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May is Mental Health Awareness Month



You Are Not Alone

Now more than ever, we need to find ways to stay connected with our community. No one should feel alone or without the information, support, and help they need.

(see page 12)

On April 21, 2021, your Board of Directors met at 4:00 p.m. All members participated via Zoom. The regular meeting time has changed from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. every third Wednesday.

The Board agreed to expand the partial reopening of services to a maximum of 20 people attending, including visitors. Committees with fewer than 20 participants may meet at the church as long as they are spaced out. We will also allow other organizations to rent the church provided they meet our safety protocols (temperature screens, social distancing, mask wearing, etc.), which are working well. Contact Regina to be included in the lottery to attend a service.

We are moving into the new fiscal year in better shape than previously expected. A good level of pledge donations the past month along with tight budget controls all year allowed us to finish the year with

a gain. The Finance Committee reported that we achieved 99.5% percent of the adjusted revenue goal with almost all coming from pledges and extra giving. Considering the financial hardship that COVID created for many people, this high level of donations is very good. Many pledge units donated more than their original pledge. Expenses for the past year were 93.5% of the adjusted budget. The pledge drive for this year achieved good results. The Stewardship Committee is sending thank you letters to those who pledged.

We need people from the congregation to step forward to coordinate an auction fundraiser. New board member Ernie Reid has agreed to be the board representative who will help coordinate the auction; he will work with a coordinator, Ariel Hoover, and other auction volunteers. Information was collected for conducting the auction partially or totally

online. If you can help coordinate this vital fundraiser, please contact Ernie, the office, or me. The auction will probably occur this fall.

A request for proposals for a contractor for the deck construction has been developed. If you have had a good experience with a contractor for this kind of construction, please let me know ASAP.

The Board approved a plant sale for the second week of May. Proceeds will be used to help buy new plants and supplies needed to keep our gardens looking good. A “self serve and donation system” will be used, similar the one used in the past sale.

The General Assembly (GA) is coming up in June. It will be an all virtual event. Now is the time to register. For information go to the UUA website. I’ve participated both virtually and in person in the past. GA is an uplifting, inspiring, and

educational experience that I highly recommend. It was amazing how well done the virtual GA was last year, and this year promises to be better. The Ware lecturers this year will be Stacey Abrams and Desmond Meade.

If you have comments or suggestions for your Board of Directors, please email All Faiths or contact me (239-770-0795 or gcestotler@gmail.com) or other Board members.

Our next board meeting is scheduled for May 19, 2021, via Zoom at 4:00 p.m.

2021 General Assembly

**"Circle 'Round for
Justice, Healing,
Courage"**

Registration for virtual
GA 2021 is
\$200 per person.

Register now!

More info at UUA.org/GA

Mission Statement

**“All Faiths
Unitarian Congregation
is a welcoming,
caring community,
seeking diversity,
practicing openness,
and encouraging
personal and spiritual
growth.
“We are working
toward a just,
free, peaceful and
compassionate
world.”**

All Faiths Collection Schedule

Share-the-Plate (please write organization and amount in the memo line of your check).

May 9 Operation Joy (Back to School – Part I)
June 13 The Change Program (Racial Justice Team)
July 11 Operation Joy (Back to School – Part II)
August 8 Angel Wings (Homeless Team)

McGregor Clinic–t/b/d

The April Share-the-Plate raised \$245 for One Tree!





I have begun my fifth year as your Minister. Regina and I always comically argue about how many years I've been serving All Faiths. Neither of us is good at math and we add up the years differently. If you add my way, which is likely the correct way, Regina, you will arrive at the beginning of my fifth year.

I pause at this time each year and reflect on what we've done together. When I arrived in May 2017 we agreed to a shared ministry, to keep the honeymoon going by practicing the honeymoon behaviors year after year. We agreed that we wanted a greater presence in our community, we wanted to welcome children and families, we wanted more space while remaining in our current house. We agreed that you needed a minister who holds up pastoral care, responds to the needs of our members and friends, who would listen and guide you rather than serving their needs and desires. We agreed that we wanted to build on our already strong congregational life and that we wanted to find a Director of Music who would serve us well with amazing music and create a choir, and act as a ministry to us.

