

Tower *chimes*

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



Paul's Epistle

Dear Friends,

I recently had one of those “Ah Ha” moments during an Interfaith dialogue Zoom meeting hosted in Kyoto, Japan. It was a discussion on what is the foundation for ethics in all faiths. We used the word “precepts” rather than commandments to focus on positive acts of ethics rather than “thou shalt not” orders. When one Rinzai Buddhist group came up with their list of 10 precepts it dawned on me that’s exactly what we strive to embody at church. It was an “Ah Ha” moment of mutual respect and affirmation. Yes, there is a core of ethics that different faith groups can affirm as real-world family values for the human family.

So, I challenge you to see the compassionate heart of Jesus and First Congregational in these 10 precepts written by people from a different faith and non-Western culture:

1. Affirm Life ~ I respect all sentient and insentient beings and always act with compassion toward them. In gratitude, I do not take my own life for granted.
2. Act Generously ~ I act with generosity and open-handedness. I receive only things that are freely given to me. I remember that clinging and attachment are the root of suffering
3. Be Loving ~ I am conscious and loving in all of my relationships. In sexuality, I discern the difference between love and lust and do not take advantage of human beings.
4. Manifest Truth ~ I honor honesty and truth. I speak with integrity from the depth of my heart.
5. Respect Clarity ~ I act at all times with mindfulness and clarity. I do not abuse my body or cloud my mind with misuse of intoxicants.
6. Honor Silence ~ I remember the preciousness of silence.
7. Celebrate Others ~ I rejoice in the good fortune of others. I do not, through my thoughts, words or actions, separate myself from others through coveting, envy or jealousy.
8. Be Giving ~ I give generously of myself, sharing freely my love, my gifts, my talents and my abundance for the benefit of all. I do not selfishly withhold. I do not add any more suffering to the world.
9. Embody Compassion ~ I recognize and enlighten my greed, anger and ignorance. I transform my negative emotions and act with equanimity, sympathetic joy, compassion and loving kindness.
10. Steward the Earth ~ I hold sacred this planet Earth. I seek to understand Nature’s interconnections and celebrate my own interdependency. I work toward achieving a lifestyle that gives more back to this Earth than I take from it.

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

PAUL'S EPISTLE

There is a fundamental light in each human soul that recognizes the path of compassion and feels revulsion towards acts of cruelty toward our neighbors. It is a gift when people of different faiths see their own heart -Spirit -consciousness in the precepts of others. Do you recognize the heart of Jesus in these precepts?

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

FALL CINDY HAAS

I want to thank the members for your response to the survey. We had 69 responses. That is close to 60 percent of the congregation. We will be sending the responses and comments out in the next few weeks. We are analyzing the data to make decisions for the future.



Fall is now official. It is one of my favorite times of the year. Although the aspen and scrub oak here are beautiful, the falls I spent in Missouri and Nebraska were more vibrant and lasted well into November. One Halloween in Missouri the temperature was in the high sixties, a far cry from the Halloweens in Denver when I was growing up where your coat was part of the costume.

Although the vegetation is slowing down and getting ready for the winter, there are also some new beginnings. School has started. Many are going to new schools or venturing off to college. Another new

beginning is planting the bulbs for next spring. If they don't get planted, the blooms of tulips and daffodils that remind us of more new beginnings will not be there.

The seasons changing is one way our creator has taught us to deal with change. In fact, adapting to changes in everyday life is also a form of change. We might not like raking the leaves up, but if you have a tree you will need rake the leaves. We also can't control the weather at any time. With forecasts and thermometers you decide what you will wear. So we adapt.

Take the time to enjoy the cooler weather and the beauty of the aspens these next few weeks because the holiday season will ramp up in November.

NO ABC SOCIAL THIS MONTH

The ABC social planned for October has been cancelled in order to encourage everyone to attend the Church Halloween Party taking place at Julie and Linda's clubhouse Friday, October 31! Read all about it on Page 8 in this newsletter!

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY MORNING PROGRAM MARIE KOONTZ

WALKING THE PATH THROUGH THE OLD TESTAMENT

OCTOBER
THE STORY
CONTINUES.



October 5 "A Person with Dreams"
(Genesis 28:10-17) The story of Jacob

October 12: Being the Favorite is Not Always Easy (Genesis 2:5-3:24)
The story of Joseph.

October 19:
REMEMBERING THE STORIES

October 26: "Celebrating the church family and our own families."

On All Saints Day, November 1, many people celebrate family, those who are with us now and those who have passed. In studying the book of Genesis, we learned of the ancestors that were part of Jesus' family.



