

Tower chimes

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



Paul's Epistle

Dear Friends,

Recently, after church a couple shared an experience they had at a Friday night dinner party. When they disclosed they were members of First Congregational UCC, another guest asked them: "Is that church still...different?" My answer to that would be "Yes, we love being different!"

We want to be different.

We welcome all God's children and celebrate the children of God that other churches would exclude or label "different."

We dare to speak out against the threats to democracy that are endorsed and supported by white Christian nationalists.

We have the courage to question any passage in the Bible that would betray the compassion of Jesus with scriptures of ancient tribal violence and bigotry found in various chapters of the Bible.

We are different enough to proclaim we follow the compassion and teachings of Jesus and not the 66 different books in the Bible with over 40 authors. People who claim to follow the Bible are delusional when authors clearly contradict each other. The honest question is "which chapters" in the 66 books do you actually follow and teach? Our answer is the chapters that reveal the compassionate actions and teaching of Jesus. In 39 years, I have never had a sermon looking at chapters on Kosher diet plans.

We are stunningly different in honoring the truths and wisdom of other global faiths in sermons and our educational programs. We are different in having an open and voted upon budget. I dare anyone to go to Joel Osteen's church or any megachurch and ask for a line-item budget. They will treat you worse than a crew from 60 minutes. Leaders will hide their actual line-item budget. Many megachurches become like the Trump White House, a family business with family employees in key positions. They are not going to show you their budgets!

We are different in wanting to work together for the good of the community on projects with Roman Catholics and Evangelicals such as Sharefest and the Mother Teresa Apartment House. We do not anticipate they will join us in support for GLBTQ community projects or Black Lives Matter events.

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

PAUL'S EPISTLE

We are different in truth telling. Churches that remain silent about the Trump Cult in this country are not confronting the greatest threat to democracy since the Civil War. Trump is telling us what he wants to do when praising Viktor Orban and Putin as the greatest world leaders. The compassion of Jesus has to come first and critique selfish, authoritarian political plans of both parties.

We are different in working to build bridges of peace. Our church shared a key with the local synagogue after it received threats. I have reached out to a church that is under the authority of Patriarch Kirill of Russia who persecutes priests who will not support Putin's war crimes. I let them know if they had any threats that they could evacuate to our church and contact the police. Can we oppose Patriarch Kirill and also offer safe refuge to his church members? Yes, because we are a little different. And Jesus is different from many who call themselves Christians.

Peace, Shalom, Salaam,
Paul

SUNDAY MORNING CHILDREN'S PROGRAM MARIE KOONTZ



This summer for our children's program on Sunday morning, I would like to invite those who have visited different countries to come and share their experiences with the children in our church. I hope you will look at your summer schedule and see if you can spare a Sunday to help with the program. There are 13 weeks that I need to fill. Please contact me either on Sunday mornings, phone call or text 970-270-2579, or email me at charley.koontz2009@gmail.com. or sign up on the bulletin board outside of the Sanctuary. Thank you

April Sunday morning Programs:

April 7 – Catch up Sunday

This Sunday we will finish projects that have been started and also finish with knowing Moses with doing a lesson and project on the 10 Commandments.

April 14, 21 & 28

“THE WONDERS OF GOD'S CREATION”

Projects will include nature walks, collages and visitors.

MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS

Second Quarter Mission & Outreach March Collection Kids Aid

The Mission and Outreach team has designated Kids Aid as our second quarter 2024 project. Kids Aid is currently serving 113 sites in Mesa County, at 3,000 kids per week. Kids Aid provides food for children who are in need of weekend food. To quote Tessa Kaiser, Executive Director of Kid Aid, "Every bag we send out of our warehouse, all 3,000+ on a weekly basis, has a name, a face, a heart, and a tummy we are filling."

In order to continue their commitment to feeding these children, Kids Aid needs financial support from our community. Our church will be donating \$400 to this effort. Just \$4 provides a weekend food bag for one child, so the money we give them will go a long way towards helping the organization meet its commitment.

In addition, we would like to ask our congregation to donate granola bars of any kind, which Kids Aids will use for the food bags. Starting on April 1st, there will be a labeled bin across from the church office where you can place your donations.

Thank you for contributing to this worthy cause!

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 APRIL COLLECTION

Watch Church Chat and Bulletin announcements for the next item.

SHAREFEST 2024 IS COMING SOON KATHY VIGLIANCO

FCUCC will be participating in Sharefest 2024, along with many other faith-based organizations and groups to assist seniors and disabled members of our community with home and yard tasks.

Sharefest is scheduled for the weekend of April 27-28th.

We need volunteers to work on home and yard projects on Saturday, April 27 and volunteers to bake cookies to be delivered by April 24.

Sign-up sheets are located in Pilgrim Hall at the sign-up hub. We will plan to work on three home projects on the 27th with our group of volunteers.

