

Tower chimes

Monthly newsletter of First Congregational UCC | Grand Junction, CO | February 2025

Paul's Epistle



Dear Friends,

I ran across a study on aging in the scientific journal Social Science and Medicine. It caught my attention because it involved hundreds of church volunteers. What the study concluded was that helping others also helps to slow the aging process. I have observed this in visits to many monasteries. If you want to see healthy, vibrant 90-year-olds look for the monks and nuns who have been actively helping others. I

have met a 98-year-old nun who runs a food bank, a 99-year-old monk who is the ambassador of hospitality as a guest master, a 96-year-old nun who provides counseling, a 102-year-old monk who is a spiritual director for visitors. I do not know of any group that lives longer than monastics who are active helping others. It all connects to a sense of meaning and purpose.

We need something in retirement that is more vital than the next episode of NCIS or 60 Minutes. Without connections the weight of loneliness is crushing. Without meaning we lose a sense of self. Without adding something of value and purpose to our community we face clouds of depression. I knew a wonderful woman in Cincinnati who lived until 103 and asked the secret of her health at 100 declared that "she has to get up and feed the cat!" That was purpose and meaning in connection to a living being. I am always happy when I visit our retired friends and they have a dog or cat, or bird to be in their home. The joys of life are meant to be shared. The burdens of life are back breaking if we try to carry them alone. That is why we have the sharing of our joys and concerns at church.

In summary of the study on aging on volunteers it concluded:

Even a small amount of helping others is associated with a slower rate of aging in older adults, according to a recent study.

Those who volunteer between 50 and 199 hours a year – roughly one to four hours a week – see the aging process slow meaningfully, according to researchers at the Brown School at Washington University in St Louis and other institutions.

The benefits are particularly pronounced for retirees, and increase as people log more volunteer hours.

In reaching their conclusions, the researchers analyzed data on people age 51 and older, including both retirees and workers.

The study looked at how volunteering affects epigenetic aging. Epigenetics refers to

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

PAUL'S EPISTLE

how our behaviors and our surroundings can prompt changes that impact the way our genes work.

The researchers essentially found that at a biological level, people who volunteer age a bit slower than those who don't volunteer, says Cal Halvorsen, an associate professor at the Brown School and co-author of the study.

With this analysis I will add thank you for serving on Church Council, on the committees, on projects and programs that enable the church to accomplish its mission. May you be blessed with a life long in years and deep in meaning, purpose and connection to others.

Peace, Shalom, Salaam
Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM MARIE KOONTZ

Children's Sunday morning program in February

KIDS ON A MISSION

FEBRUARY 2025

"I was in prison, and you came to visit me."

- **February 2 and February 9: We will Continue to work on the valentines cards for those incarcerated in the Mesa County Jail. It is important to remember. to share God's love with everyone and not pass judgment.**
- **February 16 and February 23: Here I am Lord. What does the Lord require of us?**

WANT TO BE A LITURGIST?

A new sign up sheet is available in the gathering space!

You do not have to be a member of the church in order to be a liturgist. Michael Petri, the chair of our Worship and Celebration team, will be happy to answer any questions you may have and can share with you a brief instruction sheet with some helpful guidelines. Email Michael at petrim@verizon.net to indicate your interest.

Pastor Paul is also happy to help too.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR OUR US LEGISLATORS

Senator Michael Bennet

225 North 5th Street, Suite 511
Grand Junction, CO 81501
Phone: 970-241-6631
<https://www.bennet.senate.gov/>

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Washington, DC 20510
Toll Free: 866-455-9866
Phone: 202-224-5852

Senator John Hickenlooper

Wayne Aspinall Federal Building
400 Rood Avenue, Suite 220
Grand Junction, CO 81501
Phone: 970-822-4530
<https://www.hickenlooper.senate.gov/>

Russell Senate Office Building
2 Constitution Ave NE
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Washington, DC 20510
202-224-5941

Representative Jeff Hurd

Washington DC Office Address
1641 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, District of Columbia 20515
Phone: (202) 225-4676
<https://hurd.house.gov/>

CONTACT YOUR STATE ELECTED OFFICIALS

Governor Jared Polis [D]

Constituent Services Help Line: (303) 866-2885
Governor's Office, Front Desk: (303) 866-2471
State Capitol Building
200 E. Colfax Ave., Rm. 136
Denver, CO 80203
Governorpolis@state.co.us

If you would like to learn more about how the Colorado General Assembly works overall, <https://leg.colorado.gov> is the website.

If you live in Mesa County:

State Senator Janice Rich [R], District 7, **Minority Whip**
200 E Colfax, RM 346
Denver, CO 80203
303-866-3077
janicerichsd7@gmail.com

Generally speaking, if you live within the city limits of Grand Junction, you are in District 55 and your State House Representative is Rick Taggart [R]. If you live anywhere else in Mesa county, you are in District 54 and your State House Representative is Matt Soper [R].

Rick Taggart

200 E Colfax, RM 307
Denver, CO 80203
303-866-3068
rick.taggart.house@coleg.gov

Matt Soper

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If you do not know for sure who your State Representative is, visit <https://leg.colorado.gov/find-my-legislator> and enter your address to find out.

MODERATOR'S MINUTE KEN PUHLER

Technology...oh, technology. Constantly changing and --supposedly ---improving our lives. I used to pride myself with my ability to keep up with the modern designs of commonplace household items, updated computer innovation and brand-new inventions.

For example, my heated, massaging, zero-gravity power recliner. I purchased it several years ago and really enjoy it. The power recline is the feature I use most often. The heat is nice during the winter. There are 11 buttons on the corded remote that control the features. One button allows me to slowly recline the back. Another button brings the footrest up slowly. These features are slowly reversed by two more buttons. Only one button can be activated at a time. When I am reclined, and someone knocks on my door; there is always a second -louder- knock before I can get my chair down and answer. I inform frequent visitors that it takes me a while to get out of the chair and to be patient. I wouldn't trade it for anything else.



However--my modern stove is something entirely different. It is electric, features two ovens with five burners in the black glass top. You can see the coils inside the burners, glowing red as the stove top cooks. There's also a warning indicator light, letting you know that the stove top remains hot long after you've turned the burners off. The learning curve on this, for me, has been steep and difficult. I had been trying to use it for about four months before I finally downloaded and read the owner's guide. Perhaps if I've done that earlier, I would've had a better dinner for friends.

I invited some friends over for a Moroccan chicken tagine with preserved lemon and apricot almond couscous. I have used my favorite cast-iron enamel coated Dutch oven to prepare this dish several times. Of course, that had always been with a gas stove. So, you can imagine my frustration when I discovered the dish had scorched. Eight big chicken pieces burned and stuck to the bottom!! That is when I decided I needed to read the directions. The Users Guide had to be downloaded from the website. I discovered that several of my favorite cooking pans were not recommended for use on a glass stove top, including my favorite Dutch ovens. I tucked that information inside my little brain and felt confident my troubles were over.

A couple weeks ago, I attempted a pot roast dinner. I had browned my well-seasoned chuck roast in an approved pan. I placed it in the Dutch oven, deglazed the pan with some red wine and poured it over the roast. I put it in the oven to braise for a couple hours before adding the other vegetables. After a couple hours, I added my carrots, celery, and sliced mushrooms and returned the Dutch oven to the oven. A few hours more and the roast was done. I remove the meat and set it aside. I placed the veggies in a separate bowl and proceeded to make the gravy. We like a lot of gravy!

I was preparing a large pot of mashed potatoes. As the potatoes were simmering away on the front burner, I added a stick of butter to about a cup and a half of cold milk and place it on a small back burner turned to low to heat. I always heat the milk and butter to add to the boiled potatoes so as not to shock them -- resulting in a gummy mash.

The gravy was gently simmering on one front burner, potatoes were simmering away on another. The pot roast and veggies were staying warm in the upper oven while the lower

MODERATOR'S MINUTE KEN PUHLER

oven was baking some butternut squash. My house smelled wonderful!!

I decided to relax a moment in my recliner. After reclining and raising my feet I decided to catch up on some reading on the iPad. I hadn't been there long before I heard the unmistakable sizzle and popping of the milk and butter boiling over onto the stove top. I could see smoke and steam rising. Acrid smells filled the room. I pushed the button to return my chair to an upright position, it seemed to move slower than ever. Then I hit the other button to lower the footrest so that I could get out of the chair.

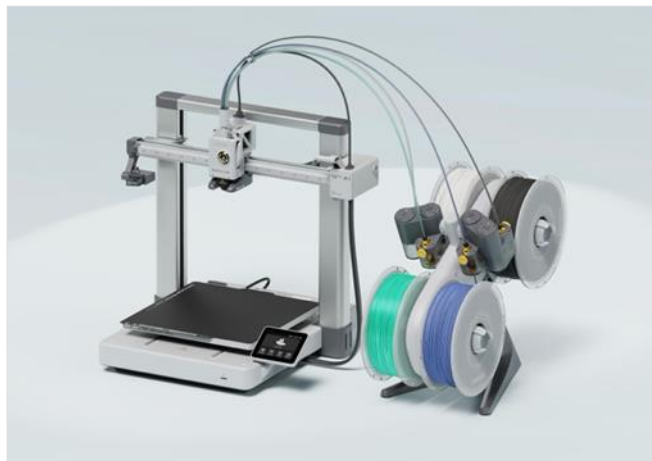
By the time I got to the kitchen, the saucepan of butter and milk was almost empty, having boiled out all over the stove top. The large pan of potatoes had a ring of burnt milk and butter surrounding it as did the pan of gravy. I immediately removed the milk pan and turned all the burners off. Of course, the stove top was still hot, and everything continue to burn and smoke. I feared the smoke alarms would go off, so I opened the front door. I grabbed a roll of paper towels and tried to sop up what I could. The delicious aroma from the pot roast was gone having been replaced with acrid smoke of burnt dairy. My guests were due to arrive in about 20 minutes. I managed to reheat another pan of milk and butter, mashed the potatoes and completed the meal. The food tasted great, and my guests were happy. But, the burnt smell remained through dinner and into the next day. A reminder of my failure. The burned-on milk took three days of soaking and scouring.

I was frustrated beyond words and swore to never use the stove again. I would just use my little propane stove and maybe even learn to cook in the microwave! "You can't teach an old dog new tricks." I resigned myself into acceptance. Face it! I am just not able to comprehend basic modern stove technology.

Then, I remembered my 3-D printer. It is far more complicated than a stove. This is my new hobby, started about six months ago. I have never used computer-assisted design software, nor the necessary slicing software. I have never owned any early version of a 3-D printer. I have had lots of stoves. I have learned how to successfully complete multicolor prints on it—surely, I can learn to cook using multiple pans.

If I can learn to do 3-D printing successfully, then somehow with some time, there should be a way for me to learn how to use a modern stove.

Learning new things isn't always easy. I will have failures and successes. But, if I give up—there is zero chance I will learn --or cook-- something new.



<—This is here just because it's soooo cute ...

NOVEMBER COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

November 17, 2024

The church council of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ met in the chapel on November 17, 2024 for the monthly stated meeting. Present were council members Karen Caton, Kathy Goe, Cindy Haas, Martha Jones, Michael Petri, Ken Puhler (moderator), Connie Pyle, Ron Rucker, Rachel Seiff, Janis Woodley and pastor Paul Ashby. Julie Krueger was absent.

A quorum was established. The meeting was opened with prayer by Paul at 11:26 a.m.

Minutes of the October 20 meeting were approved with correction that Michael Petri was absent.

Pastor's Report:

- ◇ Paul reported that a new book study will start next week.
- ◇ Reminder of the Congregational Meeting on December 15 to approve the 2025 budget.
- ◇ Suggested that the church replace the flags on the side of the building with banners since the flags get tangled and ripped in the wind. The council agreed by consensus.
- ◇ Noted that there was a good turnout for the work day – even some visitors helped.
- ◇ The council went into executive session to discuss the choir director position. It was agreed that Karen Caton will be re-hired as the choir director for the calendar year 2025 with terms similar to her previous stint (July and August off). Kam and Martha had already agreed to fill in as directors of the choirs through the end of the year.
- ◇ The Christmas Eve service is scheduled for 5:30 p.m.

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

- ◇ Mission and Outreach/JAM, November 2024
- ◇ Fellowship & Hospitality, November 2024
- ◇ Worship and Celebration, No report. The team that had met to interview candidates for the choir director position met again to review the situation and agreed to ask for her resignation. The request was denied so she was fired by the head of staff.
- ◇ Property Team, No report.
- ◇ Finance and Stewardship, in process with budget preparation

Other Business/New Business:

- ◇ A council meeting was called for December 1 following the worship service to approve the budget for presentation to the congregation.
- ◇ Membership review – Michael reviewed YTD attendance and provided a list of members who have not met the twice-a-year Sunday worship service attendance guideline – including some who have not attending even twice over several years.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at 12:07 p.m.

Michael Petri – Council Clerk

DECEMBER COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

December 1, 2024

The church council of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ met in the sanctuary immediately following the worship service on December 1, 2024 for a special meeting to review the 2025 budget. Present were council members Karen Caton, Kathy Goe, Cindy Haas, Martha Jones, Julie Krueger, Michael Petri, Ken Puhler (moderator), Connie Pyle, Ron Rucker, Rachel Seiff, Janis Woodley and pastor Paul Ashby.

A quorum was established. The meeting was opened with prayer by Paul around 11:10 a.m.

The council reviewed the 2025 budget proposal prepared by the Finance Committee. Finding no concerns, the council voted to approve the budget for presentation to the congregation at the congregational meeting on December 15.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at 11:22 a.m.

Michael Petri – Council Clerk

DECEMBER CONGREGATIONAL MEETING MINUTES MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

December 15, 2024

The Congregation of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ met in the sanctuary following the worship service on December 15, 2024 for the annual budget meeting. The meeting was opened at 11:06 a.m by the moderator, Ken Puhler. Clerk Michael Petri determined that a quorum was present.

The proposed budget was made available to the congregation electronically by December 5 and printed copies were available at the meeting.

The floor was opened for questions. There being none, a motion was made to adopt the budget for 2025 as proposed. The motion was approved unanimously.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed, on motion, at 11:08 a.m.

Michael Petri
Council Clerk



This is also here just because it's soooooo cute

MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS

FIRST QUARTER MISSION & OUTREACH FEBRUARY COLLECTION: SLEEP IN HEAVENLY PEACE

For the month of February, we will continue to collect items for Sleep in Heavenly Peace (SHP), a local non-profit organization that provides beds for children in our community who would otherwise be sleeping on the floor.

This month, we invite congregants to choose a donation from the following list of needs: Twin-sized comforters, Bed in a Bag (comforter set), or throw blankets. The best prices for these items can be found at Wal Mart in the children's section. For example, there are currently throws on sale for \$3.44. There are also bedding products on sale in a lot of stores in our area at this time of year. You may also continue to bring in mattress pads.

SHP does not accept used items. By the way --in January, we donated 12 mattress pads, 7 comforters, 1 sheet set and 14 throw blankets. Thank you so much for your generosity!

UPDATED FOR FEBRUARY: CATHOLIC OUTREACH COLLECTION

Canned Tomato Soups and Cream of You-Fill-In-The-Blank-Soup! "Mmmm, mmmm, good," as the old commercial used to say ...

NEW COLLECTION ITEM: EGG CARTONS

The Community Food Bank is looking for egg cartons. They want clean, dozen-sized ones. Please bring them to church, and one of the many food bank volunteers from our church will see they get to the food bank.

SOLIDARITY NOT CHARITY

We continue to collect personal size toiletries and other personal hygiene items for SNC. Hold off on the plastic jugs for the time being. Thank you.

NEWSPAPER BAGS

Carolyn Van Matre is collecting newspaper bags to use at Mutual Aid to fill with dog and cat food to give to our unhoused friends for their furry companions. There will be a bin in the collections area outside the main office.

**Catholic Outreach
December Collection Numbers:
Salad Dressing 11 Bottles
Soup 42 Cans
Tomato 38 Cans
Vegetables 17 Cans**

WESHELTER WINTER EMERGENCY SHELTER 2025

FCUCC will host WESHELTER from Sunday, Jan 26 to Sunday, Feb 23, 2025. We will be providing warm, safe shelter, and light meals for up to 16 men who cannot be accommodated at local shelters. Our congregation will cover week #3: Feb 9-Feb 16.

There are opportunities for everyone in our congregation to be involved:

- ◇ Overnight volunteers to supervise the facility from 5:30pm to 8:00am each night. We need a minimum of 2 volunteers each night.
- ◇ Volunteers to provide a hot meal item for each evening.
- ◇ Donations of toiletries (oral care/shaving/grooming) and socks appreciated.
- ◇ Donate your special talents: providing hair-cuts, mending, music, etc...

Sign-up posters for overnight and meal volunteers are located in the Gathering Space. There is a bin marked "WESHELTER" on the M&O shelves for other donations. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Kathy Viglianco at 970-201-9122 or kviglianco@yahoo.com.

FEELING OVERWHELMED ...?

**Jerked around from outrage to outrage?
It is an intentional tactic.**

Wise and important words from sociologist Jennifer Walter about what is happening in this country right now and what to do about it:

"As a sociologist, I need to tell you: Your overwhelm is the goal.

"1/ The flood of 200+ executive orders in first days exemplifies Naomi Klein's "shock doctrine" - using chaos and crisis to push through radical changes while people are too disoriented to effectively resist. This isn't just politics as usual - it's a strategic exploitation of cognitive limits.

"2/ Media theorist McLuhan predicted this: When humans face information overload, they become passive and disengaged. The rapid-fire executive orders create a cognitive bottleneck, making it nearly impossible for citizens and media to thoroughly analyze any single policy.

"3/ Agenda-setting theory explains the strategy: When multiple major policies compete for attention simultaneously, it fragments public discourse. Traditional media can't keep up with the pace, leading to superficial coverage.

"The result? Weakened democratic oversight and reduced public engagement.

"WHAT NOW?"

