

# Tower chimes

Monthly newsletter of First Congregational UCC | Grand Junction, CO | February 2024



## Paul's Epistle

Dear Friends,

Thanks to a gift from the Holmgren lectureship, we have a new 70-inch TV in the chapel for use for education purposes (and maybe a once-a-year Superbowl party?). With this new gift we will have a Meaningful Movies event showing Groundhog Day on Groundhog Day! This moral-ethical-spiritual rebirth classic will be on Feb. 2nd at 6pm. If you are willing to bring a dessert to share let me know. This is one of my all-time favorite films about how we choose to live our days. As those committed to follow the compassionate path of Jesus this movie is a true inspiration.

The winter-spring adult education series will be Season 2 of "The Story of God" with Morgan Freeman. We did season 1 last year and I was stunningly impressed by the beauty of the cinematography. Imagine the film on a 70-inch canvas! Since season 2 is a couple sessions shorter I will be adding the film "With One Voice" that reflects on the eternal teachings of love found across faith groups. In this time of division, conflict and war it is a powerful expression of what oneness and wisdom exists in our world today. It features teachers I have had over the years like Thomas Keating, Joan Halifax, Joseph Goldstein, John Daido Looi, Brother David Steindl-Rast and many other teachers from nine different faith groups. The dates for the series will be on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays at 1pm. So, mark your calendar starting Feb 28 then March 13, March 27, April 10 and April 24th.

If you have a movie that was a spiritual revelation for you and would like to host a Meaningful Movies event, please let me know. I had a church member in Seattle who became open to the Christ-like path of compassion after they saw the movie "Pay It Forward." For me, Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" is a dynamic story of conversion to compassion. So, share what has opened your heart to a larger life.

We will also be having a New Members Class on Feb. 4th after church in the library. All are welcome to come for a time of sharing about UCC history and values. I always try to discover what inspired a visitor to visit our church. Most recently, a mother and

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

## PAUL'S EPISTLE

daughter said it was the message on our church sign. It is a quote from my favorite TV series in the last few years, Ted Lasso. The quote proclaims "Be Curious, not judgmental."

Peace, Shalom, Salaam,  
Paul

## MODERATOR'S MUSINGS CAROLYN HOLMGREN

Most people are aware that there is a movement by some groups to ban books which they consider objectionable and should not be available to the reading public. I, and I think most of us at FCUCC, aren't among them. In fact, there are some of us who would like to gather some of these books for a special "banned books" shelf in our church library to have them available for anyone to read. A google search of banned books readily provides lists of such books. (Especially interesting are the children's books deemed inappropriate.) Our collection will be made up of donations, possibly of books you have on your home bookshelf. I will be donating Cat's Cradle by Kurt Vonnegut....after I reread it.

Peace,  
Carolyn

## SHROVE TUESDAY PANCAKE SUPPER



Lent has traditionally been thought of as a time for fasting. "Pancake Tuesday" or "Fat Tuesday" or "Shrove Tuesday" developed as a chance for one last splurge before the six-week period when eggs, dairy products and fats were considered "forbidden" foods. Even though these beliefs are not necessarily part of our religious tradition, we enjoy sharing this annual meal with our church family.

The pancake supper will be held on Tuesday, February 13th from 5:30 to 7:00 in the Mayflower Room. Along with pancakes, bacon and hashbrown potatoes will be served. (Gluten free pancakes available.)

**YOU HAVE A DATE FOR  
VALENTINE'S DAY ...  
ASH WEDNESDAY  
FEBRUARY 14**

Worship with the imposition of ashes will take place at **11:00 am** in the sanctuary, followed by lunch at The Grand International Buffet for those who want to eat with friends.



# SUNDAY MORNING CHILDREN'S PROGRAM MARIE KOONTZ

## Sunday Morning Children's Program in February

### **The Story of Moses Continues**

February 4: "Moses and the Parting of the Sea"

February 11: "Moses and the Ten Commandments"

### **Lenten Program: Lessons Jesus Taught Us**

February 18: A story of Doing What's Right and about Compassion \_  
"The Good Samaritan"

February 25: A story of change from greed to generosity  
"Zacchaeus, the Tax Collector" Matthew 25:31-46

March 3: A story of unfairness and forgiveness  
"Peter questions Jesus" Matthew 18:21-35

March 10: What is love?  
"A letter from Paul to the Corinthians" I Corinthians 13:1-8a

March 17: From a dark place to light  
"You are the light of the world" Matthew 5:14-16

March 24: Palm Sunday (1<sup>st</sup> day of Holy Week)

I am looking for volunteers for the Sunday Morning program in February. Since the age group consists of toddlers to teens, it helps to have two volunteers beside myself. If you would like to volunteer for a Sunday or Sundays, please call or text me at 90-270-2579, or let me know on Sunday morning. Thank you, Marie



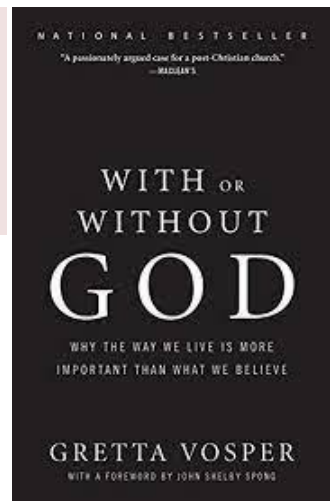
**A SPECIAL REQUEST TO THOSE WHO  
HAVE TRAVELED ABROAD**

**This summer for our children's program on Sunday morning, I would like to invite those who have visited different countries to come and share their experiences with the children in our church. I hope you will look at your summer schedule and see if you can spare a Sunday to help with the program. There are 13 weeks that I need to fill. Please contact me either on Sunday mornings, phone call or text 970-270-2579, or email me at charley.koontz2009@gmail.com. Thank you**

## **BOOK STUDY: *WITH OR WITHOUT GOD***

The next session of this book study takes place in the chapel Sunday, February 11, at 11:30 am. The group will be studying chapter 5.

Ed Orlosky, the discussion facilitator, is inviting participants to email him any questions they would like the group to address at this session. Ed's email address is [mjmejo@comcast.net](mailto:mjmejo@comcast.net).





# NOVEMBER COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

November 19, 2023

The church council of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ met in the chapel on November 19, 2023 for the monthly stated meeting. Present were council members Karen Caton, Mary Endres, Kathy Goe, Cindy Haas, Carolyn Holmgren (moderator), Julie Krueger, Michael Petri, Ken Puhler, Ron Rucker, Rachel Seiff and Janis Woodley.

A quorum was established. The meeting was opened with prayer by Paul at 11:25 a.m.

Minutes of the October 15, 2023 council meeting were approved as distributed.

## **Pastor's Report:**

- ◇ Paul participated in the ground breaking ceremony for Mother Theresa House. When completed, the building will provide temporary housing to 40 homeless families and/or individuals.
- ◇ The synagogue across the street received two verbal threats this week. Paul reminded the council that the synagogue was provided a key to our building in case they need a safe space. So far they have not used it.
- ◇ Paul celebrated the amazing generosity of the congregation. Pledges for 2024 are up by \$11,000 from 2023. This will enable raises for staff and more money towards deferred maintenance of the facility.

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

- ◇ Mission and Outreach/JAM, November 2023
- ◇ Fellowship & Hospitality Meeting, November 2023
- ◇ Worship and Celebration, November 2023
- ◇ Property Team, November 2023
- ◇ Gardens and Grounds, meeting in November
- ◇ Personnel Committee, no report
- ◇ Marketing Team, no written report

## **Finance:**

Julie distributed and discussed the proposed 2024 budget. She feels that the \$11,000 increase in pledges, despite the deaths of a number of contributing members in 2023, indicates the health and vitality of the church. There are 12 new pledging units. Major changes in the 2024 budget include increased rents for the CE building spaces starting in March. The church umbrella insurance policy was lowered from \$30 million to \$5 million. \$2,000 was moved to support Mother Theresa House construction. Salaries were increased. The committee is planning to emphasize the Legacy Circle and supermarket cards in 2024.

A motion to accept the proposed 2024 budget and submit it to the congregation for approval was unanimously approved.

Christmas bonuses for the staff were discussed. On motion, it was agreed to give the pastor \$500, the church administrator \$300, and the other staff \$100 each.

## **Other Business/New Business:**

- ◇ Holiday Decorating – After some discussion, it was agreed to decorate the church for the holidays on Saturday, December 2, at 10 a.m. followed by a soup lunch. Ken and Kathy agreed to prepare the soup. Carolyn and Karen agreed to note which decorations should

# NOVEMBER COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

be brought down from the storage room, and then the congregation will be asked to help move them into the Sunday school room or gathering space after church on Sunday, November 26. (These locations were picked to prevent cluttering spaces used by other groups during the week.) It was also suggested that photos be taken of all the decorations in place for future reference.

- ◇ Carolyn and Kathy are planning to set up a “banned book” shelf in the library for books banned from the schools or library.

Next council meeting:

The annual congregational budget meeting is scheduled for December 17. Paul plans to be on vacation on January 21. Thus, it was agreed that the next council meeting will be on January 14, 2024 at 11:15 a.m.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at 12:35 p.m.

Michael Petri – Council Clerk

## DECEMBER ANNUAL BUDGET MEETING MINUTES

**December 17, 2023**

The Congregation of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ met in the sanctuary following the worship service on December 17, 2023 for the annual budget meeting. The meeting began at 11:12 a.m. with a brief overview of the budget by the chair of the Finance Committee, Julie Krueger. The proposed budget was made available to the congregation electronically by December 7. A budget question and answer meeting was held on December 10 for those interested in learning more.

Julie commented that the increased pledges for 2024, despite the deaths of a number of long-time members in 2023, seems to indicate a healthy congregation.

At 11:14 a.m., Moderator Carolyn Holmgren officially called the meeting to order. Clerk Michael Petri determined that a quorum was present. (As per the bylaws, a quorum is 15% of membership, or 17.1 of the 114 active members. About 57 members were present.)

The floor was opened for questions. There being none, a motion was made to adopt the proposed budget for 2024. The motion was approved unanimously.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed, on motion, at 11:15 a.m.

Michael Petri  
Council Clerk

## LOOKING AHEAD

Palm Sunday | March 24

Holy/Maundy Thursday | March 28

Good Friday | March 29

March 31 | Easter

April 20 | A Taste of Africa Fundraiser

May 6 – 17 | GJHS AP Testing at Church

# MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS

## First Quarter Mission & Outreach February Collection The Gift of Love, Inc.

It was a pleasure to welcome Brittney Bade to our church on Sunday, January 18th and to learn more about The Gift of Love, Inc. The Mission and Outreach team would like to continue supporting this organization during the month of February by donating items for gift baskets for seniors living in senior apartments or assisted living facilities. Let's focus on Valentine's Day and think about providing such fun items as puzzles (crossword, Sudoku, etc.), art supplies such as coloring books and colored pencils, candy, and individually wrapped snacks.

Soon we will be providing information about opportunities to volunteer by helping to fill gift baskets for both Valentine's Day and Easter. Thank you for your support!

Thank you!  
M & O Team

### SOLIDARITY NOT CHARITY

We have resumed collecting jugs for SNC. Now that SNC is receiving food from the food bank again, they have asked us to shift away from collecting pouch foods back to personal size toiletries and other personal hygiene items.

### CATHOLIC OUTREACH JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2024 COLLECTION ITEM *by Sharyl Peterson, Poet Laureate of the Hungry*

All righty, let's begin the new year with a quiz. 1. How many of you have made a new year's resolution that involves eating more healthily? 2. How many of you have made a new year's resolution that involves being more generous? 3. What is Christmas (or any other holiday) turkey without dressing? (Hint: POINTLESS!!!) 4. What is Michelangelo's "David" without dressing? (Hint: NEKKID) 5. What is lettuce, carrots, and other veggies without dressing? (Hint: RABBIT FOOD)

So, let's prevent pointless, nekkid, cross-species culinary tragedies by collecting: SALAD DRESSINGS for the rest of January and for February (since we're starting late). And, stay-tuned for possible new jokes and/or poems in the February newsletter. In the meantime,

*“Over the river, and through the woods, a-shopping we will go ...  
To get us some Ranch and Thousand Island and Blue Cheese too, ho-ho ... oh!  
And maybe some French, and Italian too, and Caesar's always good ...  
Tahini, or poppy-seed, whatever's your fave ...  
We'll elevate those salads (that's Food Network language)  
From rabbit food (although rabbits like it just fine)  
To something splendood ...*

(Grant me a little grace here; I'm out of practice writing food poetry for the last three months.)

Let's try for 100 bottles of salad dressing (our original goal number) plus 24 for the new year, by the end of February! You bring it in, Petersons will deliver it, and the guests at Catholic Outreach will love it!

# FEBRUARY 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>Jan 28</b>	<b>Jan 29</b>	<b>Jan 30</b>	<b>Jan 31</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>WESHELTER</b>		<b>LDS</b>	<b>*** 5:00 pm to</b>	<b>8:00 am</b>		
8:45 Choir Rehearsal 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Worship & Celebration		10:00 Women's Coffee/Mens' Coffee 5:30 Cantabile Ringers		10:00 Fellowship & Hospitality	10:00 Zoom Coffee 6:00 Meaningful Movies	
<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>WESHELTER</b>		<b>LDS</b>	<b>*** 5:00 pm to</b>	<b>8:00 am</b>		
8:45 Choir Rehearsal 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour	5:00 Make Mondays Fun Again	10:00 Women's Coffee/Mens' Coffee 5:30 Cantabile Ringers	2:00 Mission & Outreach		10:00 Zoom Coffee	
<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>WESHELTER</b>		<b>FCC</b>	<b>*** 5:00 pm to</b>	<b>8:00 am</b>		
8:45 Choir Rehearsal 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Worship & Celebration 12:00 <i>With or Without God</i> Book Study	1:00 Property Team	10:00 Women's Coffee/Mens' Coffee 5:30 Cantabile Ringers <b>5:30 Pancake Supper</b>	<b>Ash Wednesday</b>	11:30 Berna B's	10:00 Zoom Coffee	6:00 FOG, Fellowship of the Grape
<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>WESHELTER</b>		<b>FCC</b>	<b>*** 5:00 pm to</b>	<b>8:00 am</b>		
8:45 Choir Rehearsal 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			10:00 Zoom Coffee	
<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS</b>	
8:45 Choir Rehearsal 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour		10:00 Women's Coffee/Mens' Coffee 5:30 Cantabile Ringers	1:00 Spring Video Study, <i>The Story of God</i> , part 2		2/1 Kathy Goe 2/4 Annie Albrethsen 2/4 Scarlett Montgomery-Anderson 2/9 Kay Ragsdale 2/18 Dan Wilkie 2/19 Jon Ragsdale 2/19 Pam Gregory 2/25 Gwen Kelly 2/29 Jonathan Ely	



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](http://www.uccgj.org)

### **Choir/Handbell Director**

Karen Caton  
topcatkc@aol.com



# UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST