

Tower Chimes



Monthly newsletter of First Congregational UCC | Grand Junction, CO | May 2026



Paul's Epistle

Dear Friends,

One of the reasons I am hopeful that we will muddle through this era of cruelty when even the word “empathy” is scorned by Christian nationalists, is the hope I see in the global light of caring for our neighbors. We do this in a beautiful way with the Mission Partners and Mission programs we support through the church. But we are not alone. The UCC is working across the globe to

support the work of compassion in our world. This heart felt concern for neighbor is a central teaching of Jesus that changed the Western world.

I recently bought a book by a self-identified atheist author and professor, Bart Ehrman. The book is entitled *Love Thy Stranger: How the Teachings of Jesus Transformed the Moral Consciousness of the West*. Yes, it is written by an atheist who at times calls himself an agnostic. Ehrman is distressed by the stunning number of self-identified Christians in America who have become believers in the politics of cruelty with arrests and home invasions without judicial warrants, shoving people in concentration camps without a trial or legal process, and shooting citizens who resist or question ICE brutality. He points out that Greek and Roman cultures had no category for loving a non-related neighbor or stranger as a universal ethic. Jesus' teachings dared to challenge the Western culture to love strangers and even enemies. This new approach crated an ethical revolution in the ways of Rome. Beyond the culture of Europe, I would add to Ehrman's analysis the global religious nature of the Golden Rule which was first taught by either Hindu, Buddhist or Jain sources hundreds of years before Jesus.

Read them and realize that there is a global light of caring for our neighbors that no tyrant will be able to end here or in Russia or in China.

These are the Golden Rules of Global Faiths:

- ◇ Christianity-- In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets. Jesus, Matthew 7:12
- ◇ Judaism-- What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. This is the whole Torah; all the rest is commentary. Go and learn it. Hillel, Talmud, Shabbath 31a

Whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!

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- ◇ Islam-- Not one of you truly believes until you wish for others what you wish for yourself. The Prophet Muhammad, Hadith
- ◇ Hinduism-- This is the sum of duty: do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you. Mahabharata 5:1517
- ◇ Confucianism-- One word which sums up the basis of all good conduct... loving-kindness. Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself. Confucius, Analects 15.23
- ◇ Buddhism-- Treat not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful. The Buddha, Udana-Varga 5.18
- ◇ Baha'i-- Lay not on any soul a load that you would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for anyone the things you would not desire for yourself. Baha'u'llah, Gleanings
- ◇ Jainism-- One should treat all creatures in the world as one would like to be treated. Mahavira, Suttrakritanga 1.11.33
- ◇ Sikhism-- I am a stranger to no one; and no one is a stranger to me. Indeed, I am a friend to all. Guru Granth Sahib, p. 1299
- ◇ Taoism-- Regard your neighbor's gain as your own gain and your neighbor's loss as our own loss. Lao Tzu, T'ain Shang Kan Ying P'ien 213-218

What strange times we live in when an atheist writes a book to remind Christians to practice the teachings of Jesus to counter the growing intolerance, violence, hate and cult of authoritarianism among self-identified Christians.

Peace, Shalom, Salaam,
Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby

ANNUAL MEETING MAY 17, 2026 CINDY HAAS

It is already time for the annual meeting when we elect the members of the Church Council. It will be May 17, 2026 after the worship service.

The annual report will be out shortly after the first of May so be sure to read it.

I would like to thank Michael Petri and Ron Rucker for serving on the Church Council these last few years.

The following is the slate for the Church Council for the 2026-2027 term:

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Cindy Haas, Moderator | Connie Pyle, Member at large |
| Janis Woodley, Vice Moderator | Kathy Viglianco, Member at large |
| Julie Krueger, Treasurer | Zoe Brosig, Member at large |
| Rachel Seiff, Clerk | Celia Elberfeld, Member at large |
| Karen Caton, Lay Representative | Terri Wenzlaff, Member at large |
| Kathy Goe, Member at large | Jean Yale, Member at large |

Zoe Brosig, Jean Yale, Celia Elberfeld and Terri Wenzlaff will be new to Church Council. Thank you for volunteering. The rest have signed up for another term. Thank you as well. I would also like to thank the members of the congregation for all the time, talent and financial support you have provided this last year.

MARCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

March 15, 2026

The church council of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ met in the chapel for the monthly stated meeting on March 15, 2026. Present were pastor Paul Ashby and council members Karen Caton, Kathy Goe, Cindy Haas, Michael Petri, Connie Pyle, Ron Rucker, Rachel Seiff, Kathy Viglianco, Allan Weinand and Janis Woodley. Julie Krueger was absent. Guest: Beth Rakestraw (church administrator) and Laura Brady.

A quorum was established. The meeting was opened with prayer by Paul at 11:21 a.m.

On motion, the minutes of the February 15, 2026 Council Meeting were approved as distributed.

Pastor's Report: Paul remarked on these items:

- ◇ He needs volunteers for readings in the Maundy Thursday service – and passed around a sign-up sheet.
- ◇ Thanked the Property team for all the work on the CE building.
- ◇ The next book study is: *For Such a Time as This – An Emergency Devotional*.
- ◇ The church is working to support the creation of a website for the Oltome village.
- ◇ Proposed that the congregation have a discussion about a 3-year commitment for a teen program. He feels three years would be needed to establish such a program from the ground up. He envisions supporting a part-time (10-12 hours per week) position plus money for programs. The council approved putting this discussion on the agenda of the annual congregational meeting (in May). Paul will write up his proposal for presentation at the meeting, and this will go to the Finance Team for discussion prior to the meeting.

Ministry Team Reports/Minutes: Available reports were distributed prior to the meeting, as noted.

- ◇ Fellowship & Hospitality Meetings: March 2026
- ◇ Mission & Outreach Meetings: March 2026
- ◇ Worship and Celebration: No meeting
- ◇ Property Team: March 2026
- ◇ Gardens and Grounds: Allan reported that they are getting organized for the season
- ◇ Finance and Stewardship: February 2026

Year-end financial reports were distributed prior to the meeting. Spending for 2025 came in under budget.

Other Business/New Business:

- ◇ Annual Meeting - On motion, the council agreed to hold the annual congregational meeting to elect officers and review reports for Sunday, May 17th following the worship service. There was some discussion about the slate of candidates.
- ◇ Children's Education – A report was sent to the council describing the discussions and conclusions of the Children's Education workshop. One concern is the lack of critical mass to support programs – especially the lack of teens. It was suggested that we

MARCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

should look into establishing a multi-faith youth group with other like-minded (progressive) faith communities in the area that are likely in the same situation.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at about 12:20 p.m.

Michael Petri, clerk

MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS

SECOND QUARTER 2026 MISSION FOCUS: THE JOSEPH CENTER

The new collection items for May for The Joseph Center is on a “List for The Joseph Center Kitchen:”

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Coffee | 10. Pasta –various types |
| 2. Tea --50 gallon bags | 11. Cream of chicken –large can |
| 3. Green Beans –restaurant size | 12. Cream of mushroom –large can |
| 4. Corn –restaurant size | 13. Ketchup |
| 5. Mac & Cheese –family size | 14. Corn meal |
| 6. Sugar –10 lb bags | 15. Baking powder |
| 7. Baked beans –restaurants size | 16. Seasoning salt |
| 8. Zip Lock Bags –all sizes | 17. Garlic powder |
| 9. Powdered coffee creamer | 18. BBQ sauce |

Mona Highline said for us “not to feel obligated for everything on the list.”

The April collection numbers for The Joseph Center were 16 containers laundry detergent, 33 rolls paper towels, 165 rolls of toilet paper and 1 box of tampons.

