

# Tower chimes

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



## Paul's Epistle

Dear Friends,

Our faith holds to a deep wisdom that caring for others and being concerned about the world serves to generate joy. Meaning comes in a package that is too large for anyone to wrap up and place under a tree. A vital part of meaning is simply recognizing the goodness and God-ness of human existence. So, celebrate a New Year and embrace the opportunities of 2024.

I do not believe it will be a year without major struggles in the fight to preserve democracy in America. We will need large hearts and people who call out the lies of politicians who deny the truth. One of the great saints of American democracy and inclusive love is poet Walt Whitman. There is a beautiful passage in the preface to *Leaves of Grass* that I recommend as an inspiration for our life in 2024:

*Love the earth and sun and animals, despise riches, give alms to everyone that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown or to any man or number of men, go freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the young and with the mothers of families, read these leaves in the open air every season of every year of your life, re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss what insults your own soul, and your very flesh shall be a great poem and have the richest fluency not only in its words but in the silent line of its lips and face and between the lashes of your eyes and in every motion and joint of your body.*

Some of the blessings of living in Grand Junction include how easy it is to love the earth with its carved grandeur in every direction, to appreciate the sun especially if you have lived in a place like Seattle, and to just adore the mountain sheep who share our hiking paths in the Monument. There are multiple reasons why people have a sense of contentment about living here. I celebrate that in 2024 we have a ongoing commitment to serve the homeless and the needy in our community. I am amazed that we have two support centers for GLBTQ persons in vital locations in Grand Junction. When I asked 2½ years ago about where there was GLBTQ equality center in town the

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

## PAUL'S EPISTLE

answer I received was...huh? What? No, we don't have that. Our church served as the bridge to create the first support center. Andi Tilman and our own Beth Rakestraw are vital leaders who made this happen. In 2024, the building process begins for the Mother Teresa Place which will provide 40 apartments for families that are currently homeless. Our 2024 budget includes a \$2,000 donation. Let us celebrate the good that is happening in 2024.

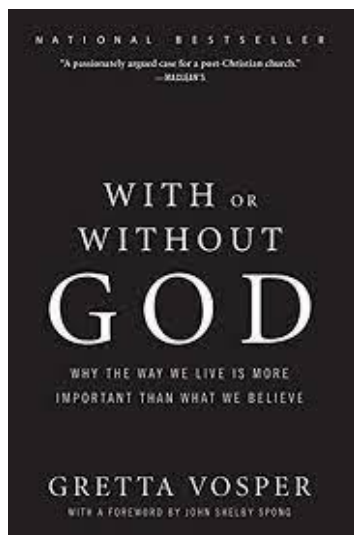
*You only live in the present, this fleeting moment. The rest of your life is already gone or not yet revealed. – Marcus Aurelius, Meditations 3.10*

Peace, Shalom, Salaam,  
Paul

## MODERATOR'S MUSINGS CAROLYN HOLMGREN

A reflection on the life of First Congregational Church during 2023. Sadly, we lost some very special people from our church family, but we also welcomed some new faces at our worship services. Our teams were very active and effective. Mission and Outreach gave us many opportunities to help people outside our walls. The Property team kept our aging facilities functioning. Fellowship and Hospitality provided us with food and refreshments on a regular basis as well as at special events. In addition to those hard-working committee members there were individuals who regularly volunteered to be greeters, liturgists, Sunday School assistants, dish washers, workday volunteers, and church members who made a special effort to visit with newcomers. With those folks continuing to work as they have been, and with Paul at our helm working with staff members Beth, Martha, Marie, Matu, Karen, and Shannon, 2024 looks to be another very successful year.

Happy New Year!  
Carolyn



## BOOK STUDY:

## WITH OR WITHOUT GOD

**Sunday, January 14 | 11:30 | Chapel**

This session, we will focus on Chapter 4.

**NEW FOR THIS SESSION ONLY:** The group will watch a zoom webinar with Gretta Vosper that takes place at 1:00 pm. Bring a hearty snack or lunch and plan to stay later than usual. For further information talk to Ed Orlosky.