If you need help with a home or yard project, enter your request on the Sharefest website or call 970-778-4880 starting on April 1.

FEBRUARY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

February 18, 2024

The church council of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ met in the chapel on February 18, 2024 for the monthly stated meeting. Present were council members Karen Caton, Mary Endres, Kathy Goe, Cindy Haas, Carolyn Holmgren (moderator), Julie Krueger, Michael Petri, Ken Puhler, Janis Woodley and pastor Paul Ashby. Ron Rucker and Rachel Seiff were absent. Visitor: Andrea Bartlett, Connie Pyle and Beth Rakestraw (church administrator).

A quorum was established. The meeting was opened with prayer by Paul at 11:31 a.m.

Minutes of the January 21, 2024 council meeting were approved as distributed.

Pastor's Report:

- ◇ Paul attended a Building Bridges event at the synagogue and reported that the congregation is very appreciative of the help and support provided by our church.
- ◇ The folks from the new members class couldn't agree on a date to all join the church together.
- ◇ Asked for volunteer mentors for the new members.
- ◇ The new large TV in the chapel is working out well for different classes and activities.
- ◇ A pro-choice group is interested in using some building space for a few organizational meetings. The council approved allowing the group to use the facility for these meetings at no cost.
- ◇ A copy of a letter to [editor redacted] from the Boy Scouts of America was received. Due to some problems at a scout gathering, [...] is prohibited from all involvement in scouting until such time as additional information is obtained and an informed decision can be made. Paul asked that anyone who sees [...] at our facility report that to either himself or Beth.

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

- ◇ Mission and Outreach/JAM, February 2024
- ◇ Fellowship & Hospitality Meeting, February 2024
- ◇ Worship and Celebration, January 2024
- ◇ Property Team, February 2024
- ◇ Green Team
- ◇ Gardens and Grounds, no report
- ◇ Finance and Stewardship, February 2024

Karen noted that the Rocky Mountain Conference of UCC is looking for some new people for the finance committee. They'd like to have more representation from outside of the Denver area.

Finance Reports: The End of Year 2023, Budget Report & Balance Sheet were reviewed by Julie. Pledges, plate offerings and rentals all came in over budget, while expenses came in about \$1,000 under budget, mostly due to not hiring a video tech person.

The committee is planning to renew efforts to encourage legacy gifts to the church. Michael agreed to help with that. They also plan to reinvigorate the City Market donation program since many newcomers may be unaware of this benefit to the church.

FEBRUARY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

Other Business/New Business:

- ◇ Set Date for May Annual Congregational Meeting – The date was set for May 19 immediately following the worship service.
- ◇ Discuss Nominations for Council and Lay Delegate – Except for Mary Endres, the current church council all agreed to be re-nominated for the class of 2024. Since the council is above the minimum size, no other candidates are needed but Connie was asked if she'd be willing to serve on the council – and agreed. There may still be a need to add someone else as a lay delegate.
- ◇ Sound System – Beth expressed frustration getting the final pieces of the sound system improvements in place. A few suggestions were made.
- ◇ Membership Review – Michael, Beth, Paul and Martha reviewed the membership rolls and suggest several changes (to be effective as of 12/31/2023).
- ◇ New Members – The following joined the church on these dates:
 - ◆ Debra Weller and Jean McArthur on February 11, 2024
 - ◆ Cheryl Garrett and Betty Patton on February 18, 2024
- ◇ Sanctuary Cross – There was some discussion about the cross hanging over the chancel.

Next council meeting:

March 18 at 11:30

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at 12:45 p.m.

Michael Petri – Council Clerk

MODERATOR'S MUSINGS

CAROLYN HOLMGREN

Greta Vosper in her book *Amen* quotes a study by Lionel Tiger and Michael McGuire in their book, *God's Brain*. Serotonin, they explain, is a neurotransmitter in the brain which is responsible for our feelings of well-being, like a "happy pill" (Vosper's description.) It is released in the brain when we receive messages that indicate that we are recognized as being of value. This can come from something as simple as someone saying your name, smiling at you, or offering a handshake.

Vosper points out that religious communities, like FCUCC, are ideal environments for giving and receiving positive messages which provide a "squirt" of serotonin. So, consider what effects your simple gestures of friendship can have on others and yourself. If you would like a model of friendly welcoming behavior, watch Joanne Drake when a visitor comes to worship and coffee hour.

Peace,
Carolyn

A TASTE OF AFRICA
SATURDAY
APRIL 20
6:30-8:30 PM

*Dinner fundraiser for a solar
powered irrigation system for
Oltome Maasai Village in Kenya*

- Enjoy dishes from Africa
- Learn about the village and the project
- Buy crafts from the village
- Learn a fun African dance
- Video chat with Maasai leader in the village



First Congregational Church
1425 N 5th St
\$20 Tickets on Eventbrite until April 15
Event ID 851715282337
For assistance office@uccgj.org
970-242-0298

Donate to the cause even if you don't attend.
Help them overcome the drought in East Africa.
Visit <https://www.uccgj.org/donate> to donate.

Our spiritual practice is to never exclude any member from fully sharing in any church event. If you are unable to afford a ticket let Rev. Paul know so a ticket will be shared as a joyful gift from the generosity of our church.

A NOTE FROM KAREN CATON

Greetings to my Church Family!

This note is just to let all of you know, that after 17 years directing the vocal choir and 13 or 14? years directing the handbell choir, that I have decided it is time to step down from both of those roles. I'm tired!!! I have thoroughly enjoyed sharing music with so many wonderful people in both groups for a lot of years. It's just time to move on.

I plan to continue to remain active in our church as well as the Western Association and the Rocky Mountain Conference. This will just allow me some time to visit my friends in other churches, get reacquainted with my animals and catch up on some much-needed sleep!

It's been a blessing to share so much music with you over the years! I hope you've enjoyed it as much as I have!

Blessings,
Karen Caton

IT'S TIME TO WRITE GOTV POST CARDS FOR ELECTION 2024!

ELLEN BRADLEY

Our first effort will be writing to registered BIPOC voters in Prince William County, Virginia, where there are hotly-contested, open U.S. House seats in this crucial primary. Past work in these districts has increased turnout so much that historic numbers of candidates are now willing to run. Primary voting promotes consistent voting habits, and greatly increases the likelihood of voting in the fall. Our postcards inform voters of where and when to vote, as well as key issues at stake.

If you are interested in participating in this effort, please plan on attending our first meeting for this election year, which will be held at 11:15 a.m. on Sunday, April 21st in the library. At this meeting, we will watch a short orientation video, receive supplies and start writing postcards. It is very important to RSVP to Ellen Bradley before the meeting so that she can be sure to have ample supplies available. When you RSVP, please indicate the number of postcards you would like to write. If you are unable to attend the meeting, but would still like to write postcards, please contact her by phone or email prior to the meeting. Although we will start writing postcards at our meeting on April 21st, it is possible to write postcards at home as well.

We will also be writing postcards for the general election in the fall. If you are interested in participating in this effort, it is extremely important to let Ellen know by September 1st so that she knows how many postcards to order, how many stamps to purchase, etc. Even if you aren't 100% sure whether you can participate or not, it's important to let her know of your interest before the above deadline. We don't want to run out of supplies! We want to reach as many potential voters as we can for this crucial election. Thank you!

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

4/2 Michael Petri
4/12 Lynn Simpson
4/14 Jessie Ragsdale
4/15 Zoe Brosig
4/16 Jean McArthur

4/17 Abigail Hildebrand
4/20 Carl Jones
4/22 Lexi Taddeo
4/24 Marty Arnold

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!

APRIL 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
March 31	1	2	3	4	5	6
Easter 8:45 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour	5:00 Make Mondays Fun Again	10:00 Women's Coffee/Mens' Coffee 5:30 Cantabile Ringers	2:00 Mission & Outreach	1:00 Fellowship & Hospitality	10:00 Zoom Coffee	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
NO Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Spring Clean Up		10:00 Women's Coffee/Mens' Coffee 5:30 Cantabile Ringers	1:00 Spring Video Study, The Story of God, part 2		10:00 Zoom Coffee	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
8:45 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 12:00 <i>With or Without God</i> Book Study	1:00 Property Team 5:00 Make Mondays Fun Again	10:00 Women's Coffee/Mens' Coffee 5:30 Cantabile Ringers			10:00 Zoom Coffee	A Taste of Africa, 6:30
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
8:45 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Church Council Meeting 11:15 GOTV PostCard Writing		10:00 Women's Coffee/Mens' Coffee 5:30 Cantabile Ringers	1:00 Spring Video Study, <i>The Story of God</i> , part 2	11:30 Berna B's	10:00 Zoom Coffee 6:00 Meaningful Movies	8:00 am Sharefest
28	29	30	May 1	May 2	May 3	May 4
8:45 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour		10:00 Women's Coffee/Mens' Coffee 5:30 Cantabile Ringers				

LOOKING AHEAD

May 6 — 17 | GJHS AP Testing at Church

May 19 | Annual Congregational Meeting

May 19 | Pentecost

May 27 | Church Office Closed for Memorial Day

June 6 — 8 | RMC Annual Celebration at LaForet



Go Green! Get your Tower
Chimes via email!



CONTACT US!

Pastor:

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Part Time Custodian:

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Children's Ed:

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Volunteer Financial Clerks:

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Church Office Hours

Monday through Thursday
9am—3pm
Reach us at :
(970)-242-0298
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Choir/Handbell Director

Karen Caton
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OF CHRIST