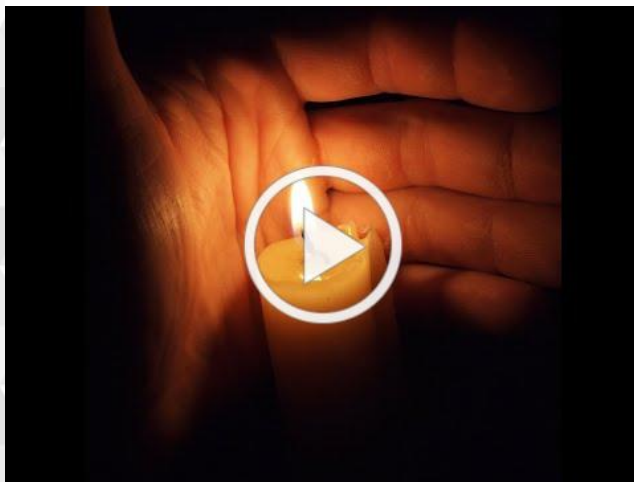




April 9, 2021



If you haven't seen this special message from Mike, please take a moment to watch this important video message and then share it with your family and friends by copying the link and pasting it to the social media channel of your choice. We continue to encourage you to light your candles and share them with us. Please remember to send us a picture at [mediaministry@whatis1st.com](mailto:mediaministry@whatis1st.com).

### **Attention all cookie bakers!**

The "Thank You" (aka Cupcake) ministry needs you. We delivered our first Thank You tribute, 34 small bags of home baked cookies to the workers and staff of the Punta Gorda Sanitation Department. These people are there every week to ensure that our streets and neighborhoods stay free from waste and yard debris. We're so accustomed to seeing them that we often really don't see them as people at all. These workers were so grateful to be recognized. It was heartwarming.

Our second "Thank You" this past week went to the Charlotte County Sheriff's office. For this one, we needed 120 bags of home baked cookies! That's right, 120 BAGS OF

COOKIES. The sheriff's office was thrilled and stated that they had never been selected for a thanks such as this. Not only did we thank the officers but the detectives, the dispatchers, communication specialists and the administrative support staff. The person in charge of community relations greeted us and took pictures of us and our many boxes of bagged cookies. Our team of bakers included: Kathy "B", Kathy Taylor, Beth Howell, Cindy Crystal, Betsy Wauters, Patty DePetro and Julie Edwards. Together we baked and bagged 140 bags of cookies. We didn't want anyone to be overlooked.

Our next "Thank You" target for July will be the Hospice workers who do such a fabulous job with the end of life process both as a comfort to families and for those that are passing on. Please, if you love to bake and would like to participate in this fun and rewarding ministry, call me, Kathy Kresge at 941-661-1175 or Gail in the church office.



### **Weekend Weather Advisory...**

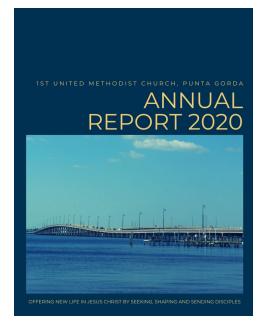


Current weather forecasts are calling for rain this weekend, and may require us to cancel our Praise in the Park service this Sunday. If that is the case, we will let you know by posting on Facebook, as well as updating you by email and on our 1st Church app. Please make sure to check for updates throughout the day on Saturday.

### **2020 Annual Report is Now Available!**

The 2020 Annual Report is now available online. Click the link below to access your copy. Thank you for your faithfulness and support throughout the past year. We look forward to even greater things in the year to come!

**[Click Here for our 2020 Annual Report](#)**



### **Congratulations!**

Congratulations to Ken Moses and Barbara Dexter who were united in holy matrimony on March 28. A private ceremony officiated by Rev Loomis was held at 2pm in the historic sanctuary. Music was provided by David Bellows and Briyin Butgereit. Ken and Barbara



will be living in Ponte Vedra until the end of the school year so that Barbara may continue teaching her 20 piano students. They will return to Punta Gorda for the summer. For those who saw them at the 8am service, yes they were holding hands!