# SUNDAY MORNING CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

**January 2024**

**Sunday Morning Children's Program**

**"The Life of Moses"**



- **Baby Moses**
- **Moses and the Burning Bush**
- **Moses and the 10 Plagues**
- **Moses Parting the Sea**
- **Moses and the 10 Commandments**

## EARTH CARE THIS MONTH:

### ELIMINATING PLASTIC IN THE HOUSEHOLD

LINDA RANDOLPH

I have done research on removing plastic from my home. At first it was daunting even thinking about it. I decided to talk with my partner to see where she stood on this subject because we had to agree how to approach this change. I could hear the gears turning in her head. "How can we do this"? "Why should we do this"? "We already do our share in recycling". We do recycle but this is not enough. Two reasons why we should live without plastic. 1)The health risks are enormous because the chemical compounds seep into our food. Here's what I know: the chemical chlorinated plastic contains a wide range of synthetic polymer which are made of nylon, Teflon, polyvinyl chloride, and polyethylene terephthalate. By using plastic tubs to store our food, plastic water bottles, plastic to heat food in the microwave, we are putting all these chemicals into our system. When we send plastic to the landfills it is buried and then the chemicals seep into our groundwater. Once the plastic compound is introduced into our bodies it causes hormonal imbalance, obesity, cancer, nerve system damage and several other abnormalities. 2)The environmental impact happens when plastic is dumped into the oceans and breaks down into tiny particles. These particles are called "nurdles". Nurdles are smaller than 1/5th of an inch, this is smaller than a BB. Plankton eat the tiny particles (nurdles), fish eat the plankton, marine animals and humans eat the fish. These nurdles infiltrate not just the oceans, but also the air, land, and other bodies of water. According to the book "Living Without Plastic," there are more than 165 million tons of plastic in the oceans and it's growing. Marine life also gets caught in plastic. Strips of tarps, plastic from beverage cans and larger pieces of plastic wrap around them. Often the animal cannot break away. They either drowned, are severely injured or deformed.

There still is hope. Start now by doing a few simple things. Don't buy plastic water bottles, use a cloth bag for your groceries, buy bamboo combs and toothbrushes.

There are so many more things, little things, that we can do. Read articles like this one and educate yourself and then take more actions.



# MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS

## First Quarter Mission & Outreach January Collection

For our first quarter mission focus for 2024, the Mission and Outreach team would like to support The Gift of Love, Inc., a local non-profit organization that is dedicated to bringing love and hope to many people in Mesa County. The organization started in 2018 by providing care packages for domestic violence clients at Hilltop's Latimer house. Realizing that even more people in Mesa County would feel less lonely if they expanded to other needs, they started raising funds to make more packages to be donated to other causes.

Today the Gift of Love serves babies all the way to seniors, and each care package is designed for the individual person it is given to. For example, seniors may be in need of food items, hygiene products and warm socks. They also enjoy fun items like candy, snacks, and crossword puzzles. For kids, they do stuffed animals, toys, and games. Brain injury clients receive basic necessities like water bottles and snacks. They try to see what each recipient needs and then add in special gifts to help them feel loved.

We would like to start in the month of January by focusing on senior citizens living in nursing homes and/or assisted living facilities. Let's collect hygiene products such as body lotion, hand sanitizer, dental products, shower gel, and shampoo as well as non-slip warm socks and lap blankets. In February, since that is the month for Valentine's Day, we will focus more on fun items such as puzzles, art supplies, coloring books, colored pencils and squishies (good therapy for folks with arthritic hands and fingers) as well as candy and snacks.

Brittney Bade, the director of The Gift of Love, will visit our church service on Sunday, January 21st. She will tell us more about the organization and its needs at that time. As always, thank you for your donations and support of this worthy cause, bringing joy and love to people who might otherwise feel lonely and unloved during the cold winter months.



## UPDATE ON OTHER COLLECTIONS

**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 Collection** | Watch Church Chat for the January collection item!

# PALESTINIAN CHILDREN'S RELIEF FUND



## Grand Valley Compassion in Action:

### A Fundraiser for Children in Gaza

**Sat., Jan. 13 at First Congregational United Church of Christ**  
**1425 North 5<sup>th</sup> St., Grand Junction**

PROGRAM 5-6 p.m., open to all. Optional PALESTINIAN DINNER follows at 6-7 pm.

*Limited seating for dinner: advanced reservation/ticket recommended*

Dinner Tickets available at: <https://GrandValleyCompassioninAction.eventbrite.com>

Come enjoy a program of music, stories and a candlelight vigil for peace. Hear about life in Gaza and the West Bank, and the impact of the Palestinian Children's Relief Fund (PCRF).

This event is being held by a coalition of G.J. churches to raise money for humanitarian aid for children in Gaza. Speakers include Dr. Barbara Zind, Pediatrician and PCRF volunteer; Hanan Zand, who grew up in the West Bank, and Steve Sosebee, President and founder of PCRF.

Since 1992, the Palestinian Children's Relief Fund, a 4-star (Charity Navigator) nonprofit, has provided free medical care and support for Palestinian children. The Gaza Relief and Recovery Campaign will supply medication, food, clean water and other necessary supplies to families affected by the conflict. In the first week of the current war, PCRF provided \$1.7 million dollars of aid.

**For those who cannot attend, you can still be a part of Gaza's recovery.**

Donate to our "Grand Valley Compassion in Action" fundraiser on the PCRF website at [pcrf.net](http://pcrf.net). Check donations can be made out to "Palestinian Children's Relief Fund" and sent to the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Grand Valley, 536 Ouray, G.J., CO 81501. Thank you.

**Join us. Come together to make a difference.**

## A NOTE ABOUT COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

The minutes from November's Council Meeting and the minutes from the Annual Budget Meeting will be published in the February edition of Tower Chimes after both have been approved by Council.

## YEAR-END GIVING REMINDERS

If you want credit for a contribution in 2023, it must be received in the church office by Sunday, 12/31/2023 (or postmarked by 12/31 if mailed). If you want your contribution to be recorded in 2024, date it 2024. If you have any questions about your contributions please email [finance@uccgj.org](mailto:finance@uccgj.org) or call Martha. Giving statements for 2023 will be distributed in church the last 2 Sundays in January and mailed on January 29.



## WHAT GOES UP MUST COME DOWN

**Unhanging the Greens, Sunday January 7, After Worship.**

Help take down our Christmas Décor. Many hands make work's burden light.

If you cannot help that day, there will be other opportunities during the week after.

## NEW YEAR'S GAMES DAY

**2:00pm - ??? | Pilgrim Hall**

Bring your favorite game and a snack to share. The more the merrier - bring a friend! Contact Ron and Annie Rucker with any questions.



## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

1/8 Linda Randolph  
1/9 Cindy Haas  
1/9 Janis Woodley  
1/12 Sveto Djokic  
1/12 Vicki Brickey  
1/19 Tristan Koontz

1/19 Carol Oglesby  
1/22 Jeanette Ford  
1/23 Barbara Endres  
1/25 Pam Ashby  
1/26 Allan Weinand  
1/29 Tess Linakis

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!



# JANUARY 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>Dec 31</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour	Church Office Closed for New Year's Day 2:00 New Year's Games	10:00 Women's Coffee/Mens' Coffee 5:30 Cantabile Ringers	2:00 Mission & Outreach	1:00 Fellowship & Hospitality	10:00 Zoom Coffee	
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
8:45 Choir Rehearsal 10:00 Worship 11:00 Unhanging the Greens	1:00 Property Team	10:00 Women's Coffee/Mens' Coffee 5:30 Cantabile Ringers			10:00 Zoom Coffee	
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
8:45 Choir Rehearsal 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Church Council Meeting 11:30 <i>With or Without God</i> Book Study	5:00 Make Mondays Fun Again	10:00 Women's Coffee/Mens' Coffee 5:30 Cantabile Ringers		11:30 Berna B's	10:00 Zoom Coffee	6:00 FOG, Fellowship of the Grape
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
8:45 Choir Rehearsal 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour		10:00 Women's Coffee/Mens' Coffee 5:30 Cantabile Ringers			10:00 Zoom Coffee	
<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>Feb 1</b>	<b>Feb 2</b>	<b>Feb 3</b>
8:45 Choir Rehearsal 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour		10:00 Women's Coffee/Mens' Coffee 5:30 Cantabile Ringers			10:00 Zoom Coffee	

**LOOKING  
AHEAD**



January 28 through February 25 | WeShelter at FCC  
February 4 | New Members Class/Inquirers Class  
February 14, 2024 | Ash Wednesday  
March 31, 2024 | Easter



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