We can't tick a lot of those boxes. We were sailing along just fine until March 2020. When COVID restrictions were set in place, my heart and spirit sank. How would I lead the congregation, respond to the needs of our members and friends, keep people connected to one another and to our congregation, and inspire for spiritual growth and financial support? How were we going to sustain our strong, vibrant, and committed congregation? Would we be mourning deaths? I knew some congregations would not survive. How would we avoid being a casualty of the pandemic? We were greatly challenged.

My biggest concern was for you. I watched, trying to respond in the best ways I could, as your emotional, social, spiritual, physical, and financial health and resources began to crumble. If you ask me what I think our biggest challenge during this pandemic is, it is not being together. Not being together causes the most intense suffering. During this pandemic we've gained members, we've gained children, youth, and families, we've gained staff, we've gained new technology, and because of your generosity we were able to sustain ourselves. Still, our most important part of who we are – gathering, loving, holding, and welcoming is returning too slowly for my liking and probably yours. It hurts.

It is right to hold up our staff, Regina, Joseph, and Joe, as well as Mary Corrigan who delivered religious education from her porch at the begin-

ning of the pandemic. And now, we add Chantel Rhodes, Director of Child and Youth Programs, to our team. I relied on our staff to help me move us through this pandemic, and still do. They rose to the occasion beautifully. One thing you can shout from the rooftops is that you've assembled a mighty staff team!

Let us take a breath and survey our work, our ministry, our individual and collective contributions. We've achieved so much together. We continue to dream together. I'm looking

forward to many more years together and can't wait to see where we are and who we are. Richard and I want to thank you for your enduring friendship and generosity.

– Blessings, CJ

[Editor's Note: The opinion expressed in this article regarding Regina's math skills are solely the opinion of the author and do not purport to reflect the opinions of the people who hired her in 2009.]

JOYS & SORROWS

With our apologies for any omissions, here are the joys & sorrows expressed by our members in April.

Susan Anthony shared the good news that she has completed her chemo and radiation treatments for cancer with good results so far. We keep her in our healing thoughts.

Carol Elrod is happy that she has regained the use of her hands after breaking both wrists and having surgery. She is in rehab and hopes to return home soon. We send our healing thoughts her way.

Jeanne Ezell fell and broke her leg, which required surgery. She will be having rehab before returning home. We keep her in our healing thoughts.

Michelle Gemma suffered the loss of one of her best friends. We send her our condolences.

Jim Kersey's brother-in-law passed away. We send our sympathy to him and his family.

Patrick Kessing died of a heart attack. We send our condolences to his friends and family.

Jennifer McDaigle's good friend died. We send our sympathy to her.

Julie Simmons' father was hospitalized. We send our healing thoughts his way.

Joyce Ramay

Care and Support Coordinator

Happening at All Faiths

*Happy May
Birthday to you!*



May 7 Ed Kleinow
May 13 Annely Hudanick
May 15 Audrey Olson
May 16 Laura Snow
May 22 Laurie Babcock
May 23 Jeanne Ezell
May 25 Lisa Leonhardt
May 26 Marge DiGalbo
May 27 Rev. CJ
May 29 Mary Ellen Taylor
May 30 Nancy Frasca Cabazares

And Coming Up...

June 6 Joyce Davison
June 8 Segundo Velasquez
June 9 Twink Markytan



Solos Group Events

Friday, May 8, 11:00 a.m.

Lakes Park - bring you own food/drink
11:00 am - meet at the parking lot by
the "Train Station"

*Don't lose track of your Solos friends.
Check your email for details.*

Contact: Annely Hudanick,
annelyblue@hotmail.com

Everyone is welcome to join the Solos
for outings and lunches.

TEN O'CLOCK SCHOLAR

Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m.

<https://zoom.us/j/7787257501>



May 5 - There Will Be More Derek Chauvins: Powerful political actors are committed to ensuring that the system of American policing remains unchanged.

May 12 - The Original Sin in the War of Afghanistan: The original sin of going to war in Iraq was going to war with Iraq. And the original sin of the war in Afghanistan was going to war in Iraq.

May 19 - A Message Too Toxic for the GOP: "Anglo-Saxon" is what you say when "whites only" is too inclusive.

May 26 - No program today

Happy 4th Anniversary, Rev. CJ!



We love you!

We're glad you found us!