## Word from Worship

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Greetings 1st Church friends --

What a glorious Easter celebration we were blessed with in 2021! Beautiful weather for 3 services at Gilchrist Park; hundreds of people, including many families heard a wonderful, uplifting message of hope, heard incredible music and a children's story, and all were able to share the gift of communion together. As if all that wasn't enough, we had the joy to witness the baptism of a beautiful little girl, named Roxanna Rain. Following the 9:15 service the children and families gathered in the Children's Ministry area to enjoy the adorable animals in the petting zoo. After the many crates and equipment was packed up, we joined the 11 o'clock service in the Life Center. God is great! I'd like to thank the many volunteers who helped, whether behind the scenes to get communion ready, to packing up and helping at each service as greeters or ushers. It requires a lot of help and I am grateful. Bless you!

It's been exciting to see some returning faces (even from the eyes up) the past couple weeks. For those of you who haven't been in church for the past months due to Covid, here are a couple of changes that have taken place. We no longer sign in the black attendance books. You can check-in on line before you arrive, or one of the hosts will get your name and check you in upon your arrival. Please wear name tags to help speed up the process. Instead of passing the offering baskets, we have large Offering baskets located at each door for your convenience. If you have questions, please let me know or contact the office for help. We are happy to have you with us again.

At our Thursday prayer meeting, RPM, the question was asked about how eloquent prayer needs to be. It made me think that sometimes we try to pray so long, loud, or fancy that we lose sight of the fact that prayer can be simple conversations with God. What's important is the sincerity of our heart and the faith that God hears in us. My most sincere and simple prayer is "God help me". Please join us in the sanctuary on Thursdays at noon for a time of prayer and sharing. Call me for more info.

Praying for you!

Rosie Young

Worship Coordinator





Ann Johnson Gateff passed away on April 1, 2021. Our thoughts and prayers go out to her family.



Rochelle "Scottie" Lester passed away on March 10, 2021. Our thoughts and prayers go out to her family and friends.

### Who is looking for 40 Days to a Healthier Life?

If you are, we would love to have you join us as we begin The Daniel Plan. This 6 week program focuses on Faith, Food, Fitness, Focus and Friendship.



We have a fun group that just completed the 40 Day Sugar Fast and we are going to continue on this journey to a healthier and more spiritual life. We meet on the church campus every Monday at 1:00 pm. If you would like to join our group, please email Kathy Butgereit at [kathy@whatis1st.com](mailto:kathy@whatis1st.com) or feel free to call me at 941-639-3842. Please respond no later than Friday, April 16<sup>th</sup> if you are interested.



**TODAY  
MATTERS  
MENTAL  
HEALTH  
MINISTRIES  
ANNOUNCES**

**THE OPERATION 22 TO ZERO HERO MOBILE  
TO ARRIVE IN PUNTA GORDA APRIL 17<sup>TH</sup>**  
{Offers Hope to Service Members, Veterans and First Responders}

"Today Matters Mental Health Ministries," a new program, whose mission is to help remove the stigma about mental health by connecting the mind, spirit, body and to be the voice for the silent, has invited Michele Ladd and

the Operation 22 to Zero Hero Mobile to participate in the Today Matters Ministry on April 17<sup>th</sup>.

“We are very excited Ms. Ladd and the National Veteran Resources organization will take part in our ministry,” said Briyin Butgereit. The Hero Mobile will be parked in front of the Life Center on the church’s campus.

Since September 11, 2018, the Hero Mobile has traveled to more than 30 States and more than 85,000 miles reaching thousands of heroes. Their mission is to offer hope and help for Service Members, Veterans and First Responders. They do this by traveling the country in the Operation 22 to ZERO Hero Mobile meeting America's heroes face to face, sharing their stories and finding local resources if they need help. Their goal is to reduce suicide by letting them know they care and that they are not alone!

Please come and support the Veterans and First Responders and invite anyone that you feel would find this event beneficial to them.

The service will be held on April 17<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 on the campus of the 1<sup>st</sup> United Methodist Church/Life Center, Punta Gorda. For information call 863-244-6289/ visit **[www.whatis1st.com](http://www.whatis1st.com)** and click on the Today Matters logo.

### Harmony Class to Offer New Andy Stanley Bible Study

The Harmony Class will begin a new 6-session Bible study on Sunday, April 25<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 am in the Fellowship Hall. This video-based study is, 'better decisions, fewer regrets' - 5 Questions to Help You Determine Your Next Move - by Andy Stanley. In this Bible study, Andy teaches us five catalytic questions to ask every time we make a decision. Stop regretting bad decisions! Learn how to ask more questions first! Moderator Debbie Harrington invites everyone to attend. RSVP requested but not required to [debbie2u@comcast.net](mailto:debbie2u@comcast.net) or text 941.380.0213.

Scroll down for more of *The Bridge*

### Yom HaShoah Service - In Memory of those lost in Holocaust



## Media Deadlines

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As we continue to move back to in-person for our Bible studies, small groups and church events, we want to encourage you to promote your events and outreach programs in our weekly newsletter, *The Bridge*. All articles and media submissions must be received by 5 pm on Wednesday. Recording times are limited and must be scheduled **no less** than two weeks prior to your desired promo date. To schedule a recording or submit an article for *The Bridge*, please email [christa@whatis1st.com](mailto:christa@whatis1st.com).

**FOLLOW US & JOIN US THIS SUNDAY LIVE AT 9:15 & 11 AM  
ONLINE ON FACEBOOK, YOUTUBE AND WHATIS1ST.COM**

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## Scroll down for Worship Service information

### Praise in the Park

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Join us this Sunday at 8 am for *Praise in the Park*! Open to everyone, this is your opportunity to join us for "in person" worship as we enjoy God's scenery from the lawn of the beautiful Gilchrist Park Pavilion, *weather permitting of course*. Please plan to bring your lawn chairs and/or blankets, and, yes, we will be asking you to practice social distancing. Don't forget to join our "Praise in the Park" group on our Church

App! Please make sure you are connected with us through the app or through social media, as we will be keeping you posted for any changes to our worship schedule in case of stormy weather!

**See you Sunday for Praise in the Park!**



## Join us for Worship In-Person This Sunday!

If you are planning on attending our services please remember the following:

- **Masks are required at all times.**
- Temperatures will be taken at check-in.
- Social distancing is being enforced per CDC recommendations.
- Families may sit together, but please leave three seats between you and others not in your family.
- If you are feverish or not feeling well, we ask that you stay home and join us online on our Facebook and YouTube channels.



At this time, you may only enter the Life Center through the **main entrance facing the Fellowship Hall courtyard**. All other exterior doors will be locked, with the Life Center opening at 9 am. Please refrain from entering the Life Center building if you have not been fully checked in by one of our hosts.

Please note, both of our services will be broadcast LIVE to our members and guests at home through our website, [whatis1st.com](http://whatis1st.com), as well as our Facebook and Youtube channels. With time constraints and necessary lighting changes for our live feed, we do ask everyone to take a seat directly after you check in for your safety.

As a reminder, all 11 am attendees, please remain in your vehicles until we are given the all clear after sanitization has been completed.

We'll see you Sunday!

## Opportunities

### Service Opportunity

We are looking for a couple of volunteers to water our flowers on campus through the remainder of the dry season. Unfortunately, we do not have a sprinkler system, and the job can be a bit overwhelming for the small maintenance staff we have on hand. If you are interested, please call the church office, 941.639.3842 and Gail will direct you to Joey DePetro for further information. Thank you and have a great day!

### Community Outreach Opportunity

1<sup>st</sup> Church Family would you like to be the voice of a child who greatly needs your help? Rick Sloan, the Charlotte County Recruiter for Guardian Ad Litem is looking for volunteers who are willing to advocate for children who are abandoned, abused and neglected by no fault of their own and end up in the child welfare system. All volunteers are trained free of charge and the training is

currently done online. One only needs to have a heart for these children, an ability to learn and 10-12 hours per month to volunteer.

If you would like to help in this worthy cause, please contact Rick Sloan at [Rick.Sloan@gal.fl.gov](mailto:Rick.Sloan@gal.fl.gov) or by phone at 941-467-4663.

## Friendship Ministry Callers

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We are looking for volunteers to be a part of 1<sup>st</sup> Church's "Friendship Ministry Callers," an important component of ConneXions. ConneXions is the new faith initiative which Pastor Mike announced in early 2021. He challenged us all with the question "How do we become the Church of Jesus Christ, as Jesus intended us to be?" Surely, outreach and kindness play a large role. Mainly because of Covid, there is an

urgent need to stay in touch with members of our spiritual family. Many of these folks are not able to attend weekly services yet yearn for fellowship and spiritual nourishment. Would you be willing to make check-in calls again for the Church? We are beginning a telephone ministry, hoping to get commitments for callers who can make 10 - 15 calls at least every six months, if not every quarter, so no one slips through the 1st Church cracks. Please consider if you are able to serve the faith community in this action. If so, please contact Gail Sexton at [gail.sexton@whatis1st.com](mailto:gail.sexton@whatis1st.com) or 941-639-3842.

## Media Volunteers Needed!

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Our Media Team is in need of several individuals to help in the media booth with slides and cameras on a rotating schedule. No experience is required, and full training will be provided. We also need two to three people to serve as hosts for our online services. Hosts are responsible to greet our viewers, answer questions and provide information about our church app, online giving and prayer team in the chat area on both our Facebook broadcast and YouTube channel. Training will be provided as well. If you are interested in any of these positions, please email Christa, [christa@whatis1st.com](mailto:christa@whatis1st.com).



## Crafters Group

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Do you crochet, knit or draw? Crafters needed for our weekly crafting sessions every Wednesday 1:30-3:30 in Room 9. Some projects we have created in the past:

- Cards for our own CARE MINISTRY to use to encourage others in our church and community
- Crochet Octopus toys - Donated to Galisano Children's Hospital, Fort Myers
- Baby Blankets - Donated to Careline Pregnancy Center in Port Charlotte



• Donated to the Veterans Home, Port Charlotte  
We look forward to seeing you there! We are always looking for new ideas, so feel free to share your favorite patterns with us!

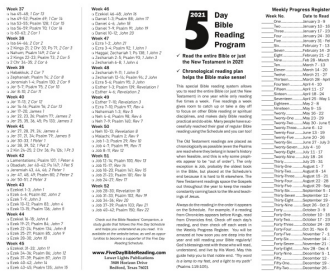
For more information, please contact Diane Houston, 941-740-1016, [houstonfla04@yahoo.com](mailto:houstonfla04@yahoo.com) or Rosalie Wilford, (941) 639-6198.

## Get Connected!



Pastor Mike recently introduced the new accountability small group ministry, "Connexions." This is your opportunity to connect with other Christ followers, to hold each other accountable in your daily walks with Christ and implement some of the same practices and worship habits developed by Methodist founder. Connexions will challenge you and help build stronger relationships with other believers. If you haven't signed up to be a part of this next step at 1<sup>st</sup> Church, we encourage you to do so today. Please send an email to Gail Sexton, [gail@what1st.com](mailto:gail@what1st.com) or call 941.239.3842, ext. 207.

## 2021 Bible Reading Schedules



We want to encourage you to join us as we once again read through the Bible. **Reading calendars** are available for download and printing on our website, [what1st.com/bible2021](http://what1st.com/bible2021), and hard copies are available in the Life Center. Start your new year off right by committing to read God's Word!





# Church Center

- DOWNLOAD THE APP FROM YOUR PHONE OR TABLET'S APP STORE.
- OPEN THE APP AND SEARCH FOR 1ST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH.
- FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS TO SET UP AND CONFIRM YOUR ACCOUNT.
- NOW YOU MAY CHECK IN, GIVE YOUR TITHES & OFFERINGS AND WATCH OUR SERVICE ALL FROM YOUR PHONE OR TABLET.

