

Tower Chimes



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

Paul's Epistle



Dear Friends,

I will often ask seminary students seeking ordination the question – who are your role models, your mentors, any special people who inspired you on this path? I was surprised and a bit delighted when a recent UCC student approved for ordination replied “Kierkegaard.” I have not heard his name outside of a philosophy

class four decades ago. In seminary one of my favorite books was the Danish philosopher's text “Attack Upon Christendom.” The book examines the comic absurdity of people who consider themselves Christians but who show no signs of following the radical compassion of Christ. Kierkegaard dared people to exercise their faith by doing something (or anything) that Jesus acted upon. He wanted us to follow Jesus as our inspiration (and Abraham) in taking leaps of faith.

If you have managed to stay awake through sermons you know how I place a key emphasis on role models and positive mentors as we seek to follow the way of Jesus. Recently, I did an in-depth search to find the mentors and role models for Senate candidate James Talarico in Texas. Who shaped his faith? Who inspired him to go to seminary? The name that became clear was Rev. Jim Rigby, his pastor at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Austin. In the UCC, The Congregational traditions is non-creedal so we do not recite formal creeds in worship. Our informal creed is to encourage people to follow the mercy, compassion and love in action of Jesus. There were always parts of creeds I just did not believe or wish to affirm, which is how **you and with** the Congregationalists or Disciples of Christ. But I admire how Rev. Jim Rigby updated the Apostle's Creed for his congregation. It is a beautiful expression of faith. This is Rev. Rigby's modern Translation:

*I trust in God, universal parent, source of all power and being,
And in Jesus Christ, a unique expression of God, and our guide for living.
Conceived by the spirit of love, born of Mary's pure trust, suffered
under political oppression, was tortured, killed and buried.
Descending to the very depths of nonbeing; on the third day was
found living again in the midst of community: perfectly at one with God,*

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

PAUL'S EPISTLE

thereafter, became our standard for living and dying.

I trust in the Spirit of Life, the universality of faith, the essential unity of all who are good of will.

I believe that no mistake is final, that love does not die with the body, and the life itself is eternal.

Now you may sense some of the roots of James Talaricos's faith that has MAGA fundamentalists so angry that a liberal not only knows the Bible, but dares to challenge others to live the compassion of Christ.

We live in a time of historical ignorance that does not know the cycles of history. During the Robber Baron era of the late 19th century with massive wealth inequality, thousands of pastors and seminary professors in America and Europe called themselves "Christian Socialists." They were working to help form unions, end child labor, create public utilities, build public parks, establish health guidelines, support minimum wage. Our most famous UCC social justice advocates called themselves socialists and in Europe there were major Christian Socialist political parties. The author of our Pledge of Allegiance was a Baptist pastor... and a self-identified socialist. How does the pledge change if you recite it as he wrote it, as a goal and aspiration toward "liberty and justice for all?"

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

NEW MUSIC MINISTRY SEASON BEGINS CINDY HAAS, MODERATOR

We have entered into the last third of 2026. The time has flown. My personal life has had some challenges. As you know, I fell and broke my shoulder requiring surgery. It went well and the physical therapy has been successful but still a process. Also, most of you know I have Stage 1 breast cancer and after 21 days of radiation am looking forward to my normal routine.

Now is the time to get back to my job as moderator. First, we are looking to the future as we know Beth will be leaving in 18 months. Our biggest concern was Pastor Paul leaving at the same time. He has advised us he is in for the next 2 to 3 years so we can fill Beth's job while having a leader who knows the routines and policies.

The personnel committee is beginning to categorize Beth's duties. We need to understand her duties and what can be handled elsewhere either with volunteers or another part time position.

Julie, Terri and I are getting the document ready about the survey ready to be released. Time, travel and other commitments have delayed that and hope to have it for you in October.

The weather is finally cooling down so enjoy. It is my favorite time of the year.

JULY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES RACHEL SEIFF, CLERK

July 19, 2026

The church council of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ met in the chapel for the monthly stated meeting on July 19, 2026. Present were Pastor Paul Ashby and council members Cindy Haas, Janis Woodley, Rachel Seiff, Kathy Goe, Kathy Viglianco, Celia Elberfeld, Julie Krueger, Karen Caton, Jean Yale and Connie Pyle. Absent were: Allan Weinand, Terri Wenzlaff, and Zoe Brosig, Guests were Beth Rakestraw. Marty Arnold
A quorum was established. The meeting opened at 11:30.

Review of Agenda

On motion, the minutes of the June 14, 2026 council meeting were approved.

Ongoing Business

- ◇ Pastor's July 2026 Report
 - Children's position: We will put a pin in this. So far the people approached are reluctant to give up weekends for work. We might need to look at having 2 people so they split the duties, or recruiting from retirees.
 - Following up with the Congregational Roof meeting. It was very calm and agreeable. We need to have an exact figure before we ask for contributions. After contributions are tallied, then we can go into reserve funds. We will bring the notion of whole roof replacement to the congregation.
 - It's best practice to bring any expenditure greater than 10% of the annual budget to a vote. The goal is to have this vote in September.
 - Using direct funding to support the roof as a capital project might free up general funds.
 - Seems likely that we will not get more than 50% of the cost from the insurance company.
 - The property team is considering getting a lawyer to fight this decision. The risk would be the current company settling up on this claim, and dropping us next year
 - Roofing companies are the ones telling us its ridiculous that the insurance company won't do the whole roof
 - We've been covered by Insurance Board for about 5-6 years. They have been good to us so far.
- ◇ Update: Personnel Committee for Succession Planning from Cindy
 - The 1st meeting discussed youth position and defining (the church admin) job description
 - We need to meet with Paul by October to go through contracts.
 - New staff members will have us in a transition period, so we need to be ready for (changes.)
- ◇ Children/Youth Position Revisited
 - In order to attract candidates to this position, we might need to bump up the pay to \$9-10k .
 - Raising amount means we would raise expectations. This includes a minimum of 10-12 hours week.

JULY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES RACHEL SEIFF, CLERK

- We've ordered curriculum for the students, so a staff person should make sure they have time to become familiar with it.
- Make sure we remember to mention when recruiting that background checks are required, since this position is with children
- We have a bit of a time crunch since Sawyer and Scarlett go back to school soon.
- Paul and Beth will go over the current job description and post that.
- ◇ Pew Cushions Revisited Briefly
 - Someone has volunteered to pay. Let's ask for matching funds in the next few weeks.
 - Anyone can chip in, and it's a smaller, more tangible goal that people might be more interested in donating.
 - Motion passed to have basket available after church for funds to go directly to pew cushions.
- ◇ Consent Agenda: Available Ministry Team Reports/Minutes were distributed prior to the meeting, as noted.
 - Fellowship & Hospitality Meeting, July 2026
 - Mission & Outreach Meeting, July 2026
 - Worship and Celebration Meeting, no meeting
 - Property Team Meeting, July 2026 verbal highlights
 - Gardens and Grounds, no report

New Business

- ◇ Women at coffee have been asking about the Adult Education committee we were recruiting. What happened? No one has signed up to be on it!
- ◇ The finance committee meets August 12. We should be prepared for a longer budget discussion at August Council.
- ◇ Cindy, Terri and Julie had good progress on strategic plan this week!

Next Meeting: August 16

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 11:55am
Minutes submitted by Rachel Seiff, clerk

Editor's note: remember that the council meeting minutes as published are two months behind the council's current work to allow for corrections to the minutes and council approval. ~~Beth

ROADS SCHOLAR PANAMA CANAL TRIP - FEBRUARY 12-17, 2027

Linda, Julie, and a couple of others from the church just signed up for this Roads Scholar adventure.

Trip Basics:

- Grit and Glory: Exposing the Panama Canal
- Program number 9901RJ
- February 12-17 (flying Feb 11 and Feb 18)
- \$2499 per person for shared double room
- \$2929 per person single private room
- 16 rooms remaining (of 51); 3 private rooms remaining as of this writing.

If you are interested call Julie at 303-717-7727.

QUEMANDO!

**Live at the Grapevines!
Saturday, September 5, 2026**

Join us Saturday, September 5th for a concert benefiting La Plaza located here in Mesa County featuring Quemando, who are a lively and very entertaining 9 piece Salsa band that will get you up and dancing the night away! Tickets are \$25/person pre-sale and \$30 at the door.

Wine, beer, cider and non-alcoholic drinks will be available at the GRV bar along with some other concessions. Two food trucks will be on site for additional dining options.

Gates open at 6pm, concert starts at 7pm.

NO OUTSIDE FOOD OR DRINK is allowed!

All ages show. No special ticket prices for children, no exceptions.

NO PETS Allowed!

Bring ID which will be checked at the gate and again at the bar.

Must be 21 to purchase alcohol.

Purchase tickets at <https://granderivervineyards.com/live-in-the-grapevines/>

MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS

ONGOING COLLECTION ITEMS

Catholic Outreach. Watch Church Chat for an update regarding the September collection item.

NEW: Our Soles for Souls box has gone local! FCC is now collecting good quality gently used shoes for the Catholic Outreach clothes closet and other local organizations as needed.

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.

THIRD QUARTER 2026 MISSION UPDATE FOR SEPTEMBER: LA PLAZA

The staff at La Plaza has informed us that they are getting low on hygiene and health items. The Mission and Outreach team would like to suggest that you choose from that list for the last month of our third quarter giving, although any item from the list will be gratefully received. (See list on next page.)

The staff has also given us the unique suggestion to consider giving small items that could be used for door prizes when they hold their welcome and harvest dinners. If you have a stash of items for “re-gifting”, consider finding something you could donate for that purpose. The items should be unused or so gently used that they appear to be new. They can be items for children or adults.

As always, you can place your donations in the labeled bin opposite the church office. Thank you so much for your continued support and generosity!

Mission & Outreach Team

MORE MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS



Food Pantry and Supplies Wish List

HEALTH AND HYGIENE ITEMS especially helpful to farmworkers:

- Tums/Antacids, ace bandages, Alka seltzer, eye drops, electrolyte powders similar to the Liquid IV brand, etc.
- Hygiene items: Razors, shampoo, conditioner, deodorant for men/women, bar soap, body wash, sanitary pads, hair brushes, hair ties, and laundry soap
- Socks, gloves, neck gaiters, bandanas for agriculture work.
- Rubbing alcohol and hydrogen peroxide
- Toothpaste and toothbrushes, dental floss
- Sunscreen, Tylenol, Advil, cold and flu medicine, allergy medicine
- Cough/throat drops, Chapstick
- Lubricating Eye drops, Q-tips, toilet paper
- Nail clippers, baby powder, foot powder, body lotion
- Icy-hot type patches, Tiger Balm and other items for muscle pain relief
- Towels, twin-size sheets, compression socks (standing for long periods), and regular cotton socks, wash clothes
- Long sleeve t-shirts, neck gators, sunglasses, cooling clothes, caps for sun protection

NON-PERISHABLE FOOD AND OTHER ITEMS

- Dried beans/lentils: regular lentils, pinto, peruanos, black, and red beans
- TORTILLAS corn and flour
- Canned vegetables: corn is the most popular. mixed veggies, peas
- Masa Harina corn flour: Maseca brand or other, for making tortillas, tamales, etc. Also the PAN brand for arepas
- oil for cooking: vegetable, canola, olive oil, etc.
- Sugar
- Granola bars, cookies, nuts, snacks for break time
- Tuna
- Oatmeal (plain old-fashioned oatmeal is preferred by most)
- Cereal: Corn Flakes, Frosted flakes, raisin bran, etc.
- Pancake mix and syrup
- instant coffee, coffee creamer.
- evaporated milk (canned), sweetened condensed milk, shelf stable milk
- Specialty items from the Hispanic Foods section of the grocery store or a Mexican market, such as nopalitos (sliced, prepared cactus) in jars, hominy for making posole, canned menudo soup, dried red chiles, pickled jalapeños, bottled salsas, etc.
- Diapers (all sizes, but especially need larger sized 4-8) and baby wipes, baby powder.
- Powdered electrolytes and liquid electrolyte drinks
- Salt, Black pepper, Clove, Cumin, Oregano, minced garlic, bay leaves, garlic salt
- Knorr (Chicken Flavor Bouillon cubes, chicken and tomato bouillon cubes) ketchup and mayo
- NOT RECOMMENDED are canned soups like cream soups or chicken noodle, etc.

Questions? Please call (970) 464-5226 or email info@laplazapalisade.org

Thank you VERY MUCH for your generosity!

SEPTEMBER 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Aug 30	Aug 31	1	2	3	4	5
Paul on vacation/study leave						
10:00 Worship 11:00 5 th Sunday Potluck		10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffees	2:00 Mission & Outreach			12-8:00 pm <i>Pridefest</i> 7:00 pm <i>Quemando!</i>
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Paul on vacation/study leave						
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:00 Pride Parade	Beth on Vacation					
	<i>Main Office Closed for Labor Day Holiday</i>	10:00 Women's/ Men's Coffee				
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Paul on vacation/study leave						
Beth on Vacation						
8:45 Choir <i>Begins</i> 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour	1:00 Fellowship & Hospitality	10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffee		11:30 Berna B's		ABC Social 6:00 — 8:00
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
8:45 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour		10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffee				
27	28	29	30	LOOKING AHEAD		
8:45 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour		10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffee		October 4 New Members/Inquirers Class October 10 Empty Bowls October 20—24 FOTL Booksale November 3 Election Day		

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

9/1 Charlie Kodis
9/1 Norma Roscoe
9/5 Len Allen
9/14 Kelly Gregory
9/14 Judy Jones
9/16 Jane Findlay
9/16 Betsy McLoughlin

9/18 Kam Macar
9/21 Russell Day
9/23 Diane Felt
9/24 Gesine Jones
9/27 Susan Hartman
9/28 Lee Allen
9/30 Andrea Bartlett

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



First Congregational UCC
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Church Office Hours
Monday through Thursday
9 am—3 pm
Reach us at:
(970)-242-0298
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CONTACT US!

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Director of Choirs

Karen Caton
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Pianist/Music Coordinator

Martha Jones
She, her, hers

Children's Ed:

*Hiring for this position
continues*

Organist/Pianist:

Ellen Bradley
She, hers, her

Part Time Custodian:

Matu Hedwall
He, his, him

Volunteer Financial Clerk:

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