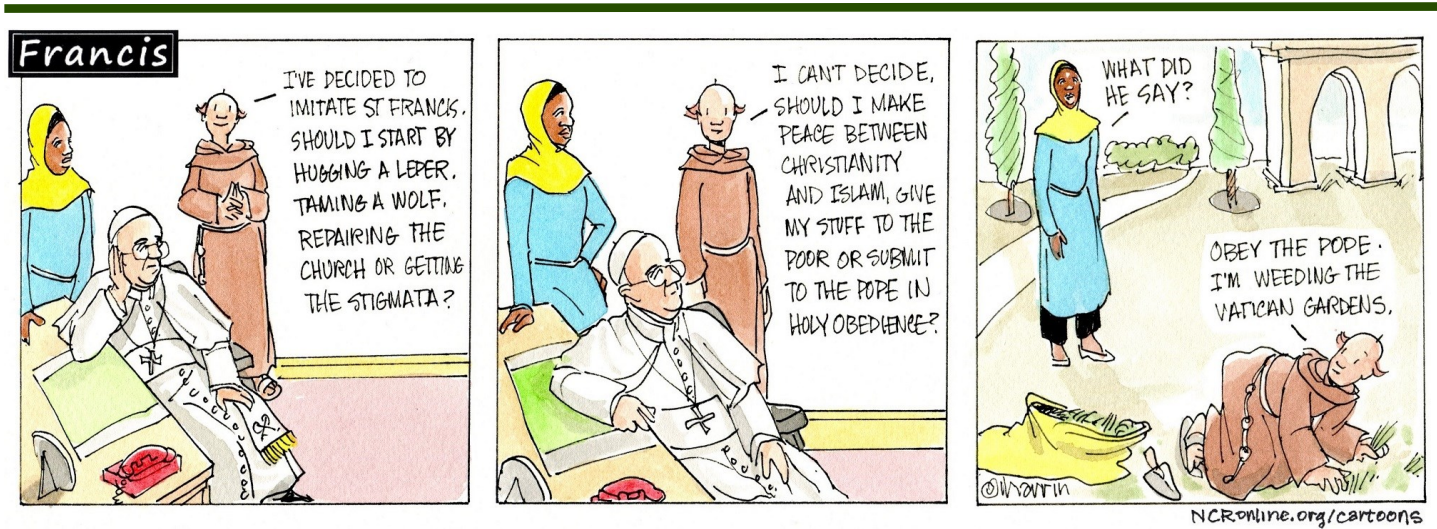
as they have a break. We went with them because they do good work AND they have the right equipment to get up to the vaulted ceilings. Denny has asked Admin to ask them if they would remove the old projector hanging from the sanctuary ceiling on a pole and remove the two hanging poles.

Air Conditioners:

Admin is getting quotes from other local commercial AC companies as to their cost for a yearly maintenance agreement to keep our old units functioning. Kalos AC out of Clermont came out on February 16th looked and gave us three options – all of which are half of what we were quoted by our current AC company for 2024. Coast to Coast came out on February 20th and is preparing a quote for UCC, also.

Admin Creation of a How-To Manual for future members on the Admin Team:

The Admin Chair created a lengthy list of titles from the numerous files in the team's file cabinet as a starting point. That will become the table of contents for this manual. The Team will decide how to explain each topic for future team members. This project should take up most of this year to complete; several items will be discussed at each monthly meeting and hopefully by the Fall, it will be completed. **Note that the Admin Team will need a minimum of three new members starting in 2025 – and could use more.**



Diaconate

The Diaconate Committee has set up for the Easter Season. A new banner was put on the wall and crosses with peoples name on them are going to be glued on the banner. This started the Sunday before Ash Wednesday.

Final plans for Palm Sunday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday will be finalized at the special Diaconate meeting on 2/27.

There will be a breakfast served on Easter morning from 8:30 to 9:30. Donations will be accepted. Peter Winner is in charge.

A banner committee has been established. Quilted banners and sewn banners will be made to change the banners we have most often



Joanne LeFevre,
Chair



Like to Quilt?

Joanne Lefevre is trying to form a quilting group. This group will work on new banners for the church. If you are interested, please contact her at joannelefevre@0@gmail.com or call 401-651-8597. She is looking at April or May to form the group.

UCC at The Villages Phone App

If you enjoy phone apps, you will be happy to hear that we now have our own phone app! To access it, search for MinistryOne in your phone's play store or app store. Download it, open the purple & white cross icon app and then search for "UCC at The Villages." Once you click on your selected church, whenever you click on the purple and white cross app, our church will appear. That's it! The app includes our online services, events, calendar, giving, and more! See the brochure in the narthex for more information. ***Don't forget to sign up for notifications from the phone app so you'll receive notifications of important events or urgent messages sent directly to your cell phone!***



Often, you may notice businesses on Google have starred ratings. We'd love you to review your church, so everyone could see how much you love our ministry! Just go to https://g.page/r/CdzuTgq_150dEBM/review to give your feedback.



Missions

I would like to thank Billie Navojosky for her time, leadership, and dedication to the Missions Committee of UCC at the Villages. Billie has been generous with her time in sharing information with me and helping me prepare for my role on the Governing Board. Much was accomplished during her leadership, and I hope to continue the work of each Ministry and support the many members and programs already in place. Thank you also to the Committee Members who help with specific projects and are continuing in their roles.

February 2024 started with several projects in place on the Missions Calendar. Seeds of Hope food collection was held at UCC on Saturday, 2/10 from 9-1:00. This is a community wide project and Kathy Peters, Dawn and Don from Seeds of Hope helped our UCC volunteers unload the food items. Thank you to so many who helped with this project. Over 730 pounds of food was collected and will be donated to the Wildwood Food Pantry and Wildwood Soup Kitchen that serve many families in our area. As of this report, \$1,160 has also been donated and will be mailed to Seeds of Hope. Great job UCC members and friends!

Suitcase Drive Donated suitcases of all sizes were cleaned and organized on Friday, February 23 in Fellowship Hall. Bea Hester has organized this ministry since 2011 when she realized there was a need to assist women and children who were living in two area shelters. Collect 2/4 - 2/20. Soaps, lotions, shampoos, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and other personal items were sorted and included in the delivery. These items and 75 books were delivered to The Haven in Leesburg and Shepherd's Lighthouse in Belleview on Friday afternoon, February 23. Thank you, Bea, for your time in organizing and leading this ministry and thank you to all for the donations and the people who helped clean and organized those donations.

Upcoming events

On 2/28 "40 Acres and A Mule" will be offered as a tour in Royal presented by Young Performing Artists at 11:00, in Royal, FL. Royal is about 5 miles west of Wildwood and was formed in 1865. It is one of the oldest African American communities and has a state issued marker. There is a sign up sheet in the Narthex

with more information. (There should be enough time to do the Tour in Royal and then attend the Documentary at UCC at 1:30!)

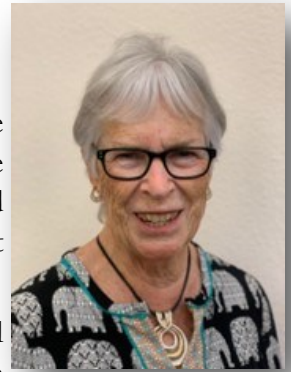
The February Documentary will be shown on 2/28 at 1:30. All are invited to attend and bring some neighbors/ friends. This month the Documentary will be "IHuman:AI" about artificial intelligence and its impact on everything in our lives and beyond. This is certainly a new topic we hear more about daily. It should prove to be informative and interesting.

The plastics collection will continue through April 30. Please continue to collect and bring your donations to add to the collection boxes at church. We are anticipating meeting the 500-pound goal this year and will be eligible for a free bench. The Mission Team anticipates starting a new year of collection so please continue to save and recycle. We are making a difference in keeping some plastic out of the waste/trash. Thank you to Ann Berg for her time in weighing and delivering it. Ann would very much like to have another person or more to help with this project. It is not difficult or too time-consuming. Please speak to Ann or Penny Zwicker if you can help.

Clothing donations and canned food donations are ongoing projects. Your donations can be left in the Narthex bins that are labeled. Thank you, Clare Paryzek and Sharon Bradley, for delivering the donations that are brought in.

The Knitting group meets once a month on the third Thursday at 10:00 to support the Prayer Shawl Ministry. Stop in and knit/crochet or just to chat. If you want a new hobby someone in the group is willing to help you learn. Check with Kaye Phelan if you have questions. Donations are always accepted.

The Little Free Library in Royal has been well stocked with books. Donations of books can be placed in the basket in the Narthex and are donated to the Little Library in Royal (Wildwood).



Penny Zwicker
Chair

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Financial donations are accepted all year to MLK Scholarship Fund in any amount. See Jean Christopher or Bille Navojosky if you have questions or need more information.

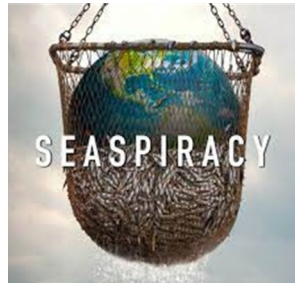
Important dates for March

One Great Hour of Sharing, 3/10 - This is a refuge, relief, and development offering of the UCC that helps transform lives through health, educational, agricultural and emergency relief initiatives in 138 countries. This special offering is collected during Lent. Checks can be made out to UCC and indicate "OGHS" in memo line.

Documentaries



See this documentary on artificial intelligence on 2/28 at 1:30pm.



Find out about the harm that humans do to marine species on 3/20, 1:30pm.

MS Walk, 3/23 – Join the Team! Please see Billie Navojosky for more information.

Tour of Royal, 3/20 @11:00- Signup sheet and information in the Narthex.

Documentary, "Seaspiracy," 3/20, 1:30

Easter, 3/21

Thank you to everyone who continues to donate their time, resources, ideas and input to help make UCC Ministries successful.

Seeds of Hope



Thanks to all the volunteers and donors who made our food drive a success for the Seeds of Hope!

Suitcase Drive



Cleaning suitcases to deliver to shelters



Books donated to women's shelters



Toiletries collected for shelters



Bea Hester making it fun to volunteer



**Walk to Support the Fight Against MS!
Saturday, March 23, 8:30am**

Walk or donate to our team. Make checks to UCC at The Villages. Sign up and/or donate at this website link:

https://events.nationalmssociety.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=donorDrive.team&teamID=53222&wait=1¬ification=success&key=message_imageuploadsuccess
Questions? Contact Billie Navojosky 330-770-8927



Shepherds

Two new Shepherds to join our ministry team were Elizabeth Scholl & Arlene Rama.

Short scripture reading and Welcome to all. Pastor Joe reviewed the importance of UCC Shepherds Ministry, continuing contacts and communication to him. Discussed how to get an updated member directory and how to use the church website to communicate. Pastor Joe has updated shepherd groups and new members are to be added. Jo Posillico will send out introduction letters to new members and make up the pastoral list and send out to all as soon as possible. Input and preferences discussed by members about needs of their individual groups.

Wellness Ministry handout "Blessings and Benediction" given to all present. Will send the document by email to shepherds not present. Reminder to all that there are Prayer bracelets and wooden crosses to give out if you wish to do visits to any shut ins. Also, the memorial garden is available as a place of peace and reflection for personal needs. The indoor Labyrinth project and meditation time is currently in progress on Thursdays in fellowship hall. I hope to have this completed by Easter to allow the whole congregation an opportunity to walk the indoor labyrinth as part of the Lent Journey.

Planning next gathering: most felt that an e-mail check in would be good by May. And a Planned gathering meeting on another Sunday after church (without choir) in late Sept-early Oct would be best.



Jo Posillico
Coordinator

Reminder to look out for the poster about the UCC Women's retreat -Methodist Retreat Center in Fruitland Park April 26-28th. It would be nice to have a group of us go this year, as it is so close. Pastor Joe closed with a prayer for us all.

Ladies, mark your calendars for this upcoming event of the Florida UCC Women's Conference! We'd love to have a large group attend.

Questions?

Contact Jo Posillico, jnp62@icloud.com

How Do We Worship?

FL UCC Women 2024 Annual Conference



Join us as we gather to explore
alternative worship experiences!
April 26 - 28, 2024

Warren Willis Camp &
Conference Center, Fruitland
Park, Florida

Watch for registration form and conference updates:
www.fluccwomen.org



Spotlight on Our Members - The Bodenners



Photos by Maddie Cutler | Daily Sun
Sue and Jim Bodenner, of the Village Tierra del Sol, have spent the entirety of their five decades of marriage volunteering with each other.

The following article was in The Villages Daily Sun on February 15 featuring couples in our community. The article was written by Senior switer Maddie Cutler.

“If Jimi Bodenner could talk to his younger self, the high schooler would never believe he would marry his biology lab partner.

Now, after 52 years of marriage, Jim and Sue work together volunteering with the Rotary Club of The Villages Evening.

The Bodenners, of the village of Tierra del Sol, were Rotarians in Michigan before they moved to The Villages. Volunteering is important to them both and is a foundation of their relationship.

Jim joined first, in Rockford, Michigan, becoming president of the group.

“I started volunteering with the club because I had my own interest in volunteering,” Sue said, “I decided to end the other volunteer work I did to help with the Rotary.”

Sue led an Alzheimer’s support group and became an honorary Rotarian before fully joining in 2001.

The couple started to do a lot of safe water works projects through various Rotary channels. They traveled to countless countries to talk about the need for clean water.

“We made the permanent decision not to go in different directions,” Jim said, “We found something we enjoy and do it together.”

The Bodenners have volunteered for the entirety of their married life. Before they found Rotary, they bought Christmas presents for elder adults in nursing homes, and they owned and operated a long-term care facility together.

“I do find that we even brain-storm together, our pillow talk is kind of interesting because we’re reflecting on how there’s a need and we want to do something more impactful.” Jim said. “We make each other better, and together we are making our community better.”

BE THE CHURCH

Protect the environment. Care for the poor.

Forgive often. Reject racism.

Fight for the powerless.

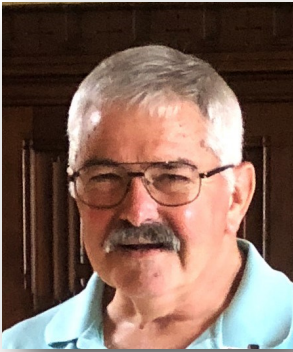
Share earthly and spiritual resources.

Embrace diversity. Love God. Enjoy this life.

God is still speaking,
UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST



Welcome New Members!



Meet Mark Mayer

I am originally from Kansas and moved to Massachusetts after getting married and later to Maine. My wife Judy and I moved to Florida in 2012 after my retirement from the U.S. Army and the Postal Service. We moved around from church to church over the next few years. We were introduced to United Church of Christ at the Villages by Judy's cousin, Beth Lipsett. Unfortunately my wife passed away in October and was not able to enjoy the UCC community.

Meet Dave Babler



I was born and raised on a dairy farm in Northwestern Illinois. Graduated from Iowa State University with BS in Ag Mechanization in 1976. Started my career in Ag Supplies in 1976 until 1994 in Midwest and started my career as a Financial Advisor with Ameriprise Financial in 1994 building my business in Dubuque Iowa and then continued when I moved to Overland Park Kansas (Kansas City area) in 2007 when my wife Jean St Pierre and I were married. Jean and I joined our Ameriprise Practices in 2008 and we both retired in 2023. I have 2 sons. My gay son lives in Miami with his long-time partner Stephen. My younger son lives in Dubuque Iowa and has a significant other Jiawen who has a 10-year old daughter. Jean has 3 sons in the Kansas City area at various levels of college. We moved to our home in Chatham in 2021 as full-time residents. I enjoy golf and pickleball as my main activities. We also enjoy traveling.

Meet Jean St. Pierre



I was raised in the Kansas City area before moving to Jacksonville, FL where I completed high school in 1982. I graduated from The University of Southern California and started my 30+ year career as a financial advisor with Ameriprise Financial. In 2002, after 20 years in California I moved back to the Kansas City area to raise my three sons. In 2006 I met and married David Babler. We moved to The Villages in 2020 - our home is in the Village of Chatham.

Meet Arlene Rama



My name is Arlene Frances Rama. I am the oldest of four children, one sister and two brothers who are both deceased. Detroit is my hometown where I was educated in the Catholic tradition through college. I was a teacher for 37 years with a major in the biological sciences. I supervised science research projects of my students as well as doing some coaching along the way.

My happy place is working in the garden which serves as a meditation venue. I enjoy creating cards for all occasions, making jewelry, theater, and working puzzles of all kinds. Golf is my love-hate game and being near water is my passion.

My core values are respecting the rights of all people, bringing happiness to others and being of service whenever possible.

UCC Golf Group

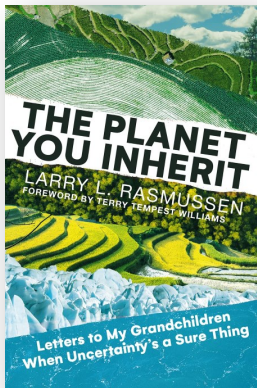
The UCC Friday Golf Group welcomes all golfers at any level. Remember, no matter who you are, or where you are on your golf journey, you are welcome with us! Please contact Denny Lawson for further information at dennylawson@hotmail.com



WISE Mental Health Group

The WISE Group is for anyone who is facing or has faced mental health challenges for themselves, family or friends. The group meets online via Zoom. For more information, contact Becky Dunning (612.281.1811) or Beverly Hallman (207.807.5896) to get the zoom link and all the readings for the Monday meeting. We do hope you will consider joining us, as we walk this descending journey to the Cross. Our lives are not perfect, nor will they every be, so let's Bless the Life we have, individually and together.

Women's Spirituality Group



We will conclude our study of "Braiding Sweetgrass" by Robin Wall Kimmerer at our next meeting on Wednesday, March 6, 2:30 PM, at the church. Please read through the end of the book in preparation for our discussion. Study questions will be emailed to participants.

Please also begin reading our next book, which we will discuss at our April and May meetings, "The Planet You Inherit: Letters to My Grandchildren When Uncertainty's a Sure Thing," by Larry L. Rasmussen.

All women of the church are invited and welcome to attend. Please contact Rachel Beam (rachel.beam@att.net) if you have questions.



Rev. Rachel Beam

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Our Prayer Shawl group is up and running! They meet each 3rd Thursday at 10am at the church. If you knit or crochet, you are welcome to join the group for fun and conversation. Don't know how to knit or crochet but would like to learn? Contact group leader, Kaye Phelan, at 954-931-098 and she can assign you to an instructor. This group provides the free prayer shawls that are available to anyone in need of comfort or who would like to share comfort with someone in need. Shawls are located in the welcome center in the Narthex.





Follow us on
facebook

Why should you follow us on Facebook? Go to our page at UCC at the Villages and you'll see inspirational postings, photos, and a live link to our worship service every Sunday. Don't forget to "like" our page so you won't miss out on a thing!

Get Involved!

It's often been said that if you really want to get to know people, volunteer! At UCC, we make it so easy to find out about volunteer opportunities.—and there is something available no matter what your expertise or lack there of may be. Find out more by visiting our website at www.VillagesUCC.org. Look for the "volunteer" tab at the top of the page.

Click it and you will find a variety of things that you can express interest in. Once you complete the form, your entry will be forwarded to the committees involved. This does NOT commit you to anything, but it shows an interest. You can also email our church office, uccatvoffice@gmail.com. The committee chair will contact you so that you can ask questions and then decide if this opportunity is for you. And don't forget to check out our sign-up sheets in the Narthex (on the blue table) for other events that need volunteers! Current needs (not listed on website) are:



1. **Kitchen Volunteers**—help setup or serve or clean up for coffee hour. Always looking for people willing to provide treats, too! See the sign up sheet.
2. **Gardening**—the Administration Committee is always in need of people who can assist with weeding, mulching, etc. in our various gardens and landscape. Contact Cherie Harrold caharrold@gmail.com for information.
3. **Communion**—help the Diaconate serve Communion on the first Sunday of each month. Contact Joanne Lefevre, joannelefevre@gmail.com or call the church office.
4. **Altar Flowers**—donate flowers for the sanctuary in honor/memory of loved ones. See the sign up sheet.
5. **Committees/Events** - Yard Sale, Suitcase cleaning, and other fun events are coming but they need your help!
6. **Audio-Visual Team** - No, you don't need to be a techie or have a lot of experience to join this group, just a willingness to learn. We can train you on the equipment in the AV booth. This group operates the audio and sound for worship services, memorials, and special events. Interested in learning more? Sign up in the Narthex.
7. **Committees** - whether it's an ongoing commitment or one-time project, committees are NOW looking for help. Contact any committee chair for more information!