"1/ Set boundaries: Pick 2-3 key issues you deeply care about and focus your attention there. You can't track everything - that's by design. Impact comes from sustained focus, not scattered awareness.

"2/ Use aggregators & experts: Find trusted analysts who do the heavy lifting of synthesis. Look for those explaining patterns, not just events.

"3/ Remember: Feeling overwhelmed is the point. When you recognize this, you regain some power. Take breaks. Process. This is a marathon. [Continued on next page]

FEELING OVERWHELMED ...?

“4/ Practice going slow: Wait 48hrs before reacting to new policies. The urgent clouds the important. Initial reporting often misses context.

“5/ Build community: Share the cognitive load. Different people track different issues. Network intelligence beats individual overload.

“Remember: They want you scattered. Your focus is resistance.”



Editor's note: I gleaned this from a variety of wise Facebook friends, but cannot gain access to the original on Jennifer Walter's website. Perhaps one of you will have more time/better luck. ~~Beth

NEW: FOGG IS BECOMING THE ABC CLUB!!!

Fellowship of the Grape and Grain —FOGG— is transitioning to the Appetizers, Beverages and Conversation Club, where the only requirement for membership is eating, drinking and talking, something most of us can manage most of the time!

Why the change? While the responsible sharing of alcoholic beverages is still welcome, we know that many of our congregants avoid their use for a variety of reasons and so wanted to encourage the sharing of all of the beverages we can enjoy together. Besides, we seem to have a lot of folks in this congregation who really enjoy eating and talking, talking and eating, so let's celebrate that about ourselves.

The first meeting of the ABC Club [formerly-known-as-FOGG] happens on Saturday, February 22, at 6:00 pm at the Woodley residence, 227 S Mulberry, Fruita. The theme is trending toward Mardi Gras, but probably any appetizer you want to bring that one could not normally eat during Lent without a papal absolution and/or 20 Hail Marys would do. If you need inspiration for an appetizer to bring, just ask a friend who is a “Roaming” Catholic. Or just bring your favorite comfort food!

It would also be helpful to drop the hosts a line to let them know you're coming. The Woodleys' contact info is in the church directory or available through the church office.

FYI Subsequent ABC events will continue on third Saturdays as usual.

Signed,
Beth Rakestraw, “Roaming” Catholic [who prefers ‘roaming’ over ‘lapsed’...]

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

2/1 Kathy Goe
2/4 Annie Albrethsen
2/4 Scarlett
Montgomery-Anderson
2/9 Kay Ragsdale
2/18 Milo Brosig

2/18 Dan Wilkie
2/19 Jon Ragsdale
2/19 Pam Gregory
2/25 Gwen Kelly
2/26 Shelly Braz
2/29 Jonathan Ely

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!

FEBRUARY 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Jan 26	Jan 27	Jan 28	Jan 29	Jan 30	Jan 31	1
WE Shelter		LDS	5:00 pm	to	8:00 am	
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:30 Sermon Talk		10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffee 3:30 Handbells				
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
WE Shelter		LDS	5:00 pm	to	8:00 am	
9:00 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Worship & Celebration 11:30 Sermon Talk	5:00 Make Mondays Fun Again	10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffees 3:30 Handbells	2:00 Mission & Outreach	1:00 Fellowship & Hospitality		
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
WE Shelter		FCC	5:00 pm	to	8:00 am	
9:00 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Spirituality Group 11:30 Sermon Talk	1:00 Property Team	10:00 Women's/ Men's Coffee 3:30 Handbells			<i>Happy Valentine's Day</i>	
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
WE Shelter	Community	At large	5:00 pm	to	8:00 am	
9:00 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Council Meeting 11:30 Sermon Talk	<i>Church Office Closed for Pres Day</i> 5:00 Make Mondays Fun Again	10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffee 3:30 Handbells		11:30 Berna B's		<i>6:00 The ABC Club, formerly known as FOGG</i>
23	24	25	26	27	28	March 1
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:30 Sermon Talk <i>WeShelter Ends at FCC</i>		10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffee 3:30 Handbells				



**LOOKING
AHEAD**

February 23 | FCC We Shelter End Date
 March 4 | Shrove Tuesday Pancakes
 March 5 | Ash Wednesday
 April 20 | Easter
 May 18 | Annual Congregational Meeting



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CONTACT US!

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 X104

Children's Ed:

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 Reach us at :
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Part Time Custodian:

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Director of Choirs

Karen Caton
 topcatkc@aol.com

Volunteer Financial Clerk:

Martha Jones
 She, hers, her
 finance@uccgj.org

Pianist/Music Coordinator:

Martha Jones
 She, her, hers