

Tower chimes

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

Paul's Epistle

Dear Friends,

On Sunday June 5th we celebrate the birthday of the church on Pentecost. This year I ask you to please wear orange to express our heart felt connection with all the victims of gun violence in our nation. This is a national day of awareness about what I call our "politically approved form of destruction." This is a modern crisis that leaders of both

parties only address with words (or the buzzy phrase "thoughts and prayers"). Last year alone there were 15,592 gun-related deaths in the U.S. So, break out the old Orange Crush Denver Broncos T-shirt or a more fashionable orange accessory for Sunday the 5th.

In February, months before the recent mass shootings, Peter Marty wrote an article subtitled "Guns are Americans' Golden Calf," a reference to the idol worshipped by the Hebrew tribes when Moses was on an extended retreat on Mt. Sinai. Now, I believe in an original reinterpretation of the 2nd Amendment. I think any American should be able to purchase a 18th century flint-lock rifle that it takes over a minute to load and is not accurate beyond short distances and could easily not work if your powder was damp. Do you think the Founding Mothers would have allowed the Founding Fathers to write an amendment for assault rifles that could wipe out entire Colonial one-room school house in 57 seconds? It would make as much sense as an amendment to permit each person an unlimited number of cannons to fire at those pacifist Quakers! Guns have evolved far beyond the imagination of the original authors of the 2nd Amendment. If you have time look up what Scotland and Australia did after they had one mass shooting. They saw the problem and banned guns. That will not happen here where guns are adored and worshipped as gods.

Guns also magnify the spiritual problem of this country where young white men are being infected with a mental virus. My Buddhist friends talk about the 3

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

PAUL'S EPISTLE

poisons – anger, greed, and ignorance — that twist the mind into violence. The “White Replacement” Theory promoted on the web and by Tucker Carlson spread a mental virus of anger, greed, ignorance with added hatred, anxiety, fear and racism. Put guns in the hands of people with this mental virus and it is a politically approved form of destruction.

As a church we dare to counter such mental virus spread by standing with love and support for those who are the targets. That is why we fly a Black Lives Matter banner and have a church sign that reads “Transkids loved and welcomed here!” It is a message in response to statements by members of the D51 school board that devalue the lives of transgender children. Each week our mission and calling is to follow Jesus in sharing a vaccine of love, compassion and care for all God's children. May God renew our strength in fighting the viruses of the mind, heart and spirit.

Peace, Shalom, Salam
Rev. Paul

MODERATOR'S MESSAGE CAROLYN HOLMGREN

As your newly elected moderator, I am excited about being a part of FCUCC's leadership team. The teams and committees we are overseeing are functioning well, and we are extremely fortunate to have Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby as our spiritual leader.

We expect 2022-2023 to be a productive year. (If you are curious about what happens in the team meetings, you are welcome to attend and/or read the meeting minutes which are posted on the bulletin board by the church office.)

Having said that, the reality is that in families, including church families, questions and misunderstanding arise. Rumors can spread quickly, feelings can be hurt, and sometimes what you hear on the parking lot isn't necessarily accurate. So, if you want something clarified, or if you hear something that raises a concern, please talk to Rev. Paul, or a Church Council member, or even the Moderator.

Rev. Cameron Trimble publishes an online devotional called Piloting Faith. She closes each one with a phrase that I really like and am going to borrow:

“We are in this together”.

Peace, Carolyn

JUNE CATHOLIC OUTREACH COLLECTION

Sharyl B. Peterson, Poet Laureate of the Desperate

Imagine yourself on a sunny green hillside in Italy. Behind you, the sky is deep blue, with a few scattered puffs of cloud here and there. The wind is blowing gently and sweetly. And then, as one voice, you and the incredibly diverse group of people you are gathered with lift up notes of joy and praise and encouragement:

♪ *I'd like to buy the world a home, ♪ and furnish it with love ...*
 ♪ *With apple-trees, and honeybees, and ♪ snow-white turtle doves ... ♪ It's the real thing ...*

It may have been the first intentionally multicultural advertisement ever, for a product apparently loved world-wide: Coca-Cola. Even today, 51 years later (yes, Virginia, they did have advertisements – and televisions – back in 1971), most people who've ever heard it can hum along. So it makes a great reminder for our Catholic Outreach collection this month.

With the weather heating up in the Valley, C.O. guests are thrilled to have a bottle or can of a refreshing beverage to take with them into the heat of their afternoons. Let's collect at least 100 cans or bottles or cartons of juice and/or soda, cold drinks, soft drinks, soda-pop (or whatever y'all called it back home) to share with our thirsty friends here in the Valley. Care ... concern ... sharing ... that's the real thing! ♪

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 June, we will collect items to make hygiene packs. Watch Church Chat for more information.

“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.

MAY COLLECTIONS NUMBERS FOR CATHOLIC OUTREACH

110 Cream of Whatever Soups: 53 Mushroom, 41 Chicken and 16 Celery
 69 “Other.”

APRIL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

April 24, 2022

The church council of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ met in the chapel on April 24, 2022 for the monthly stated meeting. Present were council members Cindy Haas, Carolyn Holmgren, Martha Jones, Nancy Palubicki, Michael Petri, Ken Puhler (moderator) and the Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby. Karen Caton and Mark Long were absent.

A quorum was established. The meeting was opened at 11:24 a.m. with prayer led by Paul.

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

Pastor's Report:

- ◇ Paul encouraged the council to do some committee rebonding events.
- ◇ He received an invitation from the Disciples of Christ church for our church to be full participant in a block party they are planning for June 25. This follows two other planned church events in the two weeks prior. The council suggested that Paul ask for more details.
- ◇ Paul will be taking vacation August 8-30.

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

- ◇ Mission and Outreach/JAM, April 2022 Draft Minutes – The Mission and Outreach Team decided to establish a Sally Shell Memorial Fund for memorial gifts that can be donated in her honor. This outreach fund will be collected through the end of 2022 and disbursed by the end of 2023 to bless those in need in our community. The council approved Ellen Bradley and Kathy Viglianco as co-chairs of the team due to the death of Sally Shell.
- ◇ Fellowship & Hospitality Meeting, April 2022
- ◇ Worship and Celebration, March 2022 Draft Minutes
- ◇ Property and Finance, April 2022 Draft Minutes
- ◇ Spiritual Formation, no report
- ◇ Personnel Committee, no report
- ◇ Marketing Team, February 2022 & April 2022

Finance/Treasurer's Report: First Quarter 2022 Financial Report, Martha commented that there was nothing extraordinary to point out. On motion, the council approved the Sally Shell Memorial Fund.

Other Business/New Business

APRIL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

◆Membership:

- ◆ Deaths: Council member Sally Shell died on March 20, 2022.
- ◆ The following were accepted into membership of the church on April 17:
 - ◆ Paul Ashby (transfer)
 - ◆ Pam Ashby (transfer)
 - ◆ Kim Sutherland (reaffirmation of faith)
 - ◆ Glenna Stark (reaffirmation of faith)
 - ◆ Kathy Goe (reaffirmation of faith)

◆**Bylaws Team Proposed Changes:** Changes based on comments at the previous council meeting and further discussion were presented to the council. The council approved the changes by consensus and thanks Michael for working through the document. Michael will prepare a clean copy of the revised document with an executive summary of the changes for the congregation with the expectation that these documents will be provided to the congregation electronically on May 9th. (A detailed comparison document, which is confusing, will be available only upon request.) A Q&A about the proposed changes will be provided after the worship service on May 15. Approval of the revised bylaws will be on the agenda of the congregational meeting on May 22.

◆**Check In with Nominating Committee** and Other Preparation for Annual Meeting: The committee is still working to find candidates for council.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at 1:00 p.m.

Michael Petri – Council Clerk

The next council meeting will be May 15 at 11:30 a.m.

NEW CHURCH DIRECTORY UPDATE

BETH RAKESTRAW

After worship for the next several Sundays, a draft of the new directory will be available for your review. I'd like congregants to review their photos and contact information, make any necessary corrections, and initial next to the entries to show it has been reviewed. Your initials will also express your permission for your photo and contact information to appear in the directory. Arrangements for new photos or re-takes can be made at that time.

PS. We really want as many photos as possible for this directory, especially from those of you who are new to our community. Please consider sharing a photo with us if you have not done so.

DISHWASHERS FOR CHURCH EVENTS NEEDED

As Fellowship & Hospitality (formerly Congregational Life) plans more events for our church family, we find ourselves in need of more help. In this case I hope to find four willing persons who can lift up to 30 pounds to rotate on Sundays to help us clean up and run the dishwasher. Your commitment would be for one Sunday a month, and after special events (would be scheduled in advance). Brief training will be provided. Please give it some thought and be generous with your time. I can be contacted by phone or email. ~Thanks, Barbara Eyler.

SUNDAY MORNING CHILDREN'S PROGRAM FOR JUNE MARIE KOONTZ

Colors in God's Creation

Come to our Sunday morning children's program and find out what my little eyes have spied.

June 5 – I spy with my little eyes....
Colors bursting in the sky.

June 12 – I spy with my little eyes...
Colors in the air and on the ground,
Colors are all around

June 19 – I spy with my little eyes...
Colors moving from here to there.

June 26 – I spy with my little eyes...
Colors popping up from the ground,
Smelling great all around.



Any guesses on what we will be working on?

Volunteers are needed to assist in the church school program (all supplies and directions are provided). Also needed are nursery attendants. Please let me know if you can help. Contact Marie Koontz, 970-270-2579. Thank you!

It is my intention to plan a special social event for the children each month. I am still looking at options for the month of June. I will keep you posted. ~Marie

JUNETEENTH

Online event just before Juneteenth will honor people's 'hidden histories'
by Staff Reports | published on May 31, 2022



Stories told by people descended from Africa, the cradle of civilization, will be featured in a live United Church of Christ webinar marking the coming Juneteenth holiday.

“Juneteenth: Revealing Hidden Histories” will take place via Zoom on Friday, June 17, at noon. The U.S. federal holiday, Juneteenth National Independence Day, is Monday, June 20. It commemorates June 19, 1865, the day that Union Army Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Tex., and told enslaved people of their emancipation. That was more than two years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on Jan. 1, 1863.

Remembering that day “acknowledges God’s sacred people of African descent,” said the Rev. Velda Love, UCC minister of racial justice and leader of Join the Movement Toward Racial Justice. Hearing real stories from those people, she said, is a way to counteract white supremacist “efforts to suppress the truth of our history.”

Howard University Professor Renee K. Harrison will help lead the webinar. Her 2021 book, *Black Hands, White House: Slave Labor and the Making of America*, inspired the “hidden histories” theme, Love said. Serving as the event’s “cultural historian,” Harrison will help elicit stories via prerecorded and live interviews. Featured speakers will focus on their own — and their families’ — relationships to the land where they live or were born, stories about their lineage, and emancipation moments in their lives.

Storytelling as sacred

Hearing stories that acknowledges people’s birthplaces — and humanity’s birthplace in Africa — is a sacred exercise, Love said.

“Sacred acknowledgement is celebration of cultural expressions as first peoples, free people, multilingual, multiethnic and multi-talented artisans, scientists, creators, builders, navigators, writers, thinkers and orators,” she said. “Sacred acknowledgement is remembering and honoring the generations of untold stories that are waiting to be revealed within these sacred bodies.”

STAND WITH TRANSGENDER, NONBINARY PEOPLE

Saying “the stakes have never been higher,” a letter from the national setting of the United Church of Christ is calling the entire denomination to a special focus during Pride Month, June 2022. It urges all “UCC communities to center trans experience, advocacy and care in your Pride celebrations this year.” It cites an uptick in anti-trans legislation in many U.S. states and harm already done to “the mental health of LGBTQIA+ communities, and, in particular, youth.” Here’s the letter:

UCC PRIDE MONTH CALL TO ACTION

Beloveds, vulnerability is increasing in our midst – by the day, seemingly, even, by the hour. COVID is becoming endemic and so is legislation and policy being written that strips bodily autonomy from people and criminalizes trans experience, especially youth, trans families, and gender-affirming health care. More extreme policy preventing nonbinary identification is moving through state legislatures as well. The stakes have never been higher. Much harm has already been done, and the mental health of LGBTQIA+ communities — and, in particular youth — is of great concern.

The fear of being singled out and targeted, or the bullying some youth are subjected to, takes a great toll. For queer adults as well, and even allies not connected to strong communities of care and support, it is overwhelming to think about making an impact on our own. The good news is we are not alone. We are a church full of justice-seeking, affirming communities. More than 1,760 of our churches have adopted open and affirming covenants with more in the process. We need everyone right now and are issuing this call to action for the month of PRIDE (June). PRIDE month is a month of high visibility and affirmation for the LGBTQIA+ community. It is an opportunity for the United Church of Christ to demonstrate our mission to build a just world for all (which sometimes means great outfits and parades). We lament the harmful legislation that has already come into place. We will work to remove it and we believe the Love of God, the Hope of Jesus, and the Movement of the Holy Spirit will always be making way.

Given what is at stake for our trans, nonbinary and queer kin, we are calling on UCC communities to center trans experience, advocacy, and care in your PRIDE celebrations this year.

Center trans advocacy

PRIDE month in the United States began as a commemoration of the Stonewall Uprising, which occurred in New York City in June of 1969 and which Black trans activist Marsha P. Johnson is credited with starting. Many local UCC churches have participated in local PRIDE events for years out of solidarity, love and support for the queer and trans communities, some of whom make up our local congrega-

STAND WITH TRANSGENDER, NONBINARY PEOPLE

tions. This year, with the onslaught of policies and laws aimed at maligning and even criminalizing trans and nonbinary people and youth, in particular, we urge you to connect with local organizers and get involved. Seek out LGBTQIA+ groups working to create affirming and life-giving policies such as was passed recently in Maryland. Be public and vocal as an ally. Many people wait to speak up until someone they know speaks up. Our siblings deserve justice and security, not silence in the face of State violence.

Center trans experience

In addition to getting more involved in direct advocacy and engaging your community, continue to turn to and share the incredible educational resources the UCC offers. Resources are being posted at ucc.org/trans, which will include a toolkit by the first week of June. If you have not yet brought the Our Whole Lives curriculum to your church and community, now is a great time.

Center trans care

Finally, engage the Open and Affirming (ONA) process as a way to learn more about people of trans and nonbinary experience, and strategies to strengthen the welcome, inclusion and justice experienced in your church and community. Whether your church has been ONA for a long time, has just adopted its ONA covenant, or has not yet been through the process, there's always another step on the journey:

- ◇ Learn more about the ONA process at openandaffirming.org.
- ◇ Join a "Thursdays for the Soul" webinar — "Open and Affirming: the Power of Covenant" — on June 16 at 3:30 p.m. ET for a discussion of the ONA process. (It is part of the Just World Covenants series on the third Thursday of the month.)

We can turn this tide together. Happy PRIDE!

The Rev. Tracy Howe (she/they/womxn)
Minister for Congregational and Community Engagement

The Rev. Michael Schuenemeyer (he/him/his)
Minister and Team Leader for Health and Wholeness Advocacy

The Rev. Andrew Lang (he/him/his)
Executive Director, UCC Open and Affirming Coalition

TAKE ACTION TO ADDRESS GUN VIOLENCE REV. DR ANTHONY SCOTT

Rev. Dr. Anthony Scott, one of our Associate Conference Ministers, put forth the following challenge and exhortation on his Facebook page: “Are you seeking an opportunity to put action to your lament, thoughts, and prayers? I offer the following as theological grounding and concrete action. Call on your legislators to do justice; it is their job to hear and vote in ways which represent us.”

“In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus tells a parable about a woman seeking justice and a judge who refused to grant it. This woman, a widow, continued to bring her cause before the judge, even though the judge refused to grant justice on multiple occasions. She pled her case before this judge with such frequency that he finally gave in. The judge relented because he was annoyed, not because he had a change of heart.

“In this moment, we are called to be holy annoyances at the doors and voicemails of our elected officials. Complain, implore, cry out until they hear and enact what is just, for the sake of all.”

Colorado Senators:

Michael F Bennet: 202-224-5852

John W Hickenlooper: 202-224-5941

Sample Script: “Hello, my name is [your name]. I am a constituent from Colorado, zip code [xxxxx]. The only response I am seeking is ACTION. I am troubled by the lack of senate action on gun control. I am particularly concerned about the lack of a senate vote on the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2021, H.R. 8, and the Enhanced Background Checks Act of 2021, H.R. 1446.

“I encourage you, in the strongest of terms, as my elected senator, to support a vote and the passage of these acts. Thank you for listening to the voices of the people you represent.”



LOOKING AHEAD

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

October 19- 22 | Friends of the Library Book Sale

November 27 | Advent Begins

Christmas Eve is on Saturday this year, Christmas Day on Sunday.

JUNE 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
May 29	May 30	May 31	1	2	3	4
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Worship & Celebration				1:00 Fellowship & Hospitality	10:00 Zoom Coffee	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Pentecost Sunday 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Worship & Celebration		5:30 Cantabile Ringers	1:00 Through the NT Study 2:00 Mission & Outreach		10:00 Zoom Coffee	
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour	5:00 Make Mondays Fun Again	5:30 Cantabile Ringers			10:00 Zoom Coffee	Women's High Tea
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Father's Day Juneteenth 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Council Meeting	Juneteenth Federal Holiday	5:30 Cantabile Ringers	1:00 Through the New Testament Study		10:00 Zoom Coffee	
26	27	28	29	30	July 1	July 2
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour	5:00 Make Mondays Fun Again	5:30 Cantabile Ringers			10:00 Zoom Coffee	

JUNE BIRTHDAYS

6/8 Paul Ashby
6/25 Robert Peterson
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!



Go Green! Get your Tower
Chimes via email!



CONTACT US!

Pastor:

Rev. Paul Ashby
revpaulashby@yahoo.com
X104

Part Time Custodian:

Anna Driggs

Church Office Hours During Corona Time:

Monday through
Thursday 9-3_{pm}
Reach us at :
(970)-242-0298
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