

# Tower *chimes*

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



## Paul's Epistle

Dear Friends,

I want to thank everyone who helped with the We Shelter program at church. From those who cooked to those who endured sleep deprivation overnight, it required a village. Let it be known your time and energy are appreciated. I also want to mention how one word makes a difference.

After church on the 19th one person said our work was a nice act of charity. My response was it is not charity, it is hospitality. One word makes a difference in how we understand our mutual mission. The Jewish-Christian traditions have an ethic of hospitality. We are hosts who to welcome the stranger, the neighbor, the immigrant, the widow, the orphan, the economically challenged. The word "charity" invokes notions of a superior person giving to help a lesser, struggling person. Most of us have had periods of economic struggle, even if it was a month with nothing but cereal and bologna sandwiches in grad school. So, we extend not charity but a heart of hospitality for our guests during a very cold month.

I believe our building belongs to a sacred mission of compassion. Church buildings only used by church members are a sign of failure in both compassion and imagination. I enjoy seeing people in our church building throughout the week. It is about being a heart center for hospitality. Yes, sometimes it's about fun games of Mahjong that create fellowship and build memory skills for seniors in our community. At times it is about creating greater peace and mercy in our area. I was so grateful for our Church Council's vote to approve an invitation for hospitality. After Rev. Sharyl, the Council and I signed on to offer support for the Jewish community, I wanted to take action beyond that public letter. I presented an invitation and we voted to extend an invitation to our synagogue neighbors to present a program in our fellowship hall on either The Meaning of Jewish Holy Days or a community program with music, dance or art from the Jewish tradition. Maybe it can be both on different evenings. Our role is to

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

## PAUL'S EPISTLE

work towards greater peace, friendship and understanding when any minority group becomes the target of hate. I did have one church member in Tulsa who as a word of criticism said "Rev. Paul would give the whole church away." I replied, "I think Jesus and St Francis would approve." Is the church building just for members only or does it belong to a sacred mission of compassion? Let's say it's God's building and she opens the doors with hospitality and grace. That is the truth and wisdom of the gift of caring.

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

## MODERATOR'S MUSINGS CAROLYN HOLMGREN

While spending the night at the church during the WESHELTER program I wandered into the church library and found a treasury of great books. The books are shelved by topic, so it is easy to find what you are looking for among a wide range of subjects. Ever wonder what The Koran contains? There is a copy in the library. Interested in reading about the thinking of well-known theologians? There are many to choose from in the library. Maybe you would rather hear a lecture. There are numerous Great Courses on a variety of subjects; or listen to a book. There are those also.

Susan Thistlethwaite was our first Holmgren Lectureship guest speaker. Her fiction books are there waiting to be read. John Dominic Crossan was at FCUCC in 2019. The book he wrote with Marcus Borg called The Last Week in which they used Mark's Gospel to interpret each day of the week leading up to Easter (an appropriate read for Lent) is in the library with other books by both Crossan and Borg.

Or if you would rather watch than read, check out Hidden Figures DVD which is especially appropriate for Black History month.

Don't wait until you are spending the night at the church to visit our church library.

Peace, Carolyn

## FELLOWSHIP OF THE GRAPE [FOG]

**Friday, March 10 | 5:00 pm**

At the home of Linda Randolph & Julie Krueger, 2655 Liberty View Drive. Please bring a Merlot or a Riesling, and a side dish to go with chicken vegetable soup.

# MARCH SUNDAY MORNING CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

## JESUS AND PARABLES

March Sunday Morning Children's program



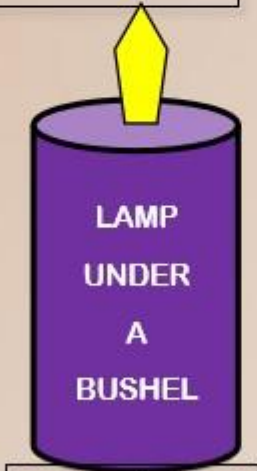
THE LOST SHEEP  
Luke 5:3-7

March 5



THE  
GOOD  
SAMARITAN

March 12



LAMP  
UNDER  
A  
BUSHEL

March 19



THE  
SOWER

March 26

## CATHOLIC OUTREACH NEWS, SHARYL PETERSON



It's almost March which, this year, means it's almost Easter. But first, for your entertainment, consider the following profound (and sometimes theological) questions:

- ◊ What do rabbits say before they eat? "Lettuce pray."
- ◊ What did the rabbit say to the lettuce? "Romaine calm; I'm here for the carrots."
- ◊ For you music-fans, you'll be interested to learn that Elton John just bought his pet rabbit a treadmill. Some of his neighbors think "it's a little fit bunny." What's more, he stocks it with all kinds of green leafy things, but the rabbit always goes after the rocket, man.
- ◊ And finally, what is the Easter Bunny's motto? Don't worry, be hoppy.

Okay, so what's more Easter-ish than rabbits? Salads! Well, at least toppings for them. Yes, we're talking salad dressings once more. The pantry shelves at Catholic Outreach are nearly depleted, and they've learned how outstanding our congregation is at collecting dressings.

The first time we did this, we collected almost 100 bottles. The second time, we collected over 100 bottles! And the last time (in June), we collected almost 200 bottles! So, let's hop to it! Let's do it again! Every kind of dressing is welcomed and needed. And maybe if you're extra-generous with your dressing-gifts, the Easter Bunny will bring you a boat-load of chocolate, and your holiday season will have a very hoppy ending.

## ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING, ELLEN BRADLEY

Through the One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) special mission offering, the United Church of Christ collaborates with domestic and international partners to support humanitarian aid and sustainable development, bringing needed assistance to communities in need of long-term recovery and economic sustainability. Gifts to OGHS also provide much-needed resources to assist our partners in providing clean water, food, education, health care, small business micro-credit, emergency relief, advocacy, and resettlement for refugees.

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) special mission offering of the United Church of Christ involves you in disaster, refugee/immigration, and development ministries



# ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING, ELLEN BRADLEY

throughout the world. When a disaster strikes or people are displaced or made refugees by violence or extreme poverty, you are part of the immediate response and of the long-term recovery.

Through OGHS you engage in holistic development programs including health care, education, agriculture, food sustainability, micro-financing and women's empowerment. Because the UCC relates in mutual partnership to churches and organizations through Global Ministries and worldwide response & recovery networks, your contributions to One Great Hour of Sharing put you in the right place at the right time for the relief, accompaniment and recovery of the most vulnerable. You meet immediate needs and you address the underlying causes that create those needs in the first place.

We will be receiving gifts for this offering during the month of March, with Sunday, March 12th as the designated official OGHS date. You can make your contribution by using the special envelopes which will be provided on Sundays, sending a check to the church office, or by going to our FCC website and making your donation online. Thank you for your gifts and support of this year's OGHS offering!

## MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS

### FIRST QUARTER 2023 MISSION & OUTREACH COLLECTION

For the first quarter of 2023, Mission and Outreach will be focusing on Trail Lamp, a local organization that empowers underrepresented youth through art and business mentorship. It also gives these youth a safe place to form healthy peer groups, make connections with community resources and local professional artists, as well as gain valuable life skills. We would like to invite our congregation to donate various art supplies to this organization over the next three months.

For the month of March, please bring multimedia paper, painter's tape, watercolor markers, and art markers. Of course, folks can also donate any items we suggested for January and February as well. As always, please place your donations in the designated bin across from the church office. Thank you! ~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.

# ROCKY MOUNTAIN ANNUAL CONFERENCE NEWS

## Rev. Sue Artt Retirement

Rev. Sue Artt is retiring from her position as Conference Minister of the Rocky Mountain Conference. Since our conference is so big, geographically, and Sue can not get to every church and see everybody before she leaves us, you can send cards to her at the conference office. If you wish to send something with the card, please feel free to do so. The conference office will receive the cards, and put together a box of well wishes for Sue. The conference office address is:

Rev. Sue Artt  
Rocky Mountain Conference  
1140 W. 5th Ave  
Denver CO 80204

All the best to all of you,  
Ken  
Rev. Kenneth Ingram  
Moderator, Rocky Mountain Conference

## Bridge Conference Minister

A Bridge Conference Minister will serve from the time Rev Sue Artt retires until the Interim Conference Minister can begin. Contract with Rev. Dr. Diane Weible has been signed. She will begin March 1, 2023, ending either May 1 or June 1.

### A Note from Rev. Dr. Diane Weible ...

After 30 plus years in ministry, I know that my passion for ministry is connected to being there for individuals and churches to support, encourage, and lead in a manner that brings out the best in everyone and the Church. I love accompanying people on the journey of following God's call, and I appreciate opportunities to offer a "balcony view" of what I see for the good of the whole. This is the work that has brought me great joy and for which I feel God is calling to me now. I look forward to serving as your Bridge Conference Minister and getting to know as many of you as possible. I trust our work together over the next couple of months will be deeply meaningful and pleasing to God.

Peace,  
Diane



# ROCKY MOUNTAIN ANNUAL CONFERENCE NEWS

## And a Letter from Rev. Diane:

Dear Siblings in Christ,

As the new Bridge Conference Minister for the Rocky Mountain Conference, I want to share a brief introduction to let you know a little more about me. While my time with you will be short, I look forward to opportunities to be supportive in the sacred, tender, and difficult work that lies ahead.

Next week, there will be a deeper reflection about the work before us as we seek opportunities for us to grow as a Conference and strengthen relationships in the midst of the painful challenges that we experience now. Something I believe in with all my heart is that we grow the most when we lean in together to work on the obstacles and difficulties that come our way. There are no easy fixes for the things that really matter, and I believe our call from God to show up in the places that need us the most compels us to stay at the table and work together.

For today, however, I want to tell you a little more about me. I grew up in St. Louis Missouri and after college worked for a very short time as a newspaper reporter before responding to God's Call. I graduated from Eden Theological Seminary in 1991. I became a Mission Co-Worker with the United Church Board for World Ministries (and, later, the Common Global Ministries Board), serving in Japan as a Yochien (Kindergarten) Principal and Associate Pastor of several congregations in Iwate Prefecture.

Our family returned to the United States in 2003, moving to Hawaii in early 2004 where I first served as an Associate Pastor at Kailua Christian Church in Kailua, HI. In 2006, I joined the staff of the Hawaii Conference as Minister of Communications and later as an Associate Conference Minister.

In 2015, I was called as the Conference Minister of the Northern California Nevada Conference. I left that work on December 31, 2022. In addition to wanting to be closer to family, I decided it was time to start my own business. I saw the needs of our churches and ministers for resources, training, and support that was more than time would allow me to offer in my position. My business adventure, Enkei Resolutions, began on January 1, 2023. Enkei is the Japanese word for vision to the future. In the beginning weeks of my business, I have clarified for myself how important it is to offer support and care to our ministers, churches and conference settings in the sacred and difficult work that is before us as we envision a future where our faith commitments will allow us to transform lives and make a difference.

Additional information that will help you know me better includes that I bring to this work a Doctor of Ministry degree that I earned in 2019 from Chicago Theological

# ROCKY MOUNTAIN ANNUAL CONFERENCE NEWS

Seminary. My thesis subject was on white privilege, supporting the work that I believe white, progressive, Christians need to do to meld our desire to engage in anti-racism work with the reality that we all have our own reflection and internal work that we need to do before we are able to show up in an authentic way to the work of anti-racism.

In my spare time, I enjoy music, including playing the banjo, flute and piano (but not at the same time, of course!), crafting, and I am a committed and an unapologetic St. Louis Cardinals fan. I have also just earned my High Red Belt in TaeKwonDo, on my way to earning my Black Belt the near future. (I hope!)

I look forward to getting to know as many of you as possible and to being in partnership and covenant together over the next couple of months. Feel free to email me at [cm@rmcucc.org](mailto:cm@rmcucc.org) as I am here to listen, support and work with all of you to find a way to move forward.

## JANUARY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

**January 15, 2023**

The church council of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ met in the chapel on January 15, 2023 for the monthly stated meeting. Present were council members Karen Caton, Mary Endres, Cindy Haas, Carolyn Holmgren (moderator), Mark Long, Brad Montgomery-Anderson, Nancy Palubicki, Michael Petri, Ken Puhler and the Rev. Paul Ashby. Julie Krueger was absent.

A quorum was established. The meeting was opened with an opening prayer by the pastor at 11:39 a.m.

**Minutes** of the November 20, 2022 council and December 18, 2022 congregational meetings were approved as distributed.

**Pastor's Report:** Paul noted

- ◇ The Rocky Mountain Conference plans to have their annual meeting in Grand Junction. There was some discussion about where the meeting will be held in town and who is "hosting" the meeting, etc. Details will follow.
- ◇ Our church has committed to provided overflow homeless shelter space for 4 weeks (end of February through beginning of March). Two weeks will be manned by members of the LDS church. Paul asked that we all model calm during this time since there will be disturbances to our church routine.
- ◇ In response to comments about the short length of the Congregational Budget Meeting in December, Paul commented that a short meeting is a sign of trust and health in a church.
- ◇ There was some discussion about joining with the Unitarians for a gun buy-back program with the support of a political organization such as the police or fire department. It was noted that there is a very active Moms Demand Action group in town that should be consulted. The



# JANUARY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

Longmont UCC might provide some insight, having participated in a program there.

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

- ◇ Mission and Outreach/JAM, December 2022, January 2022.
- ◇ Fellowship & Hospitality Meeting, December 2022, January 2023
- ◇ Worship and Celebration, December 2022, January 2023
- ◇ Property Team, December 2022, January 2023

Regarding the CE building, the council agreed that since the building is being used by a number of community groups, it's best to continue to muddle through with repairs and maintenance at this time – unless a major repair is required.

Regarding the Columbarium and pergola – the council decided to form a new Columbarium Committee to look into the matter. The committee will be composed of Carolyn Holmgren, Mark Long, Bob and Sharyl Peterson, and Ellen Bradley (assuming that they all consent to serve on the committee). One proposed solution was to replace the deteriorating pergola with shade sails. Discussion of adding a defibrillator (AED) to the church. It was decided to continue investigating this idea.

- ◇ Personnel Committee, no report
- ◇ Marketing Team, no written report
- ◇ Finance and Stewardship, next meeting after yearend financials are completed

**Other Business/New Business:**

- ◇ RMC special zoom meeting is scheduled for Thurs. Feb 9 6:30 pm
- ◇ Membership review - Martha Jones reviewed the membership data using the bylaws' criteria for maintaining active membership. Based on that and other considerations, the council voted, on motion, to move the following members from the active to the inactive members roll:

JoAnn deVergie  
 Chuck Harvey  
 Florine Herod  
 Rosie Hilger  
 Tom Jenkins  
 Karen VanErt  
 Tess Linakis  
 Katie Pierce  
 Bobby Van Matre  
 Curtis Swift  
 Susan Swift

Michael will follow up with Beth about contacting these members via letter.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at 12:36 p.m.

Michael Petri – Council Clerk

The next council meeting will be February 19 at 11:15 a.m.

## IMPORTANT NEWS FROM THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



After a year-long search, the United Church of Christ Board's Search Committee for General Minister and President has made a historic choice. The committee will be recommending **Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson** to the UCCB this week as nominee for General Minister and President. If elected, she would be the first woman, and the first woman of African descent, to lead the denomination.

Rev. Thompson currently serves as Associate General Minister for Wider Church Ministries and Co-Executive for Global Ministries. She has served in the National Setting of the United Church of Christ since 2009, previously as Minister for Racial Justice and Minister for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations. Prior to joining National Setting staff, Rev. Thompson served on staff of the Florida Conference, as a church planter in Florida, and in family ministries in New York. Rev. Thompson is a highly skilled leader with experience in multiple settings of the United

Church of Christ and ecumenically. She holds a Doctor of Ministry, with a dissertation in religious multiplicity among African Caribbean people, from Seattle University, a Master of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary, and a Master of Public Administration from North Carolina Central University.

This recommendation comes from the Search Committee and goes to the United Church of Christ Board, who will hold the next phase of discernment and deliberation during their meeting March 3-5. An affirmative vote from the UCCB would mean Rev. Thompson is nominated to General Synod, the third and final body to discern and vote on her call to serve as General Minister and President. If elected, Rev. Thompson would be the first woman, and the first woman of African descent, to serve as General Minister and President.

## MARCH BIRTHDAYS

3/4 Sam Ragsdale  
3/7 Donna Hochmuth  
3/16 Heidi Hess  
3/16 Joan Levy  
3/16 Mark Long  
3/20 Nancy Hoefler

3/20 Ron Rucker  
3/22 Chuck Harvey  
3/25 Beth Rakestraw  
3/27 Ken Puhler  
3/29 Karen Caton

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](mailto:office@uccgj.org). Thanks!

# MARCH 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>Feb 26</b>	<b>Feb 27</b>	<b>Feb 28</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
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	1:00 The Story of God Video and Discussion 2:00 Mission & Outreach	12:15 Health & Wellness 1:00 Fellowship & Hospitality	10:00 Zoom Coffee	1:00 [COWS] Contemplative Outreach of the Western Slope Annual Day of Prayer
<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>
8:45 Choir Rehearses 10:00 Worship w/ Communion		10:00 Women's Coffee/Mens' Coffee 5:30 Cantabile Ringers		12:15 Health & Wellness	10:00 Zoom Coffee	Set Your Clocks 1 Hour Forward for Daylight Savings Time
<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>
8:45 Choir Rehearses 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Worship & Celebration	1:00 Property Team 5:00 Make Mondays Fun Again	10:00 Women's Coffee/Mens' Coffee 5:30 Cantabile Ringers	1:00 The Story of God Video and Discussion	12:15 Health & Wellness 11:30 Berna B's	10:00 Zoom Coffee	
<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
8:45 Choir Rehearses 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Council Meeting		10:00 Women's Coffee/Mens' Coffee 5:30 Cantabile Ringers		12:15 Health & Wellness	10:00 Zoom Coffee	
<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>April 1</b>
8:45 Choir Rehearses 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:00 Spiritual Journey through 2023 Book Study	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	

## LOOKING AHEAD

April 2 | Palm/Passion Sunday

April 9 | Easter

May 2 — 11 | GJHS AP Testing at Church, Various Rooms

June 15 — 17 | RMC Annual Celebration in Grand Junction

December 3 | First Sunday of Advent



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

### **Church Office Hours**

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

### **Office Administrator:**

Beth Rakestraw  
office@uccgj.org | X 105

### **Volunteer Financial Clerks:**

Nancy Palubicki,  
Martha Jones  
finance@uccgj.org

### **Choir/Handbell Director**

Karen Caton  
topcatkc@aol.com



# UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST