

Tower chimes

Monthly newsletter of First Congregational UCC | Grand Junction, CO | May 2022



Paul's Epistle

Dear Friends,

I grew up in the Bible Belt where good religion was to make you feel miserable. As a child I was surprised when the local preacher announced that "you all" put Jesus on the cross. Even as a forgetful child, I don't remember doing that! The preacher went on "you drove the nails in his hands. You thrust the spear in his side!" Oh boy, I was going to need a lawyer. I cannot recall driving nails in anything but old boards on barns and stables. Seriously, why would I want to hurt Jesus? He was my friend. Thank God for Sunday school teachers who shared the love and friendship of Jesus.

It is really difficult to be a terrible sinner at age 7. It takes a high level of practice and opportunity to be a really good sinner (by which I mean a really bad sinner). And frankly, Jesus seemed to like the really bad sinners the most because they knew they needed help. It was the virtue of self-aware honesty. In The Through The New Testament Class I realized I never once heard Matthew chapter 25 when I was growing up. It would clearly refute the blood, guilt atonement theory that is everywhere in the Bible Belt but not in the teachings of Jesus. Even as a child I sensed Jesus did not teach that good religion should make you feel bad. Matthew 25, starting at verse 31 is the story Jesus tells about the sheep and the goats separated on the Day of Judgement. Surprise, surprise there is no call to accept Jesus as a personal Savior or to make a profession of faith. There is no creedal test or magic words to recite. The life test is have we moved from a path of clueless self-centeredness to a path of generosity, compassion, joy, love, sharing and delight?

The test was simple: did you help the hungry, the thirsty, the immigrant, the poor, the sick and imprisoned? The shocking revelation was Jesus reveals "I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of my brothers or sisters, you were doing it for me!"

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

PAUL'S EPISTLE

One of the greatest moments of joy and delight in my time here was to go with Sally Shell when she delivered Christmas gifts of board games to Salvation Army. She had the overflowing happiness of a child in a toy store just envisioning how these gifts will generate fun and happiness. It is a fitting tribute for our church to have a Sally Shell Outreach Fund in her name and honor. The gifts will be used for a special Outreach Project to help the needy in our community. Sally showed us that faith could be fun. Good religion does not make us miserable. Good religion gives birth to generosity, compassion, joy, love, sharing and delight.

Peace, Shalom, Salaam,
Rev. Paul

MARCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

March 20, 2022

The church council of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ met in the chapel on March 20, 2022 for the monthly stated meeting. Present were council members Karen Caton, Cindy Haas, Carolyn Holmgren, Martha Jones, Nancy Palubicki, Michael Petri, Ken Puhler (moderator) and the Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby. Mark Long and Sally Shell were absent.

A quorum was established. The meeting was opened at 11:31 a.m. with prayer led by Paul.

Minutes of the February 20, 2022 council meeting were approved as distributed, on motion.

Pastor's Report:

At Paul's suggestion, a motion was made that masks will be personal choice for worship services as long as Mesa County remains in the green, low-risk COVID-19 category as determined by the Center for Disease Control website, and mandatory otherwise. This motion was approved.

Paul suggested that a local historian be asked to make a presentation (open to the community) on the history of race relations in Grand Junction and Mesa County. Tentatively, this would be at the church in April or May. The council agreed by consensus.

Maundy Thursday service proposed for 7:30 p.m. Rides could be offered for people who don't want to drive after dark. The council agreed.

Paul interviewed two candidates for the Christian Education position. Those initial interviews have not worked out. He's still looking.

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

- ◇ Mission and Outreach/JAM, March 2022 Draft Minutes
- ◇ Congregational Life, March 2022
- ◇ Worship and Celebration, February 2022 Draft Minutes
- ◇ Property and Finance, March 2022 Draft Minutes
- ◇ Spiritual Formation, Report from Sunday School Volunteer Team
- ◇ Building Utilization Team, no written report – plans to disband it. Tasks largely complete.
- ◇ Personnel Committee, no report
- ◇ Marketing Team, no written report – a camping trip has been arranged for August 12-14 on Grand Mesa.

MARCH COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

Finance/Treasurer's Report: No report.

Other Business/New Business

- ◇ Revisit Church Activities and COVID Numbers: A more formal policy suggestion was distributed to the council prior to the meeting. In light of the decision earlier in the meeting, the council decided not to bother with the more formal policy at this time.
- ◇ Choir: It was agreed to try restarting the choir for Easter and beyond, depending on participation.
- ◇ Bylaws Team Proposed Changes: Michael, Karen and Martha met and proposed many changes to the church bylaws. These were provided to the council for review prior to the meeting. The team had several unsettled issues for broader discussion, so the council spent a considerable amount of time reviewing both the proposed changes and issues. Michael will make further changes to the document based on the outcome of the discussions, clean it all up, and provide it to the council for another review in April.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at 1:15 p.m.

Michael Petri – Council Clerk

The next council meeting will be April 24 at 11:30 a.m.

Note that the meeting will be postponed 1 week due to Easter.

MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS

MISSION AND OUTREACH 2ND QUARTER 2022 COLLECTION CONTINUES

For the 2nd quarter, Mission and Outreach will focus on **Solidarity, Not Charity**, with each month concentrating on a different item. For May, we will be collecting “pouch foods.” What are those? Think of things that come in pouches, like apple sauce, tuna, chicken, dried foods.

“SOLIDARITY, NOT CHARITY” REGULAR, ONGOING COLLECTIONS:

- ◇ Plastic grocery bags for making mats
- ◇ hotel and personal sized toiletries
- ◇ clean, empty plastic gallon milk or water jugs **with their lids**

Please bring jugs and toiletries and put them on the collection shelves near the office or in the appropriately marked bins. Thank you.

APRIL COLLECTIONS NUMBERS

As of this writing:

190 cans tomato sauce, 25 other for Catholic Outreach [Go church, go!]
2 large bins of pull top soups for SNC and then some

MAY CATHOLIC OUTREACH COLLECTION

Epic Poetry Submission/Mission Food Request (Cream Soups)
Sharyl B. Peterson, Poet Laureate of the Desperate

*Cream of asparagus, Cream of pea...
Cream of mushroom, Cream of flea
(for "dog-gone good dishes"),*

*Cream of chicken, Cream of potato,
Cream of shrimp, but please, no tomato!*

*Cream of this, and Cream of that,
Eye of newt, and tongue of bat
(oops, sorry, got a little carried away there) ...*

*Cream of soup in every flavor,
More to cook with, more to savor.*

*So bring those soups, please, all the cream(y) ones,
For the Catholic Outreach cooks, those are the
dreamy ones!*

He's the soupervisor



With spring busting out all over, it's time to cook those classic May dishes like mole poblano (to help celebrate Cinco de Mayo), pineapple upside-down cake (to celebrate the new pineapple harvest), fresh fiddleheads (if you hail from the Northeast, you know these are edible and delicious, rather than playable), Coronation Chicken (invented in honor of QEII's coronation 75 years ago, and she is still stylin'!), and Heaven and Earth Tempura Cakes ... none of which contains a drop of any sort of cream soup. But that's okay, because you'll have donated all the creamed soups in your cupboard to Catholic Outreach so they can cook other classic May dishes with them. For May, let's all "THINK CREAM!"



Helpful Hint: now is the time to invest your money in soup stocks or soup crypto ... especially if you want to become a boullionaire!

More helpful advice: We just heard that the McDonald's down on North Avenue is only serving soup these days. Their sign says "boullions and boullions served!"

MODERATOR MOMENT

KEN PUHLER

GOSH! Has it really been a year already? My term as moderator is almost over. We have a new moderator who is compassionate, creative and committed starting soon. I am excited to see the things we are going to accomplish in the future. I am so proud of the people who have worked so very hard this past year. The CE Building was a major undertaking and being able to provide needed medical equipment to members of the community is an achievement to celebrate. There is now space available to share God's love and accommodate the needs of others in our valley.

The main building received a cleaning and proper rearranging to better meet our needs. I am amazed at the talent, passion and dedication of our church members. I learned so much about the church history during my tenure and was inspired by our staff and ALL the volunteers on ALL the teams that make our church function.

The landscape was improved, grounds and buildings cleaned and repaired. We collected food, clothing and necessities to share, made food for ourselves and others, did service projects, provided worship services complete with music to inspire, rejoice, soothe and heal in a beautifully decorated sanctuary. We even found a way to share those services with folks at home—whether that was near or far away. We provided space for fun and camaraderie, community networking and organizing as well as recovery and reflection.

WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

I have really enjoyed the moderator meetings that our own Mark Long hosts the first and third Thursday of every month. It is the best use of ZOOM I have found so far. It is great to share ideas with and learn from the other churches in the conference. I am always grateful to be a member in Grand Junction and dealing with the issues that we have compared to some of the other things going on.

Some churches have had struggles with pastors and staff, some with maintaining or repairing buildings and others with sharing buildings and property to meet the needs of their communities. A common thread among us all is the desire to grow our congregation. I have listened to some talk about how to try to change the people in the community to want the things the church has to offer as well as changing the church to meet what the people want. A combination of both is going to be necessary to grow.

Along that same thought, church constitutions and bylaws are being changed to allow the church to operate as it needs to in order to meet the desires of the community. We don't try to change the church to meet bylaws written for a world that doesn't exist anymore. Change is exciting, scary and sometimes sad—but it is necessary. Our bylaws are changing to better meet our needs.

It has been wonderful to welcome Pastor Paul and Pam to our church. We are so fortunate that they agreed to come here. I am grateful for their new ideas, fellowship and friendship. I sure hope we can host an installment for him soon.

I am thrilled with the new members who have joined us and look forward to our church growing and improving with their involvement. Each one of you has talents and treasures that add so much to our church family. We welcome you with open arms and hearts.

I am so grateful to have had this opportunity to serve the people and the church that I love. Thank you, thank you,I had a blast—I liked it so much, I am hoping you will vote on May 22nd to allow me to serve as vice-moderator next year so I can serve as moderator again in 2024!

ANNUAL MEETING, SUNDAY, MAY 22

Our Program Year Annual Meeting will take place on Sunday, May 22, 2022 at the end of worship. This is the time when members of the congregation vote on the new proposed council for 2022-2023 and some proposed bylaws changes. It is important that we have as much participation as possible. Please save the date on your calendar and join in the governance of our congregation. A meeting agenda and other materials will be sent via email May 9.

GRAND JUNCTION HIGH SCHOOL AP TESTING

Our church is hosting the GJHS AP testing program again this year, Tuesday, May 3 through Thursday, May 12. Some church and other meetings will be shifted to different rooms during this time. It is also very important for volunteers to check with me ahead of time if you plan to access the main church building [excluding the sanctuary and gathering space] for any reason or do noisy work on the grounds near the main building. Thanks, all ~Beth

NEW NIGHT FOR MAKE MONDAYS FUN

Make Mondays Fun is shifting days from the first and third Mondays of the month to the second and fourth Mondays of the month. Change your calendars accordingly—and remember: meeting on 2nd and 4th Mondays is NOT the same thing as meeting every other Monday.

COVID PROTOCOL UPDATE BETH RAKESTRAW

As long as the CDC County Covid Check registers Mesa County at Green, or LOW risk, masks are optional for worship and other events. The CDC recommendation for that level is for people to stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines and get tested if you have symptoms. The wearing of masks is a personal choice at the green level.

Masks will be required again for worship and possibly other events if/when the CDC County Covid Check registers at Yellow, or Medium risk.

LOOKING AHEAD

June 5 | Pentecost

June 9 - 11 | Rocky Mountain Conference Annual Celebration Business Meeting

June 19 | Father's Day | Juneteenth

July 4 | Independence Day | Church Office Closed

August 12—14 | Church Camping Trip | Island Lake [on Grand Mesa]

September 5 | Labor Day | Church Office Closed

MAY 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9:00 Choir 10:00 Worship w/ Communion 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Worship & Celebration		GJHS AP Testing Begins 5:30 Cantabile Ringers	GJHS AP Testing Continues 4:30 Mission & Outreach	GJHS AP Testing Continues 1:00 Fellowship & Hospitality	GJHS AP Testing Continues 10:00 Zoom Coffee	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Super Singing Sunday 9:00 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour	GJHS AP Testing Continues 1:00 Property & Finance 5:00 Make Mondays Fun Again	GJHS AP Testing Continues 5:30 Cantabile Ringers 5:30 Graff's Dairy	GJHS AP Testing Continues 1:00 Through the NT Study	GJHS AP Testing Ends	10:00 Zoom Coffee	
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
9:00 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Council Meeting		5:30 Cantabile Ringers			10:00 Zoom Coffee	
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
9:00 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Annual Meeting	5:00 Make Mondays Fun Again	5:30 Cantabile Ringers	1:00 Through the New Testament Study		10:00 Zoom Coffee	
29	30	31	June 1	June 2	June 3	June 4
9:00 Choir 10:00 Worship	Church Office Closed for Memorial Day		4:30 Mission & Outreach		10:00 Zoom Coffee	

MAY BIRTHDAYS

5/2 Barbara Eyer
5/8 Karen Van Ert
5/18 Kathleen Carlson
5/23 Sharyl Peterson
5/30 Jim Lauer
5/31 Anne Djokic

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!



Go Green! Get your Tower
Chimes via email!



CONTACT US!

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UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST