

Tower *chimes*

Monthly newsletter of First Congregational UCC | Grand Junction, CO | June 2023



Paul's Epistle

Dear Friends,

After a recent sermon a bunch of people asked for my favorite reflection on the 23rd Psalm from the book *You Are The Light* by Christian – Hindu theologian John Martin Sahajananda. This is his reflection on God as the One who seeks us...

*O God will I ever be first?
I began to come to you
But I found you coming to me.
I wanted to run to you
But I found you running to me.
I wanted to wait for you
But I found you waiting for me.
I wanted to search for you
But I found you searching for me.
I thought I found you
But I was found by you.
I wanted to say 'I love you'
But I heard you say 'I love you'.
I wanted to choose you
But you have chosen me.
I wanted to live in you
But I found you living in me.
I wanted to ask your forgiveness
But I found you forgiving me.
I wanted to offer myself to you
But I found you offering yourself to me.
I wanted to offer friendship to you,
But I found you offering your friendship to me.
I wanted to reveal my inner life to you
But I found you revealing your inner life to me.
I wanted to invite you into my life*

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

PAUL'S EPISTLE

*But I received your invitation into your life.
I wanted to rejoice over my return
But I found you rejoicing over my return.
O God WILL I EVER BE FIRST?*

This Psalm reminds us there is something there before our birth. It is always there beyond our self-absorbed thoughts. It will be with us when we walk through the final valley.

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

MODERATOR'S MUSINGS CAROLYN HOLMGREN

I am very much looking forward to working with the leadership team that was elected at the Spring annual meeting:

Vice-moderator: Ken Puhler
Clerk: Michael Petri
Treasurer/Finance and Stewardship Chair: Julie Krueger
Lay Delegate: Karen Caton
At Large Members:
Mary Endres
Cindy Haas
Kathy Goe
Ron Rucker
Rachel Seiff
Janice Woodley

Welcome to Church Council!

At a recent gathering at the UU congregation, Tom Mauser, from Colorado Ceasefire shared some information about the newest Colorado "red flag" law. Essentially the law is an expansion of the list of petitioners who can legally report concerns about individuals who shows signs of themselves or others. Now included are educators, health care professionals, and mental health care professionals. Tom did strongly suggest that any petitioner first report their concerns to a police officer. An officer usually has the skill to help with the process of filing an ERPO (extreme risk protection order.) Hopefully this is not a process that anyone we know has to go through.

Peace,
Carolyn

The three best prayers: Help, Thanks, Wow! --Anne Lamott

CATHOLIC OUTREACH NEWS

REV SHARYL PETERSON

I have to admit that Bob and I have not done the final count yet, but looking at the food-basket full of various kinds of pasta, it looks like you all have stepped up to the plate and done it again!



And speaking of the plate ... when I asked the head of the Catholic Outreach Soup Kitchen what they might like to help build plates of good food for June, she said ... well, if you all aren't tired of it, we can use some more oodles of noodles! (And yes, she did know we were coming with a new batch of oodles.)

My brain hasn't been working so well with all the pollen in the air, so rather than try to write another piece of epic pasta poetry, decided to call on Google to provide a little June-or humor:

- ◇ *"I once told some friends a joke about macaroni. They thought it was pretty cheesy."*
- ◇ *The President of France recently published a recipe for a new spring dessert made with coconut and pasta; it's Macron's macaroon macaroni macaron.*
- ◇ *"I just found a macaroni noodle in my box of orzo. Impasta!"*
- ◇ *And ... what do you call pasta with a seasonal allergy? Macaroni and sneeze ...*

Angela at the Soup Kitchen said they make lots of macaroni salad this time of year, and plain old mac noodles are always a good buy ... so let's stock them up for June! 100 bags of mac, perhaps? Even 150 bags might be a pasta-bility!

APRIL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

April 16, 2023

The church council of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ met in the chapel on April 16, 2023 for the monthly stated meeting. Present were council members Karen Caton, Cindy Haas, Carolyn Holmgren (moderator), Brad Montgomery-Anderson, Nancy Palubicki, Michael Petri, Ken Puhler and the Rev. Paul Ashby. Mary Endres, Julie Krueger and Mark Long were absent. Visitors: Kathy Goe, Ron Rucker, Rachel Seiff and Janice Woodley.

A quorum was established. The meeting was opened with a prayer by the pastor at 11:21 a.m., followed by introductions.

Minutes of the March 19, 2023 council meeting were approved as distributed.

Candidates for the 2023 Council - The four visitors had agreed to be candidates for the 2023 council. As some discussion, the following slate for the 2023 church council was approved, by general consensus, for presentation to the congregation.

- ◇ Karen Caton as a lay delegate. There was some discussion of the duties of lay delegates. They represent our church at Western Association and Rocky Mountain Conference meetings.
- ◇ Julie Krueger as treasurer
- ◇ Carolyn Holmgren as moderator
- ◇ Ken Puhler as vice-moderator
- ◇ Michael Petri as clerk
- ◇ Mary Endres, Kathy Goe, Cindy Haas, Ron Rucker, Rachel Seiff and Janice Woodley as at-large council members

Pastor's Report:

Paul noted:

- ◇ He would like the church to have a free gun locks event. Ken agreed to check with some contacts about obtaining gun locks and suggestions for event organization. It was noted that the central library is having a teen health festival on May 6. There was general agreement to support such an event.
- ◇ He'd like the church to adopt a policy that any baked goods sale or other fundraising events be used only to support mission, outreach, or promote an act of compassion. Such a policy was approved, on motion.
- ◇ He suggested assigning "friend guides" to new members. Guides were assigned to the recent new members.

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

- ◇ Mission and Outreach/JAM, April 2023
- ◇ Fellowship & Hospitality Meeting, April 2023,
- ◇ Worship and Celebration, meets next time in May
- ◇ Property Team, April 2023
- ◇ Personnel Committee, no report

APRIL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

- ◇ Marketing Team, no written report
- ◇ Finance and Stewardship, meets April 26
- ◇ Holmgren Lectureship – Carolyn contacted Tom Mauser of Colorado Cease Fire about speaking for the program. The plan is for a 2 hour lecture followed by lunch and discussion. Tentative dates are September 16 or 30.

Finance Reports: Next meeting

Other Business/New Business:

- ◇ Planning for Annual Meeting – Committees should send in their annual reports so they can be printed in the church report. Paul will handle the recognition of Sharyl Peterson planned for the meeting.
- ◇ Membership: Michael reported that the following were accepted into membership during the Easter service (April 9):
 - Beth & Mike Avery
 - Stephanie Goode
 - Rachel Seiff
 - Lou Villaire
 Also, [another member, TC editor redaction] was returned to the active roll. If anyone is interested in hosting delegates to the Rocky Mountain Conference annual celebration in June, please let Beth know.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at 12:16 p.m.

Michael Petri – Council Clerk

The next council meeting will be June 18 at 11:15 a.m. Due to the annual congregational meeting, no council meeting is planned for May.

FOG: FELLOWSHIP OF THE GRAPE



Join us for FOG (Fellowship of the Grape) Saturday, June 17th at 6:00 PM at the home of Julie Krueger and Linda Randolph. Bring your favorite white wine (or other refreshing summer drink of your choice) and an appetizer. We are looking forward to starting up FOG again so bring a wine or beverage, a friend ... and expect a good time.

PASTOR EMERITA REV. SHARYL PETERSON, RETIRED

When the Council decided to honor me with the status of pastor emerita, Pastor Paul asked if I would write an article for the TC describing some of my fondest memories of my decade-plus serving as the Sr. Minister of our church. As I started thinking about that, I found myself smiling and filled with joy at the many wonderful things we did together, surprised at some memories I'd forgotten, and occasionally wrinkling my brow as I thought about some of the challenges we encountered.

For example, when I first arrived, the church had already contracted with an architectural firm and a fund-raiser to renovate/add to the church. The proposed project would give us our beautiful Gathering Space, renovated Chapel and Library, vastly improved office spaces, and additional bathrooms. It was a 1.2 million project, for a church with a membership under 200 members, and no Capital Campaigns in anyone's memory of the last several decades. Not surprisingly, this new pastor was quaking in her boots, having had no input into the planning process, nor into how this church could possibly raise the money to pay for the project.

And in response to my many worries, Jim McCall and Betty H. stepped up to lead the Capital Campaign. (Throughout this, if I use just the last initial for someone, they are still with us, and you can find them in our Directory; if they are no longer with us, or not in the directory, I'll use their full name.) People got excited. People got creative. People stepped up to chair the various needed committees (I.P., you know who you are, as do others). Annie A. started the Quilt Project that raised thousands of dollars as we went, and when we finished the building project, she initiated the Birthday Fund and raised tens of thousands more for expenses/needs that weren't originally planned. (Everyone who has participated in either/both merits a shout-out here too!)

Volunteers stepped up (some anonymously, like the person who in the middle of one night spirited away mass quantities of health-risk debris and saved thousands of unbudgeted dollars), thinking and brainstorming, and sewing, and painting, and doing so much of what needed to be done. E.G., David H. and his crew, along with Master Gardeners Betty H. and Joanne M. planned and installed every bit of our landscaping. Martha J. spent weeks laying out our outdoor labyrinth. Lots of people, directed by Shirley K., worked with our youth and our kids to help them feel part of it all. I remember much anxiety, sweat and tears and some fervent disagreements about what colors the carpet and baseboards should be. And I remember that our folks stepped up – all of them – widows living on tiny pensions and successful business people and everyone in between, as well as our Women's and Men's Fellowship groups, and gave so generously that this huge debt was paid off in only three years. And, along the way, we also did a special collection for and built the Columbarium with leadership from Don Everhart.

I remember how our commitment to hands-on mission grew and grew over the years. My first Advent season here, I was told the church had always had a Hat & Mitten Tree, and sometimes gave a Christmas check to a local non-profit. Then, a younger, newer member, Leah Pabst, asked whether we couldn't do something that involved a little more hands-on involvement from more people. We decided to try, and that year participated in the Shoe Box Project that collects toys and treats for kids whose parents are imprisoned, with huge participation from the congregation. The next Advent season, we did that again (and still had our Mitten Tree), and added Latimer House as another recipient ... and so on and on until in five years, our Gathering Space was filled every year with trees for collecting

PASTOR EMERITA REV. SHARYL PETERSON, RETIRED

pajamas for kids escaping domestic violence, calling-cards for jail inmates, hats and mittens and still more gifts of love.

Through the years, our congregation became known in GJ as the “go to” church – the church to go to if your organization was in need of help. Among other projects, we hosted the Veterans’ Stand-Down; the Undie 500 (collected 500 sets of new socks/undies for homeless folks); the Sukkah Project to collect food for local food banks; the Mission Bookshelf (thank you Carolyn R. & Shirley K.), and monthly food collections for Catholic Outreach. We completely furnished an apartment in the newly built St. Martin’s Place. We hosted a fundraiser art show with pictures from a brilliant photographer volunteer from Outreach; we hosted Room at the Inn (with over half of our congregation involved one way or the other (like Marsha Overdorf making lunches for guests to take with, several people making dinners, Carl Hochmuth showing up at 5 AM to help me make breakfast, and many folks providing overnight care for our guests).

Not surprisingly, we also became known as the church where “everyone is welcome.” Yes, everyone! Not without a lot of resistance, but with some brave and open modelling and education and vulnerability by members newer and older, many of us learned to expand our understanding of “us” and of “God’s children” to include many more people than it had before. Which led, in part, to our eventually becoming Open & Affirming, and led to an array of other ministries as well.

I remember with great joy our implementation of Parents’ Night Out for family members of special needs’ children and young people, with Barb Harvey taking the lead, Pam G. serving as chef extraordinaire, and 15-20 people every month who stepped up to eat with, talk, play, read, and make art with the dozens of families we hosted over the years. The Shrimp Boil fundraiser was the brainchild of Len & Lee A., and took dozens of people (thank you, Vicki B., Ruth Edfast, Kong V., and the many other “kitchen ladies”) who made it happen, including all our auctioneers (Shirley McGinness & Julie K.), and many silent auction contributors like Mike S., whose hot sauce was always a hot-selling item. Judy Lauer started the Prayer Shawl Project, which provided beautiful gifts of support to dozens of people who were struggling; Carolyn R. and Shirley K. set up and managed our Mission Bookshelves that raised amazing amounts of money and provided great reading for our members as well; Men’s and Women’s Coffee groups provided not only fellowship, but also financial support for many of the church’s special projects, as did the Women’s Bazaar for many years (thank you, Vicki B. for your leadership, and Susan H. for your home-made pickles); and we provided space and hospitality to the congregation of American Lutheran for 18 months while they built their new church.

We’ve always been fortunate to have outstanding support for worship, between our Bell and Vocal Choirs (thank you, Karen C. and Martha J.) and keyboardists (Ellen B., Bob Boberg, and Martha and Max). The Drumming Group provided gorgeous support for worship as they integrated newly found joys of music-making with Scripture Study. Our various Liturgy-Writing and Worship Planning groups wrote some breathtaking liturgy that made Advent and Lenten worship extra special. Our Paraments Group, under the able leadership of Nancy H. and with her gifted and hard-working crew, created beautiful banners and altar-cloths that still add to the beauty of our worship. And on Christmas Eve, our walkways were lined with beautiful luminaria, thanks to Linda L. and family.

I fondly remember some of our other “special Sundays,” like Holy Humor Sunday (the week

PASTOR EMERITA REV. SHARYL PETERSON, RETIRED

after Easter), complete with breakfast, song, and lots of really corny humor ... Reformation Sunday when we nailed our dreams/vision for the wider church onto a huge wooden door in the chancel ... our always-moving Veterans' Sundays, on which we recognized our veterans from each service branch ... and our All-Church Christmas pageant where everyone, from the youngest person to the oldest, donned angels' wings, shepherds' staffs, Wise Ones' crowns, and more to celebrate the Holy Day!

On the kids' and youth front, our church has long been fortunate in having dedicated staff and volunteers who have made sure the youngest among us were challenged, educated, had fun, and ate well. Kay R. and Marie K. have always made sure we had Sunday School for our kids, assisted by former staff like Dan W. and Nancy R., and a plethora of volunteers. And they made sure we had VBS in the summers as well, sometimes in cooperation with other congregations.

Our adults' educational needs were also enthusiastically met by our Science & Faith group, Chuck Holmgren's many "Living the Questions" classes, book discussion groups led by Bob P., and others, and a contribution or two by myself. Supporting the congregation at large with an excellently stocked and maintained church library were our archivists and librarians extraordinaire, Dorothy Everhart, Connie Stemsrud, Frances Crowell, and Jean Y.

Our folks' pastoral needs have been met by several of our staff (we can't forget Bruce Crowell and Dan W. and Lael VanRiper), and the help and support of our Shepherds (taking friendship and Communion to shut-ins), our Caregivers' Support Group, and of course our Bereavement Committee, who have provided comfort to countless loved ones of those we have lost. I also remember the joint support our Sunday AM worshippers provided to members of the Addictions Group run by the Salvation Army – and to other special groups in need over the years.

And ah, the social gatherings! Countless potlucks, Fifth Sunday dinners, Annual Meeting Bar-B-Qs for our congregation, Association, and RM Conference ... our celebrations of Shrove Tuesday, Mardi Gras (thanks, Kay R.), Trunk or Treat (thanks to lots of you) ... my surprise 60th birthday party ... our Beach Party in January ... the hard and faithful work of Charlie Koontz (for whom our dishwasher is named!) and Van G. in the kitchen ... and every delicious treat, meal, snack, dessert, and other goodie our dear Ken P. has shared with us!

Our grounds too have been a matter of pride. Our retired forester David H. has planned, planted, and nurtured numerous trees, shrubs, and bushes ... he and Dennis Price and Bill Duncan took care of the endless task of maintaining our watering system/lawn ... Brian M. has spent more time up on the roofs of our buildings, checking things out, repairing, fixing, and replacing than perhaps anyone else in the history of the church ... Celia and Bill Duncan cared lovingly for our roses year after year ... then taught me and others, including Ellen B. who has been Rose Empress in years since ... and when the task needed doing, Linda R. graciously took up the wheel of the lawn-mower and keeps everything tidy and beautiful.

I am also deeply grateful to our congregation for the support you provided for me as a scholar. You made it possible for me to teach in TEI (Theological Education Institute), our joint program for training licensed ministers with the Disciples ... for me to take sabbaticals and write ... to publish a number of sermons, chapters of original liturgy in

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several new books on worship, and two books on pastoral care. And you let me share my gifts with the wider church through service on various Association committees, and as our Conference representative to our national UCC Local Church Ministries Board, where I chaired the Education and Worship Teams, and preached and led worship in Amistad Chapel.

There have been so many more people, more projects, more transformations, more joy ... the list above was simply off the top of my head and my now failing memory. But I remember so many other folks – Who Were/Are the Church – whose smiles, jokes, challenges, ideas of all sorts, and yes even occasional bad tempers, built and nurtured our ministry together. As a community, we have welcomed and supported folks who were unwelcomed in other churches ... married couples ... baptized babies ... blessed anniversaries ... sat at hospital bedsides ... bore witness as loved ones died ... celebrated lives and deaths together, sharing tears, support, and happy memories ... Whew!

I sincerely apologize for anyone or any important event I may have left out. When Pastor Paul invited me to write this, I simply opened up my heart and my memory, and wonderful memories poured out. Yet I suspect I may have forgotten nearly as many things as I've remembered. Thank you for letting me serve as your Senior Minister for over a decade, and for letting me re-join you in retirement. Bob and I love you all, and feel grateful to have so many FCCUCC friends!

MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS

SECOND QUARTER 2023 MISSION & OUTREACH COLLECTION



During the month of June, Mission and Outreach continues to focus on **The Joseph Center** for our 2023 second quarter project. This month she has requested full size health products for men and women. In addition to what we have been collecting you should put shaving cream and disposable razors on your list.

Let's fill the shelves with shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste and brushes, soap, deodorant, lotion, and shaving cream and razors. These products will be used the Circle Program, a residential drug and alcohol recovery program supported by St. Joseph Center.
~M & O team

“SOLIDARITY, NOT CHARITY” REGULAR, ONGOING COLLECTIONS:

- ◇ hotel and personal sized toiletries
- ◇ clean, empty plastic gallon milk or water jugs **with their lids**
- ◇ plastic grocery bags —if you have them!
- ◇ Handbags and stuff to put in them.

STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH OFFERING ELLEN BRADLEY

The Strengthen the Church offering supports the expansion of ministry and growth of UCC local congregations. Your support of this offering will help the UCC fulfill its commitment to creating a just world for all by investing in new ministries and practices that meet the emerging needs of local communities.

As God calls our congregations to be the church in new ways, your generosity will plant new churches, awaken new ideas in existing churches and develop the spiritual life in our youth and young adults. We will receive the STC offering throughout the month of June. There will be special envelopes provided each Sunday, or as always, you may make your donation online by going to the STC dropdown box. Thank you!

OLTOME UPDATE - SPECIAL OFFERING CONNIE PYLE



On Sunday June 11, the Mission and Outreach Committee will be taking a special offering to show our continued support for our Maasai friends in Kenya. According to our liaison Richard, they finally had some rain this past rainy season, so the cows that survived this last phase of the drought have pasture for the time being. However, they are in need of money to continue their feeding program for the villagers as the cows are not yet healthy enough to give milk or be sold at market. They will greatly appreciate any donations from us.

JUNE BIRTHDAYS



6/8 Paul Ashby
6/15 Beth Avery
6/25 Robert Peterson
6/25 Annie Rucker
6/27 Kong Vong

If we are missing a birthday from our lists, or our list is incorrect, please call the church office at 970-242-0298 or email office@uccgj.org. Thanks!

SUMMER SUNDAY MORNING CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

CHILDREN'S SUMMER PROGRAM

"Love, Justice, Peace: It's a Mystery"

The children's summer program will be led by wonderful volunteers who have offered to help by planning and leading a special program each Sunday. Please plan to come and support them on Sunday mornings.



JUNE 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
May 28	May 29	May 30	May 31	1	2	3
8:45 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:00 Spiritual Journey through 2023 Book Study		10:00 Women's Coffee/Mens' Coffee 5:30 Cantabile Ringers		12:15 Health & Wellness 1:00 Fellowship & Hospitality		
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10:00 Worship w/ Communion 11:00 Happy Hour	1:00 Property Team 5:00 Make Mondays Fun Again	10:00 Women's Coffee/Mens' Coffee 5:30 Cantabile Ringers	2:00 Mission & Outreach	12:15 Health & Wellness	10:00 Zoom Coffee	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Worship & Celebration		10:00 Women's Coffee/Mens' Coffee 5:30 Cantabile Ringers		←————— 11:30 Berna B's 12:15 Health & Wellness	RMC Annual Celebration 10:00 Zoom Coffee	—————→ 6:00 FOG, Fellowship of the Grape
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Church Council Meeting	5:00 Make Mondays Fun Again	10:00 Women's Coffee/Mens' Coffee 5:30 Cantabile Ringers		12:15 Health & Wellness	10:00 Zoom Coffee	
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:00 Spiritual Journey through 2023 Book Study				12:15 Health & Wellness	10:00 Zoom Coffee	

LOOKING AHEAD

September 9-10 | Grand Junction Pride Weekend



Go Green! Get your Tower
Chimes via email!



CONTACT US!

Pastor:

Rev. Paul Ashby
revpaulashby@yahoo.com
X104

Part Time Custodian:

Matu Hedwall
custodian@uccgj.org

Children's Ed:

Marie Koontz
charley.koontz2009@gmail.com

Office Administrator:

Beth Rakestraw
office@uccgj.org | X 105

Volunteer Financial Clerks:

Nancy Palubicki,
Martha Jones
finance@uccgj.org

Church Office Hours

Monday through Thursday
9am—3pm
Reach us at :
(970)-242-0298
www.uccgj.org

Choir/Handbell Director

Karen Caton
topcatkc@aol.com



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST