

# Tower Chimes



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

## Paul's Epistle



Dear Friends,

Humor can be healing. The capacity to laugh can help us through the hard days of life. Humor allows us to also see our own flaws and poor habits. One of the great gifts in life is having a friend with a sense of humor. As a pastor, I worry about people who seem to be stuck in serious mode. Are they trying to play Atlas and carry the

world on their shoulders? Are they dealing with some unresolved rage or ancient disappointment? Are they attempting to live out some perceived loss? I enjoy making overly serious family members break out in laughter. It is liberating. Overly serious family members are often stuck in self-created drama. Help them find a way past the drama.

With a major and graduate degree in political science, I noticed dictators and authoritarian leaders seldom even smile or are shown laughing. They often have the Mussolini scowl. Did you ever see a picture of Stalin with a smile? In books that analyze the rise of authoritarians they note that political comedy is banned and all media critics are condemned as “enemies of the people.” Recently, with the forced ending of Stephen Colbert on Late Night I feel like I have lost a wonderful source of comic relief. The continued attack by Trump on Jimmy Kimmel is right from Putin’s playbook. When Putin took power in Russia, he ended political comedy and threatened comedians with arrest for treason. Dictators seem to lack a sense of humor. They often stomp around like spoiled, irate toddlers who throw tantrums to get what they want.

In June, I will invite you to laugh and reflect on some classic movies that were done to confront the Nazi movement. The series will be “American Movies that Hitler Hated.” It will feature comedies with Charlie Chaplin and Jack Benny along with an anti-Nazi drama with Humphrey Bogart (no, not Casablanca but one you have not seen unless you went to the movies in 1937).

History often repeats itself and we witness this with the growth of right-wing authoritarian leaders across the globe. It happened before in the 1930’s. Somehow, we have forgotten the wisdom of our ancestors who faced the first fascist “America First” movement 90 years ago. And we overlook the lessons of “the Greatest Generation” who

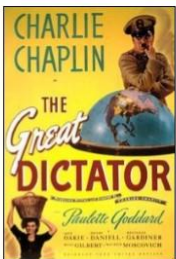
*Whoever you are, wherever you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here!*

# PAUL'S EPISTLE

made the sacrifices necessary to save democracy. We currently face the reality of former slave states who did leap at the chance to eliminate the all descendants of former slaves in their states from our Congress. The mid-decade change in Congressional seats is a way to exclude minorities from representation. We may have to march in Selma again!

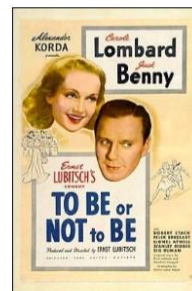
Join us to laugh with our ancestors who fought against the Nazi movement both in the U.S. and abroad. I am grateful for the courage of Charlie Chaplin, Jack Benny, and Humphrey Bogart. The series will be on Wednesdays, June 10, 17, and 24 at 6:30pm.

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



Wednesday, June 10: *The Great Dictator*. Dictator Adenoid Hynkel tries to expand his empire while a poor Jewish barber tries to avoid persecution from Hynkel's regime. It is a 1940 American political satire dark comedy film written, directed, produced by, and starring Charlie Chaplin.

Wednesday, June 17: *To Be or Not To Be*. A 1942 American dark comedy film produced and directed by Ernst Lubitsch, starring Carole Lombard and Jack Benny, the plot concerns a troupe of actors in Nazi-occupied Warsaw who use their abilities at disguise and acting to fool the occupying troops.



Wednesday, June 24: *Black Legion*. A 1937 American crime drama film, the film stars Humphrey Bogart, Dick Foran, Erin O'Brien-Moore and Ann Sheridan. It is a fictionalized treatment of the historic Black Legion of the 1930s in Michigan, a white terrorist group.

# APRIL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES RACHEL SEIFF, SCRIBE

**April 19, 2026**

The church council of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ met in the chapel for the monthly stated meeting on April 19, 2026. Present were Pastor Paul Ashby and council members Karen Caton, Cindy Haas, Connie Pyle, Ron Rucker, Rachel Seiff, and Kathy Viglianco. Julie Krueger, Michael Petri, Janis Woodley, Kathy Goe, Allan Weinand were absent. Guest: Beth Rakestraw (church administrator).

A quorum was established. The meeting was opened with prayer by Paul at 11:32 a.m. On motion, the minutes of the March 15, 2026 Council Meeting were approved as distributed.

## **Pastor's Report:**

- ◇ For a Time Such as This (the current book for book study) is a hit! It covers dealing with tensions and animosity in our culture today.
- ◇ Marie Koontz is ready to retire from Sunday School!
  - Last month, month we discussed getting more help for Marie, but at this point that is not enough support.
  - Proposal dependent on right person
  - Friday night 7/11 is reminiscent of the Respite Nights we used to host.
  - Candace at LaForet could potentially splitting duties between the camp and helping individual churches, and might be a good resource to support growing this program.
  - Iliff seminary has a distant learning program. Their students could be prospective job candidates.
  - Let's wait to hear about finance committee thoughts.
  - Propose this as a goal to the congregation, committing to a 3-year trial program. That's the bare minimum time to see any results. Programs like this this don't tend to be ones that immediate reap monetary or membership gains.
- ◇ Thanked for volunteers that put on the Taste of Africa event, especially the ones who cleaned up, to give everyone else a chance to sit down!

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

- ◇ Fellowship & Hospitality Meeting, April 2026
- ◇ Mission & Outreach Meeting, April 2026
- ◇ Worship and Celebration Meeting, No April meeting
- ◇ Property Team Meeting, April 2026
  - CE Building Roof is done!
  - The bill has to go back to insurance board. The complete total is \$23,000. We have put \$5000 towards the work, and have \$10K to go towards the final bill.
  - We expect that the total amount to be paid will be around \$8-14k, since hail damage was not the only reason why we needed it repaired.
  - Still waiting to hear back about the asbestos content.

# APRIL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES RACHEL SEIFF, SCRIBE

- Work Day tasks are mostly arranged (painting Pilgrim Hall back wall, general Sanctuary cleaning (including pew cushions), light tree pruning, windows cleaning, etc.)
- More smoke detectors have been put up.
- ◇ Gardens and Grounds, emailed report from Allan
  - Tuesday, April 21 is the first volunteer workday!
  - That will probably be the standard day.
  - Gardens are in great shape thanks to Peter's year-round efforts.
- ◇ Finance and Stewardship, meeting April 29.

## Other Business/New Business

- ◇ We reviewed and finalized the proposed council slate for next year and thanked the outgoing members.
- ◇ Council accepted a gift from the Holmgren Estate. \$2k will go to Fellowship and Hospitality, after remaining funeral expenses paid. We will recommend that the committee use these funds for their 'kitchen wish-list' before their 2026 budget.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at about 12:15 p.m.  
Minutes submitted by Rachel Seiff, substitute clerk

## MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS

### SECOND QUARTER 2026 MISSION FOCUS: THE JOSEPH CENTER

For second quarter 2026 the Mission and Outreach Committee chose The Joseph Center as our mission partner.

**The NEW collection items for June for the Center are on a NEW list for The Joseph Center Kitchen:"**

Bleach	Boxed Scalloped Potatoes
SOS pads	Yellow Corn
Coffee	Canned Mushrooms
Sugar	Brown Gravy Mix
Brown Sugar	Lasagna Noodles
Canned Chili	Saltine Crackers
Manwich	Canned Nacho Cheese
Tuna	Boxes of Chips
Parmesan Cheese	



## MORE MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS

### WEShelter Summer Update

From Sherry Cole: "First Christian Church has decided to open their doors this summer when the temperature is 100 or more degrees for our unhoused neighbors to rest comfortably in their Fellowship Hall from noon to 4pm. If you would like to do a 2 hour shift when that time rolls around, please contact Bruce by calling or texting him at 970.210.2607. He will then have a list to work from as the temperatures rise. Thank you dear loving friends."

### ONGOING COLLECTION ITEMS

**Catholic Outreach.** This month CO will be grateful for whatever you have **extra in your pantry.**

**Soles4Souls.** FCC has a collection box for good quality gently used shoes. When the box gets full, Mission & Outreach ships them to Soles4Souls, who distributes them to various programs around the world.

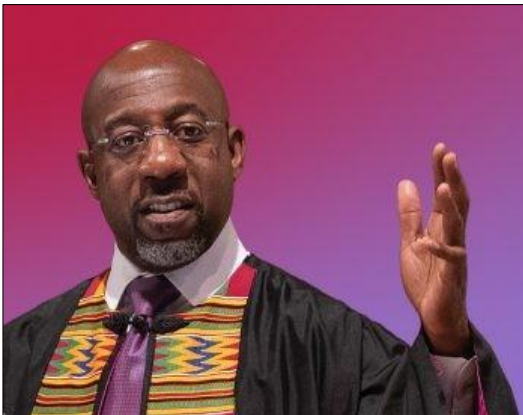
**Egg Cartons for the food bank.** Remember that the food bank can only use 12-count, cardboard-based cartons.

**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.

## FROM OUR FRIENDS AT WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL

*An Evening with Senator Raphael Warnock*  
*June 19, 2026 | 7:00pm - 8:30pm*



The Rev. Raphael G. Warnock, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church and U.S. Senator from Georgia, returns to Washington National Cathedral on Juneteenth for a powerful conversation on faith, democracy, and moral imagination. Together with Canon Theologian Kelly Brown Douglas and Canon Missioner Leonard L. Hamlin, they explore the urgent themes of Senator Warnock's new book, *The Crooked Places Made Straight*, a prophetic call to reach for the highest and noblest aspects of our national character.

The event is being livestreamed and tickets are \$12.00.

# MORE FROM THE WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL

## *Interfaith Service Celebrating USA at 250 July 3, 2026 - 10:00am - 11:30am*

The Cathedral marks the 250th anniversary of the United States with an interfaith service on July 3. Lifting themes of pluralism and the common good, *We Hold These Truths to be Self-Evident* celebrates the nation's ideals alongside an honest reckoning of its history and unfinished work.

In partnership with The Courage Project, this service of scripture, readings and music features representation from diverse religious traditions and contributions from spiritual and civic leaders including Canon Historian Jon Meacham. The service also honors individuals who have shown extraordinary courage and bravery in service to our shared life together, affirming that the work of a more perfect union is never finished and never done alone.

The service is free and will be streamed on the Cathedral's website and YouTube page.



## ABC: APPETIZERS, BEVERAGES, CONVERSATION

This month's ABC social meets from 6:00 to 8:00, Saturday, June 20 at the home of Mike and Beth Avery, 655 Janece Dr, Grand Junction. Attendees are invited to bring appropriate appetizers and beverages to share.

## JUNE BIRTHDAYS

6/8 Paul Ashby  
6/14 Wes McCleery  
6/15 Beth Avery  
6/18 Dan Braz  
6/25 Bob Peterson  
6/25 Annie Rucker  
6/27 Kong Vong

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



# JUNE 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>May 31</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
8:45 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour <b>11:30 Jesus Was a Migrant video</b>	1:30 Fellowship & Hospitality	10:00 Women's/ Men's Coffee	11:00 Finance Team 2:00 Mission & Outreach			
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour		10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffees	6:30 Movies Hitler Hated: <i>The Great Dictator</i>			
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Church Council 11:15 <i>For Such a Time as This</i> Spirituality Study	1:00 Property Team	10:00 Women's/ Men's Coffee	6:30 Movies Hitler Hated: <i>To Be or Not to Be</i>	11:30 Berna B's		<b>ABC Social 6:00 — 8:00</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour		10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffee	6:30 Movies Hitler Hated: <i>Black Legion</i>			
<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>July 1</b>	<b>July 2</b>	<b>July 3</b>	<b>July 4</b>
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour		10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffee				

## LOOKING AHEAD

July 5-11 | Explorer Camp | Grades 3-6

July 12-18 | Voyager Faith and Science Camp | Grades 6-8

July 12-18 | Music, Art, Drama, Dance [MADD] Camp | Grades 9-12



First Congregational UCC  
1425 N 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Grand Junction, CO 81501

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

## CONTACT US!

### **Pastor**

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby  
He, his, him  
[revpaulashby@yahoo.com](mailto:revpaulashby@yahoo.com)  
ext. 104

### **Church Administrator**

Beth Rakestraw  
They, theirs, them  
[office@uccgj.org](mailto:office@uccgj.org) | ext. 105  
[Monday through Thursday]

### **Director of Choirs**

Karen Caton  
[topcatkc@aol.com](mailto:topcatkc@aol.com)

### **Pianist/Music Coordinator**

Martha Jones  
She, her, hers

### **Children's Ed:**

Marie Koontz  
She, her, hers

### **Organist/Pianist:**

Ellen Bradley  
She, hers, her

### **Part Time Custodian:**

Matu Hedwall  
He, his, him

### **Volunteer Financial Clerk:**

Martha Jones  
She, hers, her  
[finance@uccgj.org](mailto:finance@uccgj.org)