

Pilgrims' Progress

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One God, Many Peoples

One thing which has often been badly expressed in the days and years since 9/11 is how many gods there are and who are these gods' peoples.

In our New Testament, Paul asserts numerous times that there is only ONE God, who is over all, and in all. He goes on to say that anything else worshipped as a god is no god at all, but a counterfeit, a masquerade, a hoax.

In the Jewish (Hebrew) Bible, our Old Testament, God is revered by many names, but it is understood that there is only ONE God to which reference is made. The most basic form of the designation for God is "Yah" (the One) or "El Yah," [The (One and Only) God who Is]. This is the root which is usually rendered "THE LORD" (note the small caps) in our English Bibles.

Our Jewish friends say "Adonai" (THE LORD) when referring to El Yah. Our Muslim friends say Al-Lah referring to the same God. And we say "God," "THE LORD," or the Father, to mean the same. This usage should be our best and first reminder that Jews, Christians, and Muslims all worship the God of Abraham and Sarah, the God of Isaac, Rebekah and Ishmael, the God of Moses, Miriam, and Mary, Jesus and Paul and, yes, Grandma.

Jews, Christians, and Muslims are each a people with one—and the SAME—God, a God of many peoples. Though each group, and individuals within each group, have at one time or another insisted that "I/we are God's favorite," we must remember Peter's insight, as told in Acts, where he says, "Now I perceive that God has no favorites." God loves us all the same.

So, no matter what you've heard on TV or read in the news, the answer is "Yes," when someone asks, "Do Jews, Christians, and Muslims worship the same God?" Like it or not, that's the truth! (See more inside on page 4 about "Faith Shared.")

✠ *Pastor Ron*

New Members

Susan and Don Patrick were welcomed into membership on Sunday, May 22. They come to us from Indiana and are friends and neighbors of Dan and Alberta McKinney, of Lake Griffin Isles, in Fruitland Park.

We also expect to receive more new members over the summer and fall and will announce them in upcoming issues of *Pilgrims' Progress*.

Interfaith Alliance Meets

The Tri-County Interfaith Alliance (same group new name) will meet **Wednesday, June 4, at 4 p.m.** in Wildwood, in the Library in the new Government center at the intersection of County Road 466A (Miller Rd/Cleveland Ave) and County Road 462 (Powell Road). The center is the building with the shiny bronzed dome. Note the change in day and time.

Our topic is "Celebrating and Discovering our different faiths. Whether we are mainstream Christian, Evangelical, Moslem, Jew, Unity, Baha'i' or Buddhist, our faith "beliefs" help color all of our perceptions of the world-and the Divine- around us- as well as our perception of the practices of other faiths.

Join us in moderated small group discussions with people of different faiths. We are working hard to make sure we have different faiths there. Moderator Bernie Welsh is using the information at the back of the book *The Faith Club*" on how to start a faith club. Experience other people through their faiths.

Wearing of the RED

Remember, **Sunday, June 12, is Pentecost**, the day we traditionally wear **Red**, in honor of the Holy Spirit, and the celebration of the "birthday of the church."

Check your closet now for something **RED** you can wear!

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ELDERS

Moderator	Richard Zulauf
Vice Moderator	Carol Dodd
Clerk	Jean Marra
Financial Secretary	Dorothy Cheney
Assistant	Anne Zulauf
Treasurer	Margaret Lindsay
Assistant	Fred Marra
Caring	Dorothy Sullivan
Communications	Kathy Robinson
Fellowship	Annabelle Jungbluth
Missions	Bobbi Polhamus
Spiritual Formation	Ginny Stiles
Worship	MaryAlice Morris
Resource Board	Jane Bradley
Trustees	Ken Owens

Pilgrims' United Church of Christ is a welcoming, inclusive, biblically responsible, theologically progressive church. Our members worship joyfully and grow intellectually and spiritually as we express Jesus' love and concern to our community and the world.

Pilgrims' Progress is published, usually monthly, though some summer issues may be combined, and distributed by or before the 1st of the month. Copies may be transmitted by email, regular mail, Sunday pickup following worship, or the News page on the website at www.pucc.info .

Items submitted for publication should be sent by email to news@pucc.info no later than the 15th of the month preceding publication (as, the 15th of April for the May issue). Inquiries should be directed to Pastor Ron or Jelenne Wimmer.

June Birthdays

3 Shirley Lamb
 10 Pat McArthur
 12 Mary McKenzie
 14 Jim McArthur, Frank Dean
 28 Bobbi Polhamus

Sunday Events

Musicians meet at 9:00 a.m.
 Worship at 10:00 a.m.
 Fellowship Hour follows Worship, except for the Pancake Brunch on June 26 and Dinner on June 19.

Other Events in June

4 Interfaith Alliance meets at 4 p.m.
 12 Day of Pentecost (Last Day of Easter)
 18 PUCC Council meets at 10 a.m. in the Library.
 19 Fathers Day in the Civil Calendar
 26 Faith Shared emphasis during Worship

Spiritual Formation

Ginny Stiles

"What makes people smart, curious, alert, observant, competent, confident, resourceful, persistent--is not having access to more and more learning places, resources, and specialists, but being able in their lives to do a wide variety of interesting things that matter, things that challenge their ingenuity, skill, and judgment, and that make an obvious difference in their lives and the lives of people around them." (John Holt)

Spiritual Formation Ministry will not meet again as a group until the fall. Mary McKenzie is in charge of getting sign ups for the July coffee fellowship. If you would be able to take a Sunday in July...please see her for the sign up sheet!

Interfaith Alliance

Nancy Bell

The vote was overwhelmingly in support of changing the name to **Tri-county Interfaith Alliance**, and also to charge \$10 dues (\$15 per couple). So someone will be at every meeting collecting dues and keeping a roster of members. We hope we will be able to eliminate having to have a free will offering at our meetings. At the June meeting we will elect a steering committee.

Dorothy & Ralph Sullivan

Our two sons say they think of us as one person, so I (Dorothy) will write this about both of us.

Those two boys have been our life. They returned the love. They are both successful in their professions and chose good people as their life partners. We have a grandson who will be married this June and a granddaughter who gave us a great grandson almost two years ago.

We grew up in a small town in western Kentucky. Ralph went into the marines when he was 17. When WWII was over he came home and finished high school and went University of Kentucky and Murray State College. When we married Ralph was a Kentucky State policeman. For two years he did on the job training with TVA. It was during this time that we had our two sons. When they were in grade school, I started college. I was 30 years old but wanted to teach elementary school. Later I also sold real estate.

We moved to North Dakota when our boys were teenagers. Ralph was bored in his job that he held with TVA for 16 years and the promise of a managerial position at a coal generating power plants challenged him to go to the wild frontier. It could have been a major culture shock for our family, but we adjusted fairly quickly. We came to appreciate the people and their way of life. Though we never came to love the climate, we adapted.

We retired and moved to Plantation of Leesburg in 1989. We have loved the life we live her. Both of us play golf and enjoy the friends we have made.

Both of us grew up in the Baptist Church. Our mothers were responsible for seeing that we had a Christian background. We were both active in the church especially when our sons were little. After moving to ND, we attended a tiny Baptist Church that had no teenagers. So we went to a Lutheran Church where our sons were happier.

Over the years we questioned many of the teachings of the Baptist Church. Especially closed communion and their very conservative view about homosexuals. Having a gay son, we could not continue to support a church that was so contrary to our beliefs. We tried a few churches in the Leesburg area. We went with our friends Will and Bobbie Anderson to Pilgrims' Church. When we heard the pastor say, "You will always hear a positive message here" we knew we had found a church home. That was when the congregation met in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Then we moved to the Woman's Clubhouse and then to the present location.

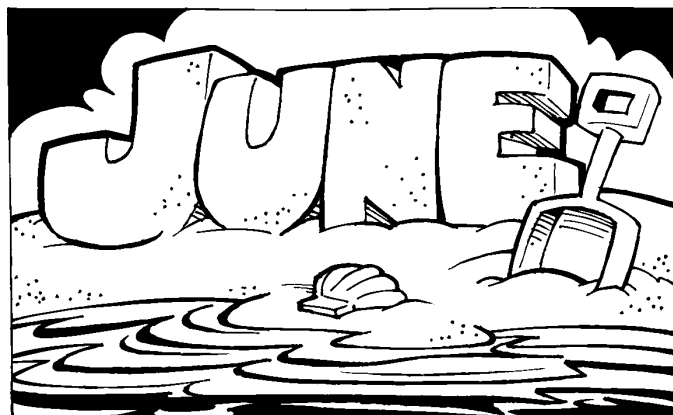
Our proudest moment with our church was when we voted to be open and affirming. We believe that God loves all his children and that he doesn't make mistakes.

We will be married 60 years on June 17. We can truly say that we can't imagine being married to anyone else. We thank God for all the blessings he has given us.

Daryl Steps Down

Rev. Daryl Taylor-Hazel recently announced that he would not return this fall as our choir director. As sons Ben and Max have gotten older, they have wanted to be able to worship together as a family.

For the time being Daryl and Todd will keep their membership at Pilgrims' but will be attending the church where Ben & Max go to school. Sad for us, we nevertheless wish the Taylor-Hazels all our best in the time to come.



FLORIDA CONFERENCE ANNUAL MEETING

Beth Lange

Pastor Ron, Dick and Anne Zulauf, and Beth Lange attended the one-day annual meeting at Boca Raton April 30. Usually the annual meeting lasts for two days, but with the General Synod in Tampa this year it was cut down to only one day. Reports were given, the finances were reviewed, and the new budget for next year was studied and approved. Rev. Siladi spoke as well as Edith Guffey from the office in Cleveland.

The Global Mission Resolution presented by Beth Lange was unanimously approved. This means the Florida Conference joins other conferences is becoming A Global Mission Conference and encourages all UCC churches in Florida to study the issue and become a Global Mission Church.

A call was given to all Florida members to volunteer to assist during the synod July 1-5. You may do so by visiting the conference website. Since Tampa is only 2 hours away, maybe you would like to attend the synod for a day or for the entire period. Registration is as simple as logging in and signing up. It is a chance to see your church in action and meet with UCC members and pastors from all over the U.S. They expect around 5,000 attendees. They also are calling for cookie bakers as thousands of home-made cookies are devoured during the meetings.