MAY CATHOLIC OUTREACH ITEM

Canned Cream of “Whatever” Soups! By the way, when Pastor Paul and Pam delivered items to the soup kitchen last time, there were 96 bottles of salad dressing, 53 cans of vegetables, 4 cans of tuna, 1 chunky salsa and 1 giant box of corn flakes.

OTHER ONGOING COLLECTION ITEMS

Soles4Souls. FCC has a collection box for good quality gently used shoes. When the box gets full, Mission & Outreach ships them to Soles4Souls, who distributes them to various programs around the world. **Egg Cartons for the food bank.** Remember that the food bank can only use 12-count, cardboard-based cartons. **SNC is requesting blankets -- used is fine.** We continue to collect personal size toiletries and other personal hygiene items for SNC. Milk jugs are no longer needed. **Newspaper Bags.** Plastic newspaper bags to use at Mutual Aid to fill with dog and cat food to give to our unhoused friends for their furry companions and dry cat/dog food to fill the bags. Contact Carolyn VanMatre with questions.

SUNDAY MORNING CHILDREN'S PROGRAMMING



- ✓ May 3 – Creation art project
- ✓ May 10 – Special gift for mom
- ✓ May 17 -- Fun in the Sun
- ✓ May 24 – Celebration! Summertime is here!

LOOKING AHEAD TO CHILDREN/YOUTH SUMMER CAMPS AT LAFORET

Explorer Camp, July 5 – July 11

Explorer Camp provides an incredible community experience for children entering grades 3-6! Supported by trained counselors and staff, campers will engage with nature, form friendships, and explore their personal beliefs, all with an emphasis on fun! The week will include activities like campfires, swimming, arts and crafts, outdoor games, free time, a ropes course, and worship.

Voyager Faith & Science Camp, July 12 – July 18

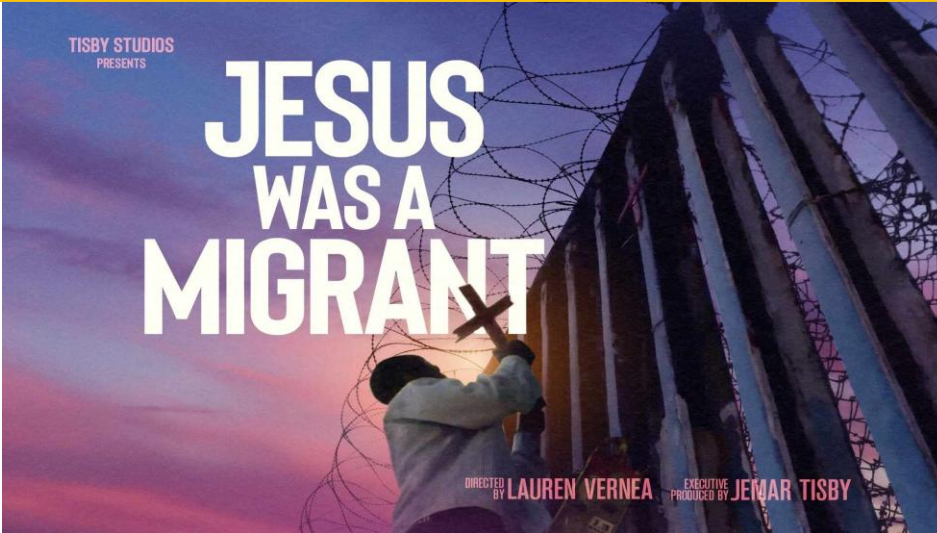
At Voyager Camp, youth in grades 6-8 are given the opportunity to be their truest selves and build a community of authenticity and support. Albert Einstein said that the more he studied the universe the more he believed in a higher power. Trained counselors and staff will set the stage and hold space for a memorable week filled with laughter, music, reflection, self-exploration, and don't forget the ropes course! Youth will form memories and friendships they'll hold dear for the rest of their lives.

Music, Art, Drama, and Dance (MADD) Camp, July 12 – July 18

We believe that the arts and creative expression are incredible tools for experiencing and growing in our spirituality. ALL artistic skill-levels (really!) are present and welcome at MADD Camp. Along with engaging youth in grades 9-12 in intellectual faith conversations, we attempt to get youth “out of their heads” and into experiencing God (or the Holy, Divine, or transcendent) through creativity, nature, friendships, self-discovery, games, activities, and LOTS of fun. Trained staff help guide youth in engaging with their spirituality on their terms. The Refuge camps and retreats create a safe, brave space where youth can ask questions, explore their faith, and connect more deeply to themselves, each other, the earth, and the Holy- whatever that means to them.

Campership monies for children and youth attending camps for both fees and travel are available through our congregation, the Western Association, and the Rocky Mountain Conference.

JESUS WAS A MIGRANT!



**SUNDAY, MAY 31, 11:30 AM
FREE ADMISSION!**

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
UNITED CHURCH OF
CHRIST**

**1425 N 5TH STREET
GRAND JUNCTION,
COLORADO**

**970-242-0298
WWW.UCCGJ.ORG**

This powerful new 30 minute documentary film — executive produced by New York Times bestselling author and historian Dr. Jemar Tisby and co-executive produced and directed by Lauren Vernea — follows Tisby to the U.S.-Mexico border to examine what American Christianity has done with the migrant. The film asks the question many of us have been avoiding: What does our faith actually require?

To view the official trailer, visit the church website listed above. We hope you'll join us.

ABC: APPETIZERS, BEVERAGES, CONVERSATION

This month's ABC social meets from 6:00 to 8:00, Saturday, May 16 at the home of Michael Petri (and Tour the Cat), 477 Escondido Circle, Grand Junction. Attendees are invited to bring appropriate appetizers and beverages to share.

LOOKING AHEAD

June 11 -13 | RMC Annual Celebration, Provo, UT

July 5-11 | Explorer Camp | Grades 3-6

July 12-18 | Voyager Faith and Science Camp | Grades 6-8

July 12-18 | Music, Art, Drama, Dance [MADD] Camp | Grades 9-12

MAY BIRTHDAYS

5/2 Barbara Eyler
5/9 David Dethmers
5/11 Karen Hildebrand
5/15 Dana Brosig
5/18 Kathleen Carlson
5/19 Cheryl Gibboney
5/23 Sharyl Peterson
5/30 Jim Lauer
5/31 Anne Djokic



**If you would like to share your birthdate with the congregation, please let the church office know! Thank you.

MAY 2026

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|--|---------------------------------|--|-----------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| April 26 | April 27 | April 28 | April 29 | April 30 | May 1 | May 2 |
| 8:45 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 5 th Sunday Potluck | | 10:00 Women's/ Men's Coffee | 3:30 Handbells | | | 9:00 Spring Clean Up Day |
| 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 8:45 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour | 1:30 Fellowship & Hospitality | 10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffees | 1:00 <i>The Story of God</i> 2:00 Mission & Outreach 3:30 Handbells | | | |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 8:45 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 <i>For Such a Time as This</i> Spirituality Study | 1:00 Property Team | 10:00 Women's/ Men's Coffee | 1:00 <i>The Story of God</i> 3:30 Handbells | | | ABC Social 6:00 — 8:00 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 8:45 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Annual Congregational Meeting | | 10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffee | 1:00 <i>The Story of God</i> 3:30 Handbells | 11:30 Berna B's | | |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| 8:45 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour | Memorial Day Church Office Closed | 10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffee | | | | |
| 31 | June 1 | June 2 | June 3 | June 4 | June 5 | June 6 |
| 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:30 Jesus Was a Migrant screening | | 10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffee | | | | |



First Congregational UCC
1425 N 5th Street
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Church Office Hours
Monday through Thursday
9 am—3 pm
Reach us at:
(970)-242-0298
www.uccgj.org

CONTACT US!

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