ZOOM MEETINGS

Mondays: Schedule a one-on-one meeting with the Minister via Zoom, or in person

Wednesdays: Ten O'clock Scholar 10 a.m.

Thursdays: Zoom Coffee Hour - 11:30 a.m.

Zoom Youth RE Social Gathering 7-9 p.m.

Sundays: Zoom News Talk w. Richard Keelan - 9 a.m.



Zoom Youth Religious Education - 10:30 a.m.
(check calendar for dates)

Zoom Coffee Hour 11:30 a.m.

SUNDAY SERVICE

The Sunday service is streamed *live* at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, on our public Facebook page: www.facebook.com/allfaithsuc, or go to YouTube.com and search "All Faiths."

May 2021 Calendar

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
 <p>May is Mental Health Awareness Month</p> <p><i>All Meetings and Social Events are Held via Zoom</i></p> <p><i>Zoom Links are Sent via Email Prior to Events</i></p>						<p>1</p>  <p>Rev. CJ's 4th Anniversary as our Minister</p>
<p>2</p> <p>9:00am News Talk w. Richard Keelan</p> <p>10:30am Service on Facebook (Youth RE)</p> <p>11:30 Zoom Coffee w. Staff</p>	<p>3</p>	<p>4</p> <p>1:30pm Climate Action Team Mtg.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>10am Ten O'clock Scholar (Pg. 4)</p>	<p>6</p> <p>11:30am Coffee Hour</p> <p>7pm Youth RE Zoom Gathering w. Chantel Rhodes</p>	<p>7</p>	<p>8</p> <p>11am Solos meet at Lakes Park for lunch</p>
Office Closed - Regina on Vacation - Office Closed - Regina on Vacation						
<p>9</p> <p>9:00am News Talk w. Richard Keelan</p> <p>10:30am Service on Facebook (Youth RE)</p> <p>11:30 Zoom Coffee w. Staff</p>	<p>10</p> <p>10am Sun. Service Team Mtg.</p> <p>12pm Zoom Book Club</p>	<p>11</p> <p>10am Racial Justice Mtg.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>10am Ten O'clock Scholar (Pg. 4)</p>	<p>13</p> <p>10 am Finance Mtg.</p> <p>11:30am Zoom Coffee Hour</p> <p>7pm Youth RE Zoom Gathering w. Chantel Rhodes</p>	<p>14</p> <p>7pm ACMA Zoom Concert Jaime Michaels, Ray Cerbone opens</p>	<p>15</p>
<p>16</p> <p>9:00am News Talk w. Richard Keelan</p> <p>10:30am Service on Facebook (Youth RE)</p> <p>11:30 Zoom Coffee w. Staff</p>	<p>17</p> <p>7pm Odyssey Michelle Gemma</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19</p> <p>10am Ten O'clock Scholar (Pg. 4)</p> <p>4pm - Zoom Board Meeting</p>	<p>20</p> <p>11:30am Coffee Hour</p> <p>2pm Homeless Team Mtg.</p> <p>7pm Youth RE Zoom Gathering w. Chantel Rhodes</p>	<p>21</p> <p>7pm ACMA Facebook Live Concert with JRobert</p>	<p>22</p> <p>10am Newcomers Orientation (Pg. 6)</p>
<p>23</p> <p>Sunday Service & Programs Same as Above</p>	<p>24</p> <p>7pm LIFE Celebration</p>	<p>25</p>	<p>26</p> <p>No Ten O'clock Scholar Today</p>	<p>27</p> <p>11:30am Coffee Hour</p> <p>7pm Youth RE Zoom Gathering w. Chantel Rhodes</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p>
<p>30</p> <p>Sunday Service & Programs Same as Above (No YRE)</p> <p>Animal Shelter Collection</p>	<p>31</p>					

MAY 2021 SUNDAY SERVICES "TRANSCENDENCE"

Livestreamed on Facebook at 10:30 a.m.

