

Church of the Isles- United Church of Christ Monthly Newsletter



Pastor's Blog

The Season of Epiphany! More Light!

From now until the beginning of Lent in February, we celebrate the church season of Epiphany. The season begins on January 6 with the commemoration of the journey of the wise men, guided on their journey by the star that came to rest over the house where Jesus was.

The colors of the sanctuary paraments are white and gold, the decorations are stars and the spiritual search is for wisdom. It is a joyous season, this season of the wise ones, this season of appearing! It is a season of promise when we have a fresh new start to the journey, a beginning, a launch, when the creation moves from the longest, darkest nights of the winter solstice and inexorably presses toward more light and life renewed in spring.

In the 1950's an amazing spiritual community was founded on the island of Iona by a wise man named George MacLeod. He wrote these words that are the heart of Epiphany: "Follow truth wherever you find it. Even if it takes you outside your preconceived ideas of God or of life. Even if it takes you outside your own country into most insignificant alien places like Bethlehem. Be courageous. But concentrate on your search. Truth is one. All roads lead home. The seeming devious route will take you to a single star. You will find it is the morning star for you. In the end you will see the sun behind all suns. Follow the light you have been given and pray for more light."

Each year at church in January we will receive a star for the new year with wise words printed on it, words of inspiration and guidance. I think that no matter what my star words are for this year, I am going to make my mantra for 2020..."more light"...follow the light you have been given...and pray for "more light."

Diane, Julianna, and I feel so blessed to be part of such a hard-working, dedicated, and generous congregation! Thank you for the many cards, gifts, yummy food, and other signs of welcome and Christmas cheer, also thank you for the cards, gifts, framed poster, cake, and kindness offered to Diane for her birthday! We are so grateful to be here with all of you!

Happy New Year, with so much love and with all blessings, Shelly



Pastors Blog Continued...

A Poem for Epiphany



We Astronomers by Rebecca Elson

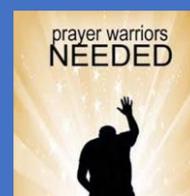
We astronomers are nomads,
Merchants, circus people,
All the earth our tent.
We are industrious.
We breed enthusiasms,
Honor our responsibility to awe.

But the universe has moved a long way off.
Sometimes, I confess,
Starlight seems too sharp,

And like the moon
I bend my face to the ground,
To the small patch where each foot falls,

Before it falls,
And I forget to ask questions,
And only count things.

PRAYER CONCERNS



Billie Dirks, Charlotte Hanna, Diane Lasley in the death of her sister-in-law, Peggy Lasley on Jan 2. Those who are grieving.



Notes from our Moderator

Happy New Year! As happens in the aging process, each year passes by faster than the year before. Where has 2019 gone? Well, it certainly was a very busy year here at COTI.

- ✓ The New Beginnings Task Force continues its work “to devise a feasible plan for effective and improved utilization of all assets; and recommend needed changes to the resources COTI is blessed to offer (human and otherwise) so as to grow our mission and discipleship impact in our beach community.”
- ✓ We had another successful IRB Greenfest and started working on 2020.
- ✓ Our Easter Sunrise Service brought over 200 worshippers to the beach
- ✓ We continued to make improvements in our facility and our relationship with the community.
- ✓ We sadly said farewell to Office Assistant, Michelle Larson, and created a new administrative structure: Jeannie Waller (Resources Coordinator), Tiffany Hafer (Office and Finance Assistant) and office volunteers (Val Courtney, Nancy Ertz and Diane Guthrie)
- ✓ We had some new ACs installed, fixed the locks on all our doors, replaced the tiles on the roof that Irma disrupted, tented both church and store for termites(!) and, thanks to Pastor Liz, the Kruegers and Kathryn Alvarez added flowers and flower pots in our Garden and around the buildings.
- ✓ Our Transition Team prepared to bid farewell to our beloved Pastor Liz and welcome our wonderful new pastor, Shelly Wilson. We worked with Trinity UCC on a Shared Minister Covenant and Call Agreement and drafted a new Church Profile.
- ✓ We had “going away” and “welcome” services and parties for Liz and Shelly.
- ✓ Shared “Blessing of the Animals” with Calvary Episcopal Church
- ✓ Hosted the Mayor’s Ladies of IRB Annual Tea
- ✓ Served Thanksgiving dinner to 58 members and friends
- ✓ Hosted a very successful Sing Along Messiah
- ✓ Provided a Respite Stop for IRB Tour of Homes
- ✓ Served dinner and provided Christmas gifts and entertainment for nearly 200 residents of Pinellas Hope
- ✓ Christmas was present at Church of the Isles throughout the month of December!

Now we are starting the new year, and we have lots to do right off the bat!! Mark your calendars...

- **January 8 (2-4pm) and if needed January 15 (4pm)**, working on By Laws updates. If this sort of thing floats your boat, come and join us!
- **January 12**, there will be a *Job Fair* following worship. You will have the opportunity to learn, all about the various positions that are needed to keep the church functioning, there are lots of openings to choose from (Vice Moderator, Finance, Clerk, Deacons, Trustees, Missions, Music, Fellowship, there is something for every interest/talent). Come join the fun and get informed!
- **January 26, 4:00pm** – COTI 67th ANNUAL MEETING. We will have several important items to vote on, including the updated By Laws. Please plan to return to church at 4 pm for the meeting AND we will feed you supper!!

We’ll get all our business over and done with in January. This may not be much fun, but it is the backbone of everything that happens at Church of the Isles. Please join us, your input is important!

Marty Synnott, Moderator



Church and Community News

Become a Church Member

When folks live for parts of the year in more than one location and/or have a particular local congregation or other denominational affiliation, they may choose to become associate members of another congregation. For example, folks who belong to a different congregation up north, may choose to join COTI as an associate member. The associate membership will promote involvement in decision-making by including excellent and dedicated part-time residents as members of Boards and Committees and having a vote at congregational meetings here while still maintaining full membership in another congregation. If you have been interested in learning more about this option for yourself or considering joining COTI as a full member, please let Shelly know. She is happy to answer questions and have a conversation about ways for all of us to get involved in our community in meaningful ways. Email her at wilsonshellya@yahoo.com or call: 352-359-1869.

— BECOME A —
MEMBER

Stewardship- How will you contribute?



Perhaps you are new to the experience of pledging. Or, maybe this practice has been a part of your spiritual journey for many years. Either way, here are at least three reasons why pledging your support to COTI's vital work really matters:

1. **Pledging empowers identity.** A pledge card (regardless of the amount) says, "I am a part of something larger than myself." It says, "I stand in solidarity with a family of faith, believers, in pursuit of the same vision to love God, love others, and love Earth". When we do the math and sign the card, we are saying in essence, "as for me and my house, we will serve those in need together with my church family." A pledge card says, "we believe in what we are doing as a church and in who we are becoming together." A pledge card says "Yes. We're are all in."
2. **Pledging empowers accountability.** Deeply rooted in our ecclesiology (our theology of church), is the conviction that we exist as a dynamic community of strength and grace,



intended to help individuals continually live into and up to their fullest identity and potential. Even with the best of intentions, and on our best days, our deepest convictions can sometimes be neglected or overlooked. When you pledge, you create for yourself a mechanism of accountability. You empower your church to empower you. A pledge makes it possible to come alongside one another in the journey, to respectfully and prayerfully encourage each other in the pursuit of our own generosity goals while empowering our church to do more together in our names than we could ever accomplish alone.

3. ***Pledging empowers the ministry budget.*** There is a practical/pragmatic reason for pledging. It is a vital tool in the process of developing and managing a healthy church budget. A church budget is a *ministry funding plan* that is built with a variety of tools. Prayer is the first tool. In prayerful discernment and dialogue, our ministry leaders (minister, deacons, council, finance committee, etc.) deliberately seek the guidance of Spirit in seeing needs in the community and helping others. They also look at our infra-structure and keep our building, grounds, staff, and other ministry assets funded. Along with our CPA, our treasurer helps provide us with another tool-- the study of trend-lines in our giving patterns. We can examine an analysis of trends in giving and in expenses from week to week, month to month, and year to year. But one vital tool used is the total number of all pledges submitted from a faithful and consistent membership. When you pledge, you help our leadership responsibly discern the viability of funding the ministry initiatives being envisioned and the maintaining of all physical assets.

Thank you for considering how you will support our important work in this new year, 2020!



Thank you for making COTI the generous church we are!

PICKED UP YOUR OFFERING ENVELOPES FOR 2020 YET? If not, they are available in the foyer outside the sanctuary! Thanks!!

COTI Bi-Laws workdays- Wednesday, January 8th & possibly January 15th.

BY-LAWS WORKING DAYS! Don't worry, COTI's By-Laws have been updated since folks wrote with quills, relatively recently, in fact! We just need to do a few tweaks here and there to make our standard operations on paper reflect what we actually DO in real life! It is important work and will surprisingly, be fun! Join Shelly in the library, Wednesdays, January 8 from 2pm-4pm and if necessary, on the 15th at 4pm.





Job Fair – Sunday, January 12 during coffee hour

There will be tables, snacks and information on how YOU can volunteer!

Want to learn more about how you might...???

- Help others
- Help create interesting worship services
- Work on music,
- Work with children,
- Teach a class
- Visit elderly/sick with the pastor
- Serve communion
- Work on organizational structure/business
- Volunteer at the thrift store
- Help change those victimized by human trafficking (Miracles Outreach)
- Help those experiencing homelessness (Pinellas Hope)
- Join a book group
- Join a group for spiritual conversation
- Help with strategical planning
- Work in the garden
- Work on social justice issues (LGBTQ, race, gun violence, environmental concerns, others...)