Member Only Website Pages

Members may access private pages on our website. Pages includes a photo membership directory, Meetings, and

the Annual Report. So, how do you access it?

YOU HAVE TO BE A CHURCH MEMBER

Only church members will have access to the Membership Page. That means you should not share your registration with anyone else. This is private information for your use only. Each registration must be approved before access is granted.

YOU MUST REGISTER ON OUR WEBSITE

- Go to our website, www.VillagesUCC.org and click on the **Registration/Log In** tab at the top of the page.
- When you click on the registration tab, a box will appear that will allow you to register. Fill in your name, email address, and a password that you can remember. Please note: we will not know your password and cannot retrieve it for you if you forget it. If that happens, you will have to retrieve the password on the site itself by re-entering information.
- Once you register, our administrator will have to give approval. This might take a couple of days, depending on when you register.

LOG IN TO SEE YOUR PRIVATE PAGES

- Once approved, you can “log in” to the site. At that time, a box will appear showing you the private pages to which you have access. Click on the page you wish to view and it will appear.
- The Membership Directory can be accessed two ways. If you want a printable non-photo directory, click on the title “Membership Directory” at the top of the page and a pdf of the directory will appear. You can print this page. If you want to view the photo directory, it is listed in an accordion-style menu on the Membership page. Just click on the letter of the last name of the person you would like to see and all last names beginning with that letter will appear in a list.

KEEP IT PRIVATE

Please remember that the information listed on these pages is for your personal use only. It is not to be used for any kind of solicitation, other than church business. Your password is yours only, so please do not share it with anyone else.

PROOF YOUR INFORMATION

Don't forget to look at your own information in the membership directory to make sure it is correct. If anything needs to be changed or you have any questions, please contact our church office at uccatvoffice@gmail.com

Where are the Sign-Up Sheets?

We often talk about signing up for an event, a luncheon, a committee, etc. If you are looking for the various sign-up sheets, they are located in the Narthex on the blue cloth-covered table. Take a few minutes on Sunday and stop by to see if there is something for which you'd like to participate!





12514 CR 101
PO Box 194
Oxford FL 34484

Phone: 352-748-9199
Email: uccatvoffice@gmail.com

We're on the Web!

VillagesUCC.org

MAILING TO UCC?

If you need to mail your contributions/pledges or anything else to us, please remember to mail it to our **PO BOX**. Our mailing address is: PO Box 194, Oxford, FL 34484. **DO NOT MAIL** us at our physical location address. We want your contributions and communications to be safe. Thank you!

2024 UCC at The Villages Officers, Assistants & Chairs

Moderator.....	Robyn Hawley
Vice Moderator.....	Jamie Klatt
Secretary.....	Jean Boutwell
Recorder.....	Kathy Frey
Asst. Recorder.....	Barbara Teel
Treasurer.....	Jeff Osterman
Asst. Treasurer.....	Jan Cope
Membership Clerk.....	Kaye Phelan
Administration Chair.....	Cherie Harrold
Diaconate.....	Joanne LeFevre
Mission.....	Penny Zwicker
Finance/Stewardship.....	Jim Bodenner



Prayer Requests

Prayer Requests may be submitted to our Pastor through our website www.VillagesUCC.org. Prayers are held for one month only. If you need prayers to continue, please resubmit your request each month. To ensure we're not violating confidentiality, if you're submitting a prayer request for someone other than yourself, please ensure you have their permission to do so. Prayer recipients will be announced during our Sunday worship service.

Please keep the following in your prayers: Bev Kuhlewind, The Powleys, Pat White, John Phelan, Bona Hayes, Gail and Jay Richards, Jess Lance and Will Randall (spiritual strength), Jake Yost (spiritual strength), Mark Westerhold, Daniel Skidmore, Ed Peters

Discretionary Fund

The first Sunday of every month, we collect donations for the Discretionary Fund. This is a fund which our church uses to help local families in need who come to our church door. 100% of your donations go to aid those in need in our own community. If you are able, please consider giving to this important fund. Thank you for your continued support! **Whether at our door or in our pews, this fund helps all those of our "beloved community!" You can make donations through our online giving on our website or mail your donations—just write "discretionary fund" on the memo line of your check. If mailing, make sure you only use our PO Box 194, Oxford FL 34484 address.**



Last month this fund helped a local woman who needed rent assistance.