

Tower chimes

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

Paul's Epistle



Dear Friends,

In July and August, we will be wrestling with Questions You Dared to Ask. The summer sermon series is shaping up with very engaging questions. Some of which may be above my pay grade. In addition to questions from the Greta Vosper book, I have received the following:

- ◇ Does Satan exist? Is it some ancient myth?
- ◇ Can people really change?
- ◇ What exactly is Spirit or Holy Spirit?
- ◇ Religions seem to be the cause of war. Can religion ever support true world peace?
- ◇ What about hell? Is it a literal place in the Bible?

These topics will be the subject of August sermons. The Greta Vosper book inspired people to ask questions like:

- ◇ Why change the Lord's Prayer from "Father" to "Creator?"
- ◇ Can we trust that God Exists?
- ◇ Why Worship? Why come to something called worship?
- ◇ Did human beings create God?
- ◇ What good things have come from Christianity?

These questions will be central topics for July.

All these questions help us to reflect upon the deeper meanings of life. I fully expect they may generate even more questions. But I remember a philosophy professor at Princeton Seminary who declared "any parrot can provide an answer they have memorized but to raise a great question is a sign of intelligent life on this planet." Yes, he was a quirky professor from Scotland. With respect for both this professor and church members we will have during July and August a "Follow Up Questions Group" that will gather in the library for coffee hour. Big questions can generate even more exploration and these are questions that few churches dare to ask. Some questions may cause a sense of curiosity, wonder or confusion. If you came from a fundamentalist background such questions can even generate fear and insecurity.

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

PAUL'S EPISTLE

The UCC is a tradition of those who dare to question. It has been our task throughout American history to raise questions about the evil of slavery, injustice towards GLBTQ+ people, Civil Rights, Women's Rights, the oppression of poverty, the ignorance of intolerance toward other global faiths. We have dared to pursue the truth even when such a pursuit was very unpopular. So, you are invited to bring your question, to explore new lands and new ideas. To boldly go where the truth freely guides you.

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

SUNDAY MORNING CHILDREN'S PROGRAM MARIE KOONTZ

JULY CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

"Around the World in 13 Weeks"



- **July 7- Turkey**
Tour Guide – Nancy and Mike Spangler
- **July 14 – Japan**
Tour Guide – Ellen Bradley
- **July 21 – France**
Tour Guide – Betsy McLoughlin
- **July 28 – England**
Tour Guide – Chris Coolidge

TEN NEW HEARING DEVICES HAVE BEEN ORDERED

In addition to having three of our current broken hearing devices used for worship repaired and upgraded, ten new ones have been ordered. The new ones are smaller, are powered differently, and are more simple to operate. These new devices have been funded by a In The Mud Grant that was designated for AV purposes that needed to be spent and the generosity of a donor from our congregation. Although our progress is very, very slow, we are doing our best to improve the quality of both our in-house sound production and the quality of the recordings we produce. If there is anyone in the congregation who is experienced with camera work or sound technology, please contact Beth in the church office or speak to Annie or Ron Rucker when they are working the AV desk. Volunteers to run sound or the camera during worship are always welcome! It is not difficult for two people [Beth needs a helper] and we're happy to train you!

RMC ANNUAL CONFERENCE PHOTO REVIEW



MODERATOR'S MINUTE KEN PUHLER

I build Lego. I really, really enjoy it. I came to Lego building late in life. I never had them as a kid, just standard Tinkertoy and Lincoln Logs sets. My wife had several barefoot encounters with an errant Lego piece while babysitting. Therefore, they were forbidden in our house as our kids grew up. The only Lego I had experienced were the movies.

Then one fateful day, my daughter sent me a picture of fish in an aquarium built out of Lego. That's all it took; I headed to Walmart and purchased it. I had so much fun building it that I went back and got a couple of other ocean themed sets. Then ----I noticed they had Harry Potter and Star Wars themed sets. I am a huge fan of both of those. And so began my collection of Lego.

Three years later, I have a nice collection of sets in my hobby room. I have enough to keep me occupied all winter through 2028.

I belong to an online group called "Adult Lovers of Lego." Members post photos of some of the more complicated packaged sets that they have built as well as Lego MOC. (MOC stands for MY OWN CREATION. Yes, I had to look it up.) They use the bricks to build things that are not available as a set from Lego. Some of these are huge, like a castle you can walk inside of, six foot tall Darth Vader or a life-sized gingerbread house. Others are smaller, but very, very creative designs. Such was the case of a building and landscape scene in rainbow colors that someone had created for Pride month. This photo had garnered a lot of reactions and many comments. It was made of pieces from Lego's #40516 "Everyone Is Awesome" set that was created in 2021. #40516 was designed by Matthew Ashton and represents a pride flag, a transgender pride flag, and black and brown colors to represent LGBT people of color.

When I began to read the comments, I was disappointed to see so many people attacking the creator. Most of these folks professed to be Christians and accused the creator of grooming children, condemned them to eternal hell and warned her to repent before it was too late. I felt the need to react. I went through and clicked a "thumbs up – Like" button on all the positive posts and did a sad face on the attacking ones. Then I posted that I loved the creativity of the design and that it would be perfect to display at our church where "Everyone is Welcomed".

So, the focus shifted from the creator to me. A barrage of comments on blasphemy, eternal hellfire and pleas to find a real church before it was too late. Paul had preached about following the gospel OF Jesus and not ABOUT Jesus a few days earlier. I posted that our denomination has been around a long time and was among the first to welcome LGBTQIA+ members and clergy, our church marches in the Pride parade, has a display of rainbow-colored doors proclaiming that "God's Doors Are Open To All." and that we follow the teachings OF Jesus, not ABOUT Jesus. I reminded people posting about grooming and indoctrinating children that this was an Adult Fan of Lego site, not one of the kid sites.

I got many thumbs ups and hearts before one of the site administrators posted a warning to all to remember the community standards "Be Kind" rules, disabled further comments and to scroll on by if we didn't agree with someone.

MODERATOR'S MINUTE KEN PUHLER

A few days later, someone posted a picture of their completed build of set #40516. There were a few comments below a banner that warned anyone that made hateful comments would be blocked and removed from the group. Someone posted that this was a set for kids being raised by LGBTQIA+ parents and stated research showed these kids grew up to be damaged adults. I had to correct her; children from single parent and same sex parent homes do not have more issues. Homes where addiction is a problem do. One woman thanked me for posting and said that she was raised by two Moms and had a wonderful childhood. She celebrates Pride in honor of her awesome Moms.

My set arrives at the end of the week. Happy Pride everyone.



SPEAKING OF PRIDE ... BETH RAKESTRAW

YOUR EXISTENCE IS
REVOLUTIONARY
AWARD WINNER



"Bringing equity to the LGBTQIA+ community has been my life's passion, and I am deeply honored and touched to receive this award."

Heidi Hess (she/her)
OneCO Western Slope Field Organizer

Celebrating Heidi Hess of One Colorado!

Heidi has won the "Your Existence is Revolutionary" award presented by Ouray County Pride for her incredible impact as an ally to the LGBTQ+ community in Colorado.

Her dedication and advocacy have inspired countless individuals and enriched our community with inclusivity and support.

Thank you, Heidi, for your unwavering commitment to uplifting the LGBTQIA+ community in Colorado.

** Heidi and her spouse Dannie are church members. Heidi is a past moderator and has been active in conference and association leadership.

MISSION & OUTREACH

THIRD QUARTER MISSION & OUTREACH JUNE COLLECTION: COMMUNITY FOOD BANK



Mission & Outreach has selected Community Food Bank to be the recipient of our third quarter project. The Community Food Bank is a local non-profit that is helping feed our community. The Community Food Bank began operations in 1978 and throughout the last 40 plus years the mission has remained the same: To provide a short-term supply of nutritious food and access to available hunger relief resources to any Mesa County community member experiencing food insecurity. The Community Food Bank provides a client choice pantry program with volunteer greeters and shopping assistants, a home delivery program, community outreach and partner support, nutrition exploration, bilingual resource navigation, SNAP application assistance and daily food rescue operations. The Community Food Bank serves 6,000 individuals, 1,600 households with 40+tons of food and 60,000 meals on a monthly basis.

Throughout the third quarter, we will collect food items on their most needed list: whole grain cereal, peanut butter, canned fruit, canned tuna, cooking oil or condiments. Feel free to donate any item(s) from the list. Please place your donations in the CFB bin located on the M&O shelving by the office.

CATHOLIC OUTREACH JULY COLLECTION

Watch Church Chats and the Bulletin for collection details.

SOLIDARITY NOT CHARITY

We continue to collect empty plastic jugs, personal size toiletries and other personal hygiene items for SNC.

JULY BIRTHDAYS

7/1 Debra Patton Davis
7/4 Carolyn Ramsey
7/6 Kristen Seiff
7/6 Lila Woodward
7/7 Glenna Stark
7/9 Mary Endres
7/10 Chris Coolidge
7/16 Jean McArthur
7/18 Brad Montgomery-Anderson

7/18 Sawyer Montgomery Anderson
7/22 Tom Jenkins
7/23 Anna Driggs
7/23 Mike Spangler
7/29 Joanne Drake
7/29 Martha Jones

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!

JULY 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
June 30	1	2	3	4	5	6
10:00 Worship 11:00 5th Sunday Potluck	5:00 Make Mondays Fun Again	10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffees 11:00 Faith & Politics For the Rest of Us	2:00 Mission & Outreach	Church Office Closed for Independence Day	10:00 Zoom Coffee	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour	1:00 Property Team	10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffees		11:00 Fellowship & Hospitality	10:00 Zoom Coffee	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Council Meeting	5:00 Make Mondays Fun Again	10:00 Women's/ Men's Coffee			10:00 Zoom Coffee	6:00 [FOG] Fellowship of the Grape
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour		10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffee		11:30 Berna B's	10:00 Zoom Coffee	
28	29	30	31	Aug 1	Aug 2	Aug 3
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour		10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffee			10:00 Zoom Coffee	

LOOKING AHEAD

August 10 | Organ Recital

October 4, 5 | Western Association Meeting

PASTORAL CARE

Let Paul know if you want to bring a sandwich and have lunch | This is an ongoing opportunity to discuss with Paul any joy or concern in depth, or anything in the news that weighs on you. Paul is available Monday, Wednesday and Friday from noon to 1 pm each week, or Saturday if you work during the week, or by appointment. Paul's email is revpaulashby@yahoo.com. To call Pastor Paul:

- ◇ His cell phone, 970-793-8638. [Paul prefers calls over texts]
- ◇ His extension at church, 970-242-0298, x104.
- ◇ Home landline, 970-200-2668. [Paul is always up until midnight, do not be shy about calling late when there is need.]



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CONTACT US!

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 X104

Children's Ed:

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Church Office Hours

Monday through Thursday
 9am—3pm
 Reach us at :
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Church Administrator:

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Part Time Custodian:

Matu Hedwall
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Director of Choirs:

Vacant

Volunteer Financial Clerk:

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

Pianist/Music Coordinator:

Martha Jones
 She, her, hers

Organist:

Shannon Jones
 She, her, hers