ALL OF THESE THINGS AND MORE HAPPEN AT COTI!! What are YOU being called to be/do in 2020?? Come to the Job Fair to learn more!

COTI needs your help!

WAYS TO BE INVOLVED:

You may have seen all the various sign-up sheets as you enter Pilgrim Hall. Here's a list of how you can be a part of what's happening at COTI:

- Help with our Pinellas Hope Table Ministry the 2nd Tuesday of each month (next is January 14th)
- Volunteer to be an Usher for Sunday Worship
- Volunteer to be a Host for fellowship following Sunday Worship
- Donate a Sunday floral bouquet in memory or in honor of someone special in your life (\$40)



- Request a name tag
- Be added to our email list
- Upcoming special sign-up sheets:
 - Attend and/or help with lunch for FL UCC Women Annual Meeting for Central Gulf Coast (Feb. 8 at COTI)
 - IRB Greenfest - lots of help needed to make it once again a huge success (March 28th)

Ecumenical Prayer- Sunday, January 19th @ 3 pm



St. Jerome Catholic Church is pleased to host our community Ecumenical Prayer for Christian Unity service on Sunday, Jan. 19, 2020, at 3 pm. This date falls within the year 2020 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Jan. 18 – 25, 2020.

COTI Annual Meeting- Sunday, January 26th @ 4pm



REPORTS! VOTING! DINNER!

WORSHIP! FUN! FELLOWSHIP!

ALL ARE INVITED!!!!

Emergency Assistance Fund- Help those in need



Each month when we receive communion in worship, we also receive a special offering which helps to support those at COTI and in our wider community who need help throughout the year. Individuals and families who are experiencing times of crisis and transition are assisted by your help. **Thanks for your generous gifts to this fund on**

January 5



Beach Community Food Pantry @ Calvary Episcopal Church IRB needs the following **items for their food pantry:**
 Oral hygiene products (toothpaste/brushes, mouth wash and floss), Dog food or dog treats

COTI Book Club- Sunday, January 19th @ 4:30 pm (note time change)

We regularly meet at 4:00 p.m. in the Lounge on the third Sunday of each month. The group is full of interesting people reading (for the most part!) fascinating books which is a great mix for some lively discussions. We're always on the hunt for books to add to our list. Join us and share some of your favorite books.



January 19 – *The Rainbow Comes and Goes* by Anderson Cooper and Gloria Vanderbilt, Non-Fiction

"A touching and intimate correspondence between Anderson Cooper and his mother, Gloria Vanderbilt, offering timeless wisdom and a revealing glimpse into their lives."

February 16 – *The Library Book* by Susan Orlean, Non-Fiction

"Weaving her lifelong love of books and reading into an investigation of the April 1986 fire that destroyed the Los Angeles Public Library, award-winning *New Yorker* reporter and *New York Times* bestselling author Susan Orlean delivers a mesmerizing and uniquely compelling book that manages to tell the broader story of libraries and librarians in a way that has never been done before."

Deadline for submissions for the February Newsletter is Monday, January 20, 2020.



2020 January

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 New Year's Day!! Office Closed	2 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Pastor Shelly is in 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop	3 9 am-2 pm COTI Office	4 10 am- 2pm Thrift Shop
5 9 am Worship	6 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Hours	7 9 am-2 pm COTI Office 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop	8 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Pastor Shelly is in 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop 2-4 pm COTI By-laws	9 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Pastor Shelly is in 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop	10 9 am-2 pm COTI Office	11 10 am- 2pm Thrift Shop
12 9 am Worship 10 am JOB FAIR	13 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Hours	14 9 am-2 pm COTI Office 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop 11 am- 2:30 pm Pinellas Hope	15 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Pastor Shelly is in 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop 1:30 pm Deacons 3 pm Council 4 pm COTI By-Laws	16 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Pastor Shelly is in 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop	17 9 am-2 pm COTI Office	18 10 am- 2pm Thrift Shop
19 9 am Worship 3 pm Ecumenical Prayer 4:30 Book club	20 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Deadline for newsletter submissions	21 9 am-2 pm COTI Office 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop	22 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Pastor Shelly is in 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop	23 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Pastor Shelly is in 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop	24 9 am-2 pm COTI Office	25 10 am- 2pm Thrift Shop
26 9 am Worship 4 pm COTI Annual Meeting & Supper	27 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Hours	28 9 am-2 pm COTI Office 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop	29 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Pastor Shelly is in 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop	30 9 am-2 pm COTI Office Pastor Shelly is in 10 am-2pm Thrift Shop	31 9 am-2 pm COTI Office	

Church of the Isles United Church of Christ

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Rev. Bill Main, Associate for Visitation (727) 291-3663

Marty Synnott, Moderator (727) 249-3011

Beach Community Thrift Store (727) 444-0339