Missions

Bobbi Polhamus

The amount contributed to One Great Hour of Sharing, the March mission, was \$984.00. However, all during the year, we receive donations to OGHS in response to tragedies and disasters around the world. OGHS is our pathway to support aid for hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, etc.

Pilgrims also generously supported The Haven, April's mission, with a cash donation of \$380.00. The cash amount is in addition to the large amount of clothing, furniture, and housewares given year-round.

The May mission was for cash donations to the Leesburg Food Pantry. The Pantry has the purchasing power of \$9.00 for each \$1.00 contributed. With summer fast approaching and school children at home, food needs increase since lunch programs offered by the schools are not available. The amount contributed to this mission will be published at a later date. A letter was recently received from the Leesburg Food Pantry thanking Pilgrims for their continuing support of the Pantry.

U.C.C. Strengthen the Church is the designated mission for the month of June. This offering assists with ongoing work in our conferences, with new church starts, and special efforts to "strengthen the church."

Faith Shared Event Sunday, June 26

Reminding ourselves and each other that Al-Qaeda and Taliban are no more representative of mainstream Islam than the KKK, the Aryan Nation, and such, are of mainstream Christianity we are invited to come together in worship on Sunday, June 26, to reaffirm that we are a people with one God—the God of Abraham—and that this God is also the one God of Islam and Judaism as well. We are also called to remember Peter's words (in Acts), where he proclaims, "Now I perceive that God has no favorites." Indeed, we are ALL God's children, though our sibling rivalries must surely try God's patience and wound God's heart, all too often.

Faith Shared is a joint effort of The Interfaith Alliance and Human Rights First, to call people of faith together to acknowledge that, though Jews, Christians, and Muslims each have only one God, it is the SAME God, the God who has many peoples.

On **June 26**, during worship, we will be invited to hear and read words from Scriptures of each religion and to sing and pray, not only our own hymns, but hymns of others, and to wish each other at the end, "Salaam," "Shalom," "Peace." Be sure to be present for worship June 26, 10 a.m.

A Statement on Religious Respect

The following statement responds to a campaign initiated by the World Dove Center, Gainesville, Florida, urging the observance of September 11 by "burning Korans," as well as other events of religious intolerance happening nationwide.

Many of us face difficult challenges these days as society experiences economic, political and social change. Under the stress of these changes, there rises an impulse to identify people who are different from us as somehow responsible for what we all are going through. As Christian leaders, we encourage both the faithful and all persons of goodwill to resist these negative impulses that would denigrate other peoples and their traditions. The issues we all face are far more complex than simply blaming problems on those who are different.

Therefore, we wish to say as clearly as possible that hostility toward and disrespect of other religious traditions goes against a Christian witness. History shows us that publicly burning sacred writings leads to persecution. The public burning of other religious texts, the automatic rejection of the construction of religious buildings, and the harassing of worshipers as they enter and leave their religious facilities are unacceptable and indefensible. To do so in the name of Jesus is a failure to receive what he taught, including among many other sayings,

- Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
- Love your neighbor as yourself.
- Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

In this truly globally-aware world, what is done in the name of Christianity here is heard on the other side of the world. Perhaps some think they can gain a local audience with strident rhetoric, but it can have devastating impact on Christians in other places. That has been true for Muslims in America, and we should make every effort to change course and welcome them. Christians are not to practice "an eye for eye"; we should resist temptation to retaliate in kind. Such behavior does not bring the reign of God. Disciples of Jesus are called to live out a new reality so that others might experience the peace of God through our interaction with them. We call upon any who have issued statements of hostility to retract them, and for those who have called for burning religious books to end their campaign with a public statement.

As our nation approaches the anniversary of September 11, let us look for the opportunity to acknowledge that both Americans from our rich diversity and representatives from around the world died from a shameful act of terrorism. Extremists killed innocent Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, secularists, and Christians. Our grief is shared by people of many national origins and religions. It was an attack upon civilized society by those who demonize America. Let us clearly reject this power to demonize others, and so honor with dignity all victims of that day.

May God bless our Muslim neighbors with peace as they now observe Ramadan with fasting, prayer, renunciation of evil, and re-dedication to the service of God for the well-being of all.

- ★ The Rev. Russell L. Meyer Executive Director, Florida Council of Churches
- ★ Bishop Charles Leigh Florida Council of Churches, President Apostolic Catholic Church
- ★ Bishop Timothy Whitaker Dean, Council College of Judicatory Leaders Regional Bishop for Florida Area United Methodist Church
- ★ Rev. Kent Siladi Florida Conference Minister, United Church of Christ
- ★ Rev. Willie Israel Florida District President, Moravian Unity, Southern Province
- ★ The Rev. W Harvey Jenkins Executive Presbyter (Ret.) Presbytery of North Florida
- ★ Bishop Edward R. Benoway Florida-Bahamas Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- ★ Bishop Leo Frade Episcopal Diocese of Southeast Florida The Episcopal Church



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