Recorded and available at www.allfaithsua.org
or on our YouTube channel

In-House attendance (limited to 20 persons)
by prior reservation

May 2 – The Possibility of Spiritual Transcendence

by Rev. CJ McGregor
Music by Joseph Brauer
Worship Associate – Joyce Ramay

May 9 – Transcending Motherhood

by Rev. CJ McGregor
Music by Joseph Brauer
Worship Associate – Donalie Benyak

May 16 – Duty Rather Than Emotion

by Rev. CJ McGregor
Music by Joseph Brauer
Worship Associate – Doug Cartwright

May 23 – Across the Threshold of Awareness

by Rev. CJ McGregor
Music by Joseph Brauer
Worship Associate – Susan Meissner

May 30 – Beyond War

by Joyce Ramay
Music by Joseph Brauer and Bob Way
Worship Associate – Regina Kilmartin

SUNDAY PROGRAMS

News Talk with Richard Keelan
9:00 a.m. on Zoom

Youth RE
10:30 a.m. on Zoom

Coffee Talk with Staff
11:30 a.m. on Zoom

CHILD AND YOUTH PROGRAMS FOR MAY 2021

May 2 - *Cindy Wang Brandt* is an author and speaker known for her work helping parents who are “raising children unfundamentalist.” She grew up in Taiwan and converted to evangelicalism as an elementary student.

May 9 - *Gustavo Gutiérrez* is a Catholic priest from Lima, Peru. Gustavo’s first church as a young priest was in a desperately poor area of Lima. Gustavo struggled to preach what he’d been taught to preach when his congregation didn’t even have enough food for their children.

May 16 - *Kaitlin Curtice* is an author and speaker whose words are often both prophetic and poetic. She is an enrolled member of the Potawatomi Citizen Band and speaks about being Native and also having grown up in the Christian church.

May 23 - *Thich Nhat Hanh* is a Vietnamese monk, a teacher and a peace activist. His students call him Thay, which means teacher. He became a monk at 16, inspired by the joy and serenity of Buddha.

May 30 - Children and youth are invited to participate in our livestreamed service.

INVITATION

ALL FAITHS NEWCOMERS ORIENTATION

Hosted by Rev. CJ McGregor & the Membership Committee
Saturday, May 22, from 10 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

2756 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers

At All Faiths we want our members and friends to understand what we believe in, what we strive for, and what we celebrate. We encourage every member to participate actively in their faith community.

If you are considering becoming a member, if you are a relatively new member, or if you're just curious, we invite you to come on Saturday, May 22, at 10 a.m. for an informative workshop that will bring you up to speed on our faith community. Visitors are welcome, too!

RSVP to Fran Way: franwayrn@aol.com

FIVE FRIENDS & THEIR WEE JINGLE ALERTS

by Ellie Peterson

Five friends ranging in age from 74 to 87 are acting like teenagers, constantly reaching for their phones when their wee jingle alert notifies them of a message.

Some twenty-odd years ago, by chance, the group began forming. Close friendships were developed, and a family of friends emerged who now call themselves the Five Friends Forever (FFF). Pre-pandemic, they enjoyed lunch outings and birthday celebrations with gifts, flowers, cards, hugs, and kisses. Voicing their opinions on hot current events stimulated their conversations.

One friend is an especially gifted writer. She shares her memories and wisdom. Her stories are remarkable, considered by some to be Garrison Keillor-worthy. She gets to the heart of her real stories, which include her growing up on a farm in Ohio as well as years of traveling and living around the world because of her husband's career. She artistically sets the stage and makes you feel like you are right there with her. The stories leave everyone grinning while giving their hearts an extra upbeat.

The FFF's share many views and values. They admire and encourage activism on current political issues. Two friends are past presidents of the Democratic Women's Club. Some of



them took part in the Lee County Pulling Together organization, a group organized to improve communications between Blacks and Whites in the Fort Myers area. One extra special relationship formed when the two friends realized they were living a few hundred miles away from each other, growing up in the South in the late '50s. At that time, they would not have met due to segregation. A bonus is seeing each other at All Faiths' congregational gatherings.

These cherished times involved more laughter and gaiety than talking. Sadness at the death of a spouse, illnesses and physical challenges bring them closer together. Not apart. They rallied around the person going through the difficulty. Spending time at the hospital with a friend in recovery was standard procedure. Joining a friend waiting for AAA

to come and fix a flat tire is considered fun. They are resilient. And the pandemic has not stopped them. They continue to deepen their connections in new and exciting ways.

The FFF's found an awesome way to counter the inherent pandemic changes that brought isolation, social distancing, and loneliness: texting! One friend is the group's technology expert, troubleshooting the problems they encounter. With her help, another friend upgraded from a tracking phone to a smart phone. Some were skeptical about texting. How could it possibly be a substitute for in-person gatherings? To their surprise, they are learning more about each other and find the experiences delightful.

Their wee jingle begins early with a good-morning post welcoming in the new day. Then throughout the

day, texts arrive announcing someone's daily joys and concerns, jokes, news and their opinions of it, snapshots of their families, and even the weather. They recommend books, television programs, and news reports. The range is so enjoyable, and they never know from one day to next, what is going to pop up. A fascinating thing is that no one complains. Getting texts throughout their day is constant and everyone can be as engaged as they want to be. Although if someone misses a day or two, she is contacted to be sure there is no major problem.

One friend fully understands how people can text and be closer, more open, and supportive. What surprised her was getting to know more about everyone's families such as where they lived as children and how they met their significant others. They even get to see pictures of their sweethearts when they first met. This is eye-opening as they delve into more intimate areas of their friend's lives.

Most posts throughout the day start with a short story. Then questions are asked expanding the conversations and teasing out more details. One friend's text shared her anxiousness for her sister and family who contracted

(continued on page 8)

COVID. She received replies like: Oldest sister? Do you have other sisters and brothers? This is a gift enabling them to reveal more personal bits of their life.

Some texts:

- keep them informed about events of interest to go to or get involved in (lectures and where to get the COVID shot!).
- set fine nonstop examples of worthy children's activities and shares ideas for involvement.
- remind everyone the importance of family. One friend is more on-call for family obligations than the rest. Yet she is still so supportive.
- show dependability in helping when needed.

Some posts involve using snail mail to complete the dialogue. One friend made Chicken in the Limelight and sent a printed copy to everyone. Learning about people's favorite holiday dishes and corresponding recipes brings much joy. Then discussing the recipe's origins evokes quite a bit of reflection. "That northern recipe sounds more like a southern one that I remember when I was growing up."

Every evening, a faithful good night text with a warming graphic ends the day.

Each woman contributes in her own way. Love and kindness are felt as their friendships grow. A richness now exists within each one. It would not be there without the pandemic and their creative solution to staying connected. They do dream of getting together in person again. Lunch together would be nice!

Meanwhile, they are certainly Not Alone!

About the Author

Ellie Peterson is a health and wellness columnist for the local *Fort Myers Community Press* paper. She loves hearing uplifting stories and enjoyed assembling this piece for her Five Friends Forever, *Ann Batal*, *Charlotte Blitt*, *Jeanne Ezell*, *Jan Guardiano*, and *Frankie Jennings*, who all met at All Faiths. Each friend contributed their enriching stories.

Ellie, creator of the Meditative Movement™, has spoken at All Faiths', conducted workshops sharing her Meditative Movement technique, and attended their in-person meditation sessions.

Ellie can be reached at 612-710-3415 and ellie@meditativemovements.com. Visit her website for other blog articles. www.meditativemovements.com

LIFE Lee Interfaith for Empowerment

by Marsha Bates, Team Leader

All Faiths' LIFE Activities in April

All Faiths supported Lee Interfaith For Empowerment (LIFE) in several ways in the month of April. On April 12, approximately 20 All Faiths congregants attended (via Zoom) LIFE's Annual Rally. Participants were updated about research efforts completed by the Affordable Housing and Criminal Justice/Mental Health Action Teams since the fall Assembly. The teams interviewed experts, attended meetings with local officials, and worked to identify specific actions/policy changes that LIFE wants elected officials to support.

LIFE's Affordable Housing Action Team wants Fort Myers Mayor Kevin Anderson to support a motion that will be made to City Council to establish a \$3 million Affordable Housing Trust Fund to provide housing for citizens making less than 80% of the area median income (AMI).

The Criminal Justice/Mental Health Action team wants Sheriff Carmine Marceno to support Crisis Intervention Team Training for his Department; to fully use civil citations in his office; and to support a community responder unit.

These requests were made at the April 26 Nehemiah Action. (Note: The Action had not take place when *Connections* went to press, but the resulting information will be dispersed.)

Making a Personal Investment

To ensure independence from outside organizations, LIFE does not accept government funding or corporate donations. Instead, it depends on contributions from its member congregations and individuals within those congregations. All Faiths' budget includes a congregational contribution to LIFE to support its important social justice work.

Many All Faiths congregants have made personal investments to LIFE to support its ongoing work. The suggested individual contribution is \$200; however, that level of giving is not mandatory. Any amount would be welcomed and put to good use.

Contributions can be mailed to: Lee Interfaith for Empowerment, P.O. Box 62692, Fort Myers, FL 33906. You can donate by phone at CashApp \$LIFEJustice. Or you can donate online at LIFE's website: lifejustice.org/make-a-donation. If you have questions, contact Donalie Benyak at 239-482-3545 • bdbenyak@gmail.com or Marsha Bates at 740-278-2357 • gcsmbk@gmail.com.

CLIMATE ACTION TEAM NEWS

by Joan Marshall, Chair



2021 promises to be a year of hope and transformation in the global response to the climate crisis. The Biden administration has clearly embraced America's leadership role in meeting the challenge of climate change. This is evidenced not only by the *Leaders Climate Summit* hosted by President Biden on Earth Day, 2021, but by the fundamental focus on addressing the impact of climate change in his economic mission to "build back better."

You can feel the energy and momentum building right here in conservative southwest Florida. Last month, the *SW Florida Regional Resiliency Compact* was approved by all our county and city governments. At our February Climate Action Team (CAT) meeting we learned about the new Water School at Florida Gulf Coast University. At our CAT meeting at 1:30 p.m. on May 4, we will hear from FGCU professor Dr. Fritz Roka, about their new Agriculture Business program and how the university is addressing the impact of climate change in their agricultural instruction. Be sure to join us.

On May 6, *The Coastal & Heartland National Estuary Partnership* is hosting a free public virtual event to share knowledge, showcase climate action, engage leadership across sectors, and mobilize the collaboration needed to tackle this significant challenge. The Summit includes expert presentations with interactive Q&A sessions, to exchange ideas on expanding the region's climate resiliency. For registration and more information, please visit chnep.org/2021-climate-summit.

We hope you have already joined the SWFL Drawdown team and are learning how you can make a difference in your daily life to help the world reach the point of drawdown, where the CO2 in our atmosphere actually begins to decline. We formed this team in collaboration with our sister congregations, UUCFM and UUCGN here in Lee and Collier Counties, to participate in the UU-DD-2021 challenge from the UU Ministry for the Earth. You can still join the team.

To sign up, navigate to the website drawdown.ecochallenge.org and select Join. A registration screen will be displayed where you enter the requested information.

The next step is to select "join a team." In the search box enter SWFL Drawdown (use caps and spaces as written).

The search will return SWFL Drawdown with a Join Button. Enter SWFL as the password and click Join.

Let's all do our part to help make 2021 the year new hope for the Earth was born.

♥ FOR THE HOMELESS NEWS

by Barb McFarlane

First, we thank everyone for the generous donations to March's Share the Plate. \$385 was donated to Angel Wings, a temporary house for single women without housing. Other members have quietly donated money to All Faiths for this team to share with community organizations that serve people without a place to live. The Salvation Army's Day Resource Center was the recipient of 2 large donations earmarked to support the center. Thank you!

We continue to work on our "bike ministry." This is simple! By me putting a request on my community's Facebook page, seven bikes were donated in April. Between Judy Alberda and me, we are able to transport them to two organizations helping homeless people.

Donating a bike is an easy way to help someone have the independence needed to get to a store, appointments, and work. It would be great if one or two All Faiths' members could replace inner tubes or perform other simple repairs.

We hope you all will consider putting a notice on your neighborhood's social media or newsletter. Bikes in any condition are welcome. Bike locks and lights are also appreciated. Please let Judy or myself know and we will pick up any donated bikes. ***Bikes may also be left at the bike rack on All Faiths' property during the months of May, June and July.***

Please let us know if you have any suggestions on how All Faiths can have a positive impact on the lives of people living on the street and working toward stable housing. Join a monthly team Zoom meeting.



Judy Alberda, judyalberda@yahoo.com, 616-301-5340

Eileen Moran, eileengmo@gmail.com, 610-733-0490

Lewis Robinson, lewrob@comcast.net

Barbara Gaiser, speechmkr@gmail.com, 239-671-9344

Barb McFarlane, mcfarlanebar@gmail.com, 651-808- 8271

All Faiths...It's More than a Name

by Doug Cartwright

For twenty years we've opened our doors
Welcoming congregants wanting to share;
But COVID's prevented the contact we craved
To show to the world that we care.

But now, a year later, we must re-imagine
Our role in this infinite strife.
To bring caring, concern, and, yes, comfort
To someone struggling in life.

And now, we've cautiously opened our doors
To those who have shown they don't fear
A virus, pernicious and hateful,
Which claims victims from those we hold dear.

We've stayed indoors and sequestered,
We've done the social distancing thing.
We've Facebooked and Zoomed and been patient;
But now we are ready to sing.

It's not enough to hear Joseph's piano,
And the words to his welcoming song.
We're ready to open our hearts and our love
To friends we've been missing too long.

CJ's words are a comfort,
His jokes we endure with a groan.
But nothing replaces the joy that we feel
When we realize we're not alone.

And so we entreat the powers that be
To live up to our basic conviction.
Throw open our doors, let in the fresh air,
Put an end to unwanted restriction.

.....

But Wait!

While others ignore safety and caution
And throw their arms open wide,
Our leaders must be more responsible
And not push the threats to one side.

Our name, after all, is All Faiths;
And respect for all is our creed.
We'll wait, ever patient and faithful,
For a time of indisputable need –

A need to come together in person,
Sharing hugs and greetings at last.
A time when we can truly rejoice
That this demon among us has passed.



Shelters provide a safe and nurturing environment for the animals until they can find a forever home. To help them in their mission, they would appreciate donations of pet food and treats, and any of the items listed below.

Learn more about Lee County Animal Services at <http://www.leelostpets.com>, including how to become a volunteer. For more information contact Sharon Gray (geemal@yahoo.com, 565-2474).

ANIMAL SHELTER COLLECTION

Drop Off at All Faiths from May 23 to May 30, 2021

SHELTER WISH LIST

Cat food (dry & canned)
Dog food (dry & canned)
Cat litter (clay & scoopable)
Cat carriers
13- and 55-gallon trash bags
Towels, large & small
Blankets, comforters

Pillow Cases, Sheets
Clorox Wipes
Tissues
Paper Towels
Bleach
Pet Store Gift Cards

TREASURER'S REPORT

by John Conrad, Treasurer

Balance Sheet: Cash Assets – March 2021

Iberiabank Checking	\$19,391
Iberiabank Op. Reserve	25,028
Live Oak Op. Res. CD	20,719
Raymond James Legacy	37,025
Pay Pal	35
Iberiabank Capital Fund	<u>7,337</u>
Total	\$109,534
Prior Month	<u>105,872</u>
Net Gain	\$ 3,662

March 2021 Profit & Loss

Operating Income	\$ 20,097
Operating Expense	<u>16,008</u>
Net Gain	\$ 4,089

Revenue/Operating Income decreased in March compared to February. This was the result of the 2021–2022 fiscal year pledge drive generating more cash revenue in February than in March. Even though those donations are received as cash revenue in the current fiscal year (2020–21), the donations are recorded as a donation towards the new pledge drive for 2021–22. Through these critical and difficult times for all of us, your generosity is appreciated!

The outstanding mortgage principal at the end of March was \$86,897.

The Small Business Administration Paycheck Protection Program loan forgiveness application was submitted to Iberiabank on April 20, 2021. No documentation was required at the time.

In March, \$385 was collected for Angel Wings (Heart for the Homeless Team).

MAY'S ODYSSEY MICHELLE GEMMA

Monday, May 17 at 7:00 p.m.
(Check your email for the Zoom link.)



Michelle Gemma found her way to All Faiths a little over a year and a half ago. She's helped our Heart for the Homeless Team work on a Habitat for Humanity house, and you may also recall seeing her in some of our Stewardship Drive video clips. Let's see what else we can learn about Michelle. Please join us on May 17. Hosted by Rev. CJ with Q&A to follow.

ACMA MAY CONCERTS



The ACMA Facebook page is updated every Saturday with YouTube or music links from our scheduled artist for that date. Also check out new concerts outdoors at the Alliance for the Arts.

May 14 at 7 P.M.

Zoom concert with Jaime Michaels
Ray Cerbone opens

May 21 at 7 P.M.

Facebook Live Concert with J Robert

June 12th 7 P.M.

Facebook Live Concert with Tim McGearry

MAY PLANT SALE WILL BENEFIT THE GARDEN TEAM

May 10 through May 16, 2021

All Faiths' annual plant sale will be held from **May 10th through May 16th**. For those of you who attend services, Sunday is your chance to shop! There will be a box on the front porch during Regina's office hours for cash donations. Any other times, a check can be mailed to All Faiths marked with the words



"plant sale." All prices are by donation. Nothing is marked. Most will be labeled as to type, other than ferns and bromeliads and those I have no idea what they are (ha). So shop, rain or shine, day or night, weekday or weekend. Enjoy!

– Judy Alberda and the Landscape Team

MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH MONTH – YOU ARE NOT ALONE

by Richard Keelan



I'd like to reflect on how being part of a community helps our mental health. One of the strongest protective factors in keeping healthy mentally is having a support network. All the statistics and data show that being connected and part of a community not only can prevent mental illness, it can ensure early intervention and support during a crisis. We tend to underestimate or ignore the risk of mental illness in older adults.

In the United States, elders are the second highest risk group for suicide after adolescents. The pandemic has exacerbated these issues for the whole of society.

We at **All Faiths** are a community that cares for each other and demonstrates that caring in our services, our outreach to each other, and in all our interactions. We can be that commu-

nity that helps each be safe and healthy. I know I am grateful for a community that holds me and holds each other. Let us in mental health month remember and renew our commitment to each other and care for each other's mental health.

If you know someone in crisis, the **Center for Progress and Excellence** has a mobile crisis unit that will send a clinician to anyone in Lee County's home or workplace. A team of two will evaluate and provide assistance for free. The service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Mobile Crisis Unit
CRISIS HOTLINE NUMBER
(844) 395-4432

*"Together, we can realize our shared vision of a nation where anyone affected by mental illness can get the appropriate support and quality of care to live healthy, fulfilling lives — a nation where **no one feels alone** in their struggle."*

~ National Alliance on Mental Illness

All Faiths Unitarian Congregation

2756 McGregor Blvd., Fort Myers, Florida 33901

Phone: (239) 226-0900 – Email: office@allfaithsuum.org – Website: www.allfaithsuum.org

Executive Board: Chris Stotler, Chair; Rachel Spiller, Vice Chair; John Conrad, Treasurer; Ed Elrod, Secretary; Diane Cartwright, Past Chair.

Directors: Marge DiGalbo, Peter Erickson, Eileen Moran, Ernie Reid, Linda Runkle.

Staff: Regina Kilmartin, Administrator; Joseph Brauer, Music Director; Chantel Rhodes, Child & Youth Programs Director; Joe Gayton, Sexton.

Minister Emeritus: The Rev. Dr. Wayne Robinson

Communications

Newsletter

Regina Kilmartin

Proofreaders

Carol Elrod

Joyce Ramay

Social Media & Website

Regina Kilmartin,

Sharon Gray, Becky Ross

Adult Education Forums

Sunday Service Team

Joyce Ramay

Richard Keelan

Member Services

Fran Way

Greeters

Marsha Bates

Care and Support

Joyce Ramay

Finance

Joyce Ramay

Stewardship Committee

Howard Silverman & Janet Falk

Nominating Committee

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Ed Elrod

Building and Grounds

Bob DiGalbo

Judy Alberda

Social Action & Outreach

Climate Action Team

Joan Marshall

Community Events

Richard Keelan

Heart for the Homeless

Barb McFarlane

Racial Justice Team

Rachel Spiller

L.I.F.E.

Marsha Bates, Donalie Benyak,

Lana Cowell

McGregor Clinic

Joyce Schaffer

Mano a Mano

Charlotte Blitt

Operation Joy & Solos Group

Annelly Hudanick

Minister: Rev. CJ McGregor - Cell: 508-736-3361



Deadline for the **June** Issue of *Connections* is **May 18**

(Brief announcements may be accepted later, and will be included *if* space and time permit.)



OFFICE HOURS: 9am to 4pm, Monday–Thurs;
9am to 12pm, Friday & Sunday.

Congregational Administrator: Regina Kilmartin