Worship with us  
Live Every Sunday

8 am Praise in the Park

@ the Gilchrist Park Pavilion

9:15 am Contemporary

11 am Traditional

Live in the Life Center & Online

whatis1st.com  @whatis1st  @1stunitedmethodistchurch  
Children's & Youth Sunday School at 9:15 am

## MEDIA MINISTRY

IMMEDIATE POSITIONS NEEDED:  
CAMERA OPERATORS, VISUAL TECHS,  
& VIRTUAL GREETERS

EMAIL [CHRISTA@WHATIS1ST.COM](mailto:CHRISTA@WHATIS1ST.COM) FOR INFO

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## Ways To Give



WEBSITE  
[WHATIS1ST.COM](http://WHATIS1ST.COM)



ACH WITHDRAWAL  
CALL 941.639.3842 TO SET UP



BY MAIL  
1ST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
507 W. MARION AVENUE  
PUNTA GORDA, FL 33950



BILL PAY  
CONTACT YOUR FINANCIAL  
INSTITUTION FOR INSTRUCTIONS.

## PRAYER team

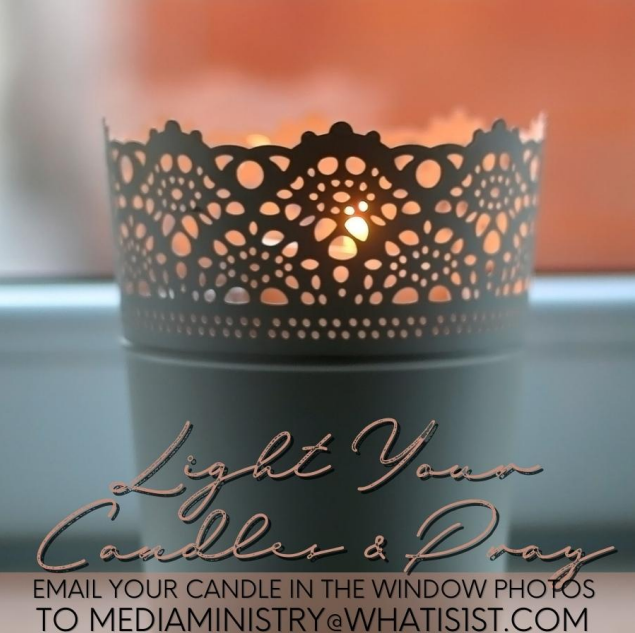
TUESDAYS AT 9 AM

EMAIL [PRAYERTEAM@WHATIS1ST.COM](mailto:PRAYERTEAM@WHATIS1ST.COM)  
FOR MORE INFORMATION





**Today Matters Mental Health Ministries Service**  
**Saturday, April 17 - 4 pm - Life Center**  
 Our Guests:  
**Michele Ladd**  
**National Veteran Resources**  
  
**Melissa Hall**  
**Suicide Prevention Coordinator**  
**Bay Pines VA Medical Center**



*Light Your Candles & Pray*  
 EMAIL YOUR CANDLE IN THE WINDOW PHOTOS TO [MEDIAMINISTRY@WHATIS1ST.COM](mailto:MEDIAMINISTRY@WHATIS1ST.COM)

**Our Office Hours are Monday - Thursday from 9 am to 4 pm**  
**507 W Marion Avenue, Punta Gorda 33950**  
**941.639.3842 - [whatis1st.com](http://whatis1st.com)**

FOLLOW US & JOIN US THIS SUNDAY LIVE AT 9:15 & 11 AM  
 ONLINE ON FACEBOOK, YOUTUBE AND [WHATIS1ST.COM](http://WHATIS1ST.COM)




**1<sup>st</sup> UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
 507 W MARION AVENUE, PUNTA GORDA, FL 33950  
 941.639.3842 | [WHATIS1ST.COM](http://WHATIS1ST.COM) | [1STCHURCH@WHATIS1ST.COM](mailto:1STCHURCH@WHATIS1ST.COM)  
 OFFERING NEW LIFE IN JESUS CHRIST BY SEEKING, SHAPING & SENDING DISCIPLES