AUGUST COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

August 17, 2025

The church council of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ met in the chapel for the monthly stated meeting on August 17, 2025. Present were council members Karen Caton, Cindy Haas (moderator), Julie Krueger, Michael Petri, Connie Pyle, Ron Rucker, Kathy Viglianco, Allan Weinand and pastor Paul Ashby. Guest: Beth Rakestraw (church administrator) and Terri Wenzlaff. Absent: Kathy Goe, Rachel Seiff and Janis Woodley

A quorum was established. The meeting was opened with prayer by Julie at 11:28 a.m. The minutes of the June 15, 2025 Council Meeting were approved via e-mail prior to the meeting so they could be included in the Tower Chimes newsletter.

Completion Strategic work session: *Note - The council met on August 3 to work on developing a strategy plan. Strengths, weaknesses and opportunities were discussed. The session was led by Julie Krueger. No actions were taken at the work session and no minutes taken at that session.*

Julie reviewed the summation of the discussions of the meeting and the decision to distribute a questionnaire to the congregation for input on the direction of the church and future areas of focus. The surveys are to be returned by mid-September.

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

- ◇ Fellowship & Hospitality Meeting, July and August 2025
- ◇ Mission & Outreach Meeting, July and August 2025
- ◇ Worship and Celebration, no meeting
- ◇ Property Team, Summary Report
- ◇ Gardens and Grounds, Verbal Report
- ◇ Finance and Stewardship, June and July 2025 Meeting Minutes
- ◇ Finance Reports: 2nd Quarter 2025 Balance Sheet and Budget to Actual were distributed prior to the meeting. The finances through mid-year continue to be solid. It was noted that Brian Mahoney has retired from the Finance Committee after many years of faithful service.

Pastor's Report:

- ◇ Paul asked the committees to start considering their budgets for 2026.
- ◇ We Love, We Listen, We Help T-shirts have been ordered and should be available before the pride parade.
- ◇ Bishop Allen has agreed to be an emergency contact while Paul and Pam are on vacation from September 9 through October 1.
- ◇ Paul noted that the UCC in Santa Fe had a "make a will Sunday", marketing to retirees who have moved there.

Other Business:

The following resolution from the Finance Committee was read and approved, on motion:

On Sunday, August 17, 2025, the Council of First Congregational Church, UCC, Grand Junction, Colorado, in its authority to conduct church business on behalf of the membership between congregational meetings, and with a quorum established, approved the following resolution:

AUGUST COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

RESOLVED, that the following individuals are approved signators on accounts held in the name of First Congregational Church and shall have authority to conduct financial transactions on behalf of the First Congregational Church, UCC

Julie Krueger, Treasurer

Nancy Palubicki, Member of Finance Committee

Martha Jones, Financial Clerk

Cindera Haas, Moderator

Kam Macar, Member of Finance Committee

Authority to conduct business shall extend to both written and verbal authorization of the sale of stock on behalf of the church, with proceeds payable to the church, the opening of accounts and making investments in the name of the church. This resolution supersedes any previous authorizations.

Martha Jones mentioned that more lay delegates are needed – they often have trouble establishing a quorum for the meetings. She feels we need 3 alternates. It was suggested that this concern be included in the Church Chat weekly newsletter with Martha and Karen as contacts.

Some “lost” inactive members had been missed in reviews of the church membership rolls due to being archived from the Breeze membership database while still listed as inactive. Several are deceased now. On motion, the council voted to drop the remaining lost member, Marilee Moore, from the inactive roll.

Michael noted that he could find no records indicating when many people were dropped from the church rolls. A review of the church bylaws shows that there’s no requirement for the council to approve dropping members. This is the section of the bylaws:

Article V Section 3 **INACTIVE MEMBERS:** The Clerk shall review annually a list of those members who, in the last year, have not attended the church’s worship at least twice (not including Christmas Eve and Easter Sunday services) and who have not contributed to its support. After consideration of circumstances, and in consultation with the Senior Minister, the Clerk may recommend to Church Council the transfer of these members from the active to the inactive membership list. After two (2) years of inactivity these persons may be removed from the church rolls.

Michael suggested that the church bylaws be updated to stipulate that members may be removed from the inactive roll after 2 years with approval by the council. In the meantime, a motion was made and approved that the council must approve the removal of members from the inactive roll.

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

Michael Petri, clerk

MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS

FOURTH QUARTER MISSION FOCUS: MUTUAL AID PARTNERS

The Mission and Outreach Committee has chosen Mutual Aid Partners for the last quarter of the year. They will receive a check for \$1,000, and their executive director will attend church to receive the check and tell us about the program.

They are requesting for the month of October donations of dehydrated meals, wool socks, and sleeping bags. The socks and sleeping bags can be used, as long as they are gently worn and clean.

The following is from the director: "MAP is a grassroots organization, rooted in the values of mutual aid, focused on community building, advocacy, and education through a platform that reduces food insecurity and centers accessibility and connection between community members, resources, and organizations in Mesa County.

"Since starting in the summer of 2020, MAP has assisted over 85,000 families through the weekly distribution of essential resources including food, clothