

Tower Chimes



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

Paul's Epistle



Dear Friends,

I have recently admired a church member who faced their fears in a major health battle. They accepted the good they could find in each day. They leaned on friends and family not just to help but to break through feelings of isolation and anxiety. They took my advice to watch their favorite DVDs or streaming shows that were comic.

Most comedy is a somewhat twisted view of human suffering or human failure. We laugh at mistakes we would make in a similar situation. If I was required to build a house, I am certain it would be similar to Buster Keaton's classic home construction disaster that was smashed by a train. Part of dealing with fear is discovering release mechanisms to focus our energy in a positive direction.

If you face most fears, you will discover the vast majority of our worries never happened or we would not have survived 1st grade. Ask if your fear is an actual reality this moment or a projected imagination of what may possibly unfold? Face your fear by having a friend or pastor or counselor discern if your fear is subject to a 40% to 70% exaggeration. Just because something negative happens, it does not mean it is as awful as fear wants us to believe. If that does not work, try the technique of the philosopher Seneca he called "premeditation malorum," which means, think about the absolute worst-case scenario, face it, and take every action to change the outcome. I also suggest a journal to keep a record of how each action helps shift an outcome. It is like the football coach who at half-time tells the team they are going to lose if nothing changes. Then the coach offers them the changes that allow for a comeback.

The problem with fear is that it can paralyze us so we do not take action. Fear can leave us apathetic and discouraged. Fear can spin thoughts of despair and surrender. One of the reasons support groups and churches continue to exist in our individualistic, self-focused culture is that community supports our deeper needs for caring and being welcomed. It's one of the reasons we continue with the Trump-era Support Group on 2nd Sundays. In 35 minutes, I feel less alone, more focused and connected to kindred souls. In an era of cruelty and clue-less Departments of War, it is a blessing to realize I am not the only one sick of the sadistic news stories flowing from this administration,

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

PAUL'S EPISTLE

the most recent being Trump withholding urgently needed disaster relief funds for any state that did not vote for him. Yes, our state and its people have been punished. This week it is North Carolina.

The book *For Such a Time as This* has a “dig deeper” set of reflection questions that are part of an in-depth study guide in the back of the book. Can you tell it was written by a seminary professor? These questions are student tested. In October we will begin at pages 140 and 141 for reflection questions about the introduction and Chapter 1. You do not have to be in the support group to buy the book by Hanna Reichel. It is listed used for \$10 on bookfinder.com which is a bargain for the best Trump-era self-help book I have run across. Church groups remind us we are not simply isolated individuals groaning at the TV and internet news programs.

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

MESA COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY 2026 FALL CONFERENCE



Saturday, Oct 24, 2026, 8:30 am - 2:30 pm

The conference will include a keynote speaker on genetic testing, breakout sessions on Genealogical DNA testing, AI for Genealogy – Tools You Can Use Today, The Emotional Life of Family Trees, Discovering Family History Through Maps, and more.

Hope to see you there! Please pass information onto others who may be interested.

To register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/mesa-county-genealogical-society-2026-fall-conference-tickets-1986474074431> \$10.00 for non-members.

For more information talk to Allan Weinand.

AUGUST COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES RACHEL SEIFF, CLERK

August 16, 2026

The church council of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ met in the chapel for the monthly stated meeting on August 16, 2026. Present were Pastor Paul Ashby and council members Allan Weinand, Celia Eberfield, Cindy Haas, Janis Woodley, Jean Yale, Julie Krueger, Karen Caton, Kathy Goe, Kathy Viglianco, and Rachel Seiff. Absent were: Connie Pyle, Terri Wenzlaff, and Zoe Brosig. Guests were: Beth Rakestraw.

A quorum was established. The meeting opened at 11:18am.

Review of Agenda

On motion, the minutes of the July 19, 2026 council were approved.

Pastor's August 2026 Report

- ◇ The book study for “Such a Time as This” has finished. But there’s more material in the book, such as the Study Questions at the back! Meetings about these will continue on Second Sundays.
- ◇ The next meetings for committees should all be about budget. Please project what you think your End of Year balances will be, and get next year’s requests ready. Our goal is to hold funding steady.
- ◇ The cost of the new roof will be \$75-90k. We should look at a spring fundraising campaign, as opposed to overloading our asks during Stewardship season.
- ◇ Catholic Outreach is asking for more donations, because the food banks are running out lately with costs rising so much.
- ◇ Finance committee suggests that fundraisers for organizations (as opposed to individuals) should come to council for approval, rather than the finance team to get approval. The finance team is working on policy language for this.
- ◇ That being said, no fundraisers should happen in August, September, or October except Stewardship!
- ◇ While Paul is out until September 19, the following will be in place:
 - Kathy and Kathy will be on deck for visiting and advocating for patients while Paul is gone.
 - Administrative/policy questions are to be answered by Cindy Haas, Beth Rakestraw or Martha Jones.
 - If there is a need for any urgent crisis counselling, please go ahead and call Paul.
 - Should any end-of-life matters arise, call Dan Wilkie or Anne Djokic. (Bishop Alan was going to cover these duties, but has family illness. When he comes in on August 30, give him encouragement!)
 - Moving Communion to August 30 from September 4.
 - Beth, Allan, Mark, and Caroline Ely giving the Sermons.
 - There were 15 participants on the recent Zoom “Speaking Truth to Power” with Bishop Budde!

Update: Personnel Committee for Succession Planning –Cindy

- ◇ Paul’s sabbatical was supposed to start in September. Due to the difficulty finding coverage for three months, it will be postponed. Leading prospects in this area have opted out of that length of coverage. Traditional coverage for sabbaticals is the worship role and “human needs,” but not any administrative duties or attending council.
- ◇ Suggestion: we could parcel out support roles and pulpit supply (as we are doing for the end of August/Beginning of September). Admin would continue on as normal.
- ◇ The last time our congregation’s minister had a sabbatical, Dan Wilkie was on our staff, and he covered all the human needs. We cobbled together other things. (So we know the church can function with multiple people providing support.)
- ◇ [We identified a person we could approach for the preaching role and a person we could approach for human needs.]
- ◇ Paul is not planning on leaving in the next 3-4 years! This means we won’t lose him and Beth at the same time. Her firm leaving date is in March 2028. There will be transition time, and no loss of institutional knowledge.
- ◇ There was no Sunday school teacher at all today, through some communication difficulties. We really need to get someone for this role soon. So far, we’ve sent out our recruitment flyer to various local

AUGUST COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

RACHEL SEIFF, CLERK

organizations. A plus is that Alicia Wenger at Food Bank of the Rockies could get the message to all the non-profits, since she is so well connected.

- ◇ Short term candidates are very welcome. We would even love someone to say “I’ll try the job for a month, and let you know.”
- ◇ If a candidate comes up while Paul is away, Cindy and Beth are to handle the interview.

Finance & Stewardship Committee Meeting, August 2026

- ◇ There are difficulties when the Church gives money directly to families or individuals. Best practices would go through a benevolence fund. We don’t want to squash compassion, just streamline it and keep everything transparent.
- ◇ CASA’s new location has two rooms for parental visitation, which need furnishing.
- ◇ Michael Petri took the lead on the new roof project. We have two estimates, and are waiting on the third to comply with policy. We are expecting them all to be about \$100K.
 - Once we have selected the contractor, they will meet with insurance.
 - After that happens, Finance Committee will meet and say “we need this much to finish paying after the insurance has been applied.”
 - Then it will come to council. Ongoing, our finance policy will be that any expenses greater than 5% annual budget, will be brought to the congregation. Our typical budget runs about \$300K, this puts the threshold at \$15k.
 - The way we are structured as a Congregational Church requires someone to validate contract. Minister and Moderator cannot do this. A Congregational meeting is the opportunity to explain this. This will be October 18, right before the October council meeting.
 - We hope to have all the data by the September Council meeting.
- ◇ Money Handling. Celia has volunteered to help with the counting of Sunday offerings. One person can collect the money from the plate, because there’s usually extra people up by the altar (but finance may adjust this practice later). Two people need to do the counting and sign off on the amounts. Only one is needed to deposit at the bank. There has not been any inciting incident, but it is just good business policy as our church grows, and benefits for any potential audits. Before 2020, we always had two people collect, sign off and deposit funds. COVID and social distancing greatly changed our practices, and we haven’t sprung quite back into form. This was a success from the spring committee recruitment drive!
- ◇ Investment: based on our bylaws, an investment team should be formed as a subgroup of finance. In the next quarter or so, they will meet and go through our current and future investments
 - Michael sent a write up to Julie and Kam on Solar Panels. (While we’re looking at the roof, this could be the best time for installation). They could be a valuable investment and good towards future earnings and energy costs (upwards of 50% of monthly costs.) We would be capped at 10c per kwh. Given that Xcel continues to raise prices, it might be even smarter. Our electric bill is a big portion of our monthly expenses.
 - Lou Villaire is co-owner of Atlasta. They are planning to come out and give us a quote. We know that there’s focus on roof and maybe other wants of the congregation, but more information is always good to have on hand. There is still a lease option for the panels.
 - Over time, the church has been gifted various things that have theoretical monetary value, but are difficult to dispose of. These include cemetery plots at Memorial Gardens and gas well royalties. Periodically people have offered to buy the royalties. It’s time to sell these. As an extra benefit it will take work off Martha’s plate!
 - It is time for us to do unofficial audit! Our last was in 2012. There was an official one around the same time.

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

- ◇ Fellowship & Hospitality Meeting, August 2026
- ◇ Mission & Outreach Meeting, August 2026
- ◇ Worship and Celebration Meeting, no meeting
- ◇ Property Team Meeting, no meeting
- ◇ Gardens and Grounds, no report

AUGUST COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

RACHEL SEIFF, CLERK

New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

Next Meeting: September 20

The meeting closed at 12:12pm

Minutes submitted by Rachel Seiff, clerk

Editor's note: remember that the council meeting minutes as published are two months behind the council's current work to allow for corrections to the minutes and council approval. ~~Beth

MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS

ONGOING COLLECTION ITEMS

- ◇ **October Catholic Outreach Item** | CO wants us to continue to supply them with canned tomato products. By the way, the last haul that Pam and Paul took to CO included 54 tomato products, 31 green beans, 33 canned corn, 7 canned peas, and 11 miscellaneous items.
- ◇ **Our Soles for Souls box has gone local!** FCC is now collecting good quality gently used shoes for the Catholic Outreach clothes closet and other local organizations as needed.
- ◇ **Egg Cartons for the food bank.** Remember that the food bank can only use 12-count, cardboard-based cartons.
- ◇ **SNC (Solidarity Not Charity) 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.

FOURTH QUARTER 2026 MISSION PARTNER: MUTUAL AID PARTNERS

The Mission and Outreach Committee has chosen Mutual Aid Partners for the last quarter of the year. They will receive a check for \$1,000, and send a representative to tell us about Mutual Aid Partners during worship on a Sunday soon.

The following is from the director: "MAP is a grassroots organization, rooted in the values of mutual aid, focused on community building, advocacy, and education through a platform that reduces food insecurity and centers accessibility and connection between community members, resources, and organizations in Mesa County.

"Since starting in the summer of 2020, MAP has assisted over 85,000 families through the weekly distribution of essential resources including food, clothing, hygiene essentials, period products, and facilitated access to education, health care, shelter and housing stability.

"Born from an immediate need to fill support gaps during the 2020 pandemic, MAP's work has evolved into a deep-rooted commitment to nurturing sustainable projects that are equity-driven, lower barriers, and create systemic change, demonstrating that MAP's impact goes beyond meeting basic needs."

MORE MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS

THANK YOU!!

A huge thank you to all the dedicated post card writers who have been hard at work these past few months writing hand-written cards to registered African American voters in Lanier County, Georgia, encouraging them to get out and vote in the midterm elections. We will be sending out 1, 271 cards in early October, encouraging them to vote early and bring friends along with them.

We had over thirty writers participating in this effort, including seven non-members. We are also grateful to those members who contributed stamps or money for stamps as it now costs 65 cents to send each post card.

Thank you to Kam, Terri, Kathy Goe, Maria, Wes, Betsy, Norma, Elizabeth, Jean McArthur, Jean Yale, Pam Ashby, Pam Gregory, Susan, Georgia, Caroline, Vicki, Andrea, Celia, Annie, Karen Hildebrand, Kathy Davis, Gwen, Louise, and Bernice! It indeed takes a team!

With much gratitude,
Ellen Bradley

EMPTY BOWLS

Save the Date

31st Annual Empty Bowls



Tickets available here,
Catholic Outreach, online at
www.catholicoutreach.org,
and on the day of the event

Saturday, October 10, 2026
11:00am – 1:30pm
Grand Valley Catholic Outreach
245 S. 1st Street
Grand Junction, CO 81501

\$25.00 ticket buys:
Soup, Dessert and a
Handmade Pottery Bowl
of your choice to keep!

"Feeding the Hungry in the Grand Valley"

Six tickets are still
available in the
church office!

Get yours Sunday!

ABC: APPETIZERS, BEVERAGES, CONVERSATION

This month's ABC social takes place on Saturday, October 17, 6:00 – 8:00 pm, at the home of Doug and Karen Hildebrand, 3167 Saddle Gulch Dr., Grand Junction. Bring a beverage and appetizer to share!

GRAND VALLEY INTERFAITH NETWORK FALL FOOD FEST

The Grand Valley Interfaith Network thanks you for answering the call to feed those who are hungry in our community. Grocery bags with an attached shopping list specific to a local non-profit will be available after worship service. You can bring your completed grocery bags back to Church before Saturday, October 17 for us to deliver to the food drive drop off on that date.

OCTOBER 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Sept 27	Sept 28	Sept 29	Sept 30	1	2	3
8:45 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour		10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffees				
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 New Members/Inquirers Class 12:00 Blessing of the Animals	1:30 Fellowship & Hospitality	10:00 Women's/ Men's Coffee	2:00 Mission & Outreach			<i>Empty Bowls</i>
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
8:45 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Book Study & Trump Era Support Group	1:00 Property Team	10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffee		11:30 Berna B's		<i>ABC Social 6:00 — 8:00</i>
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
8:45 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Church Council		10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffee 12:00 FOTL Set Up Begins	Friends of the Library Book Sale			
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
8:45 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour		10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffee				<i>6:00 pm Church Halloween Party</i>

LOOKING AHEAD

November 1 | Daylight Savings Ends
 November 3 | Election Day
 November 26 | Thanksgiving Day
 November 29 | First Sunday of Advent

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

10/9 Greg Biehn
 10/10 Beau Koontz
 10/13 Mary Wilkie

10/15 Clea Sealing
 10/21 Marilyn Day
 10/22 Sophie Koontz

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



First Congregational UCC
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Church Office Hours
Monday through Thursday
9 am—3 pm
Reach us at:
(970)-242-0298
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CONTACT US!

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Director of Choirs

Karen Caton
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Pianist/Music Coordinator

Martha Jones
She, her, hers

Children's Ed:

*Hiring for this position
continues*

Organist/Pianist:

Ellen Bradley
She, hers, her

Part Time Custodian:

Matu Hedwall
He, his, him

Volunteer Financial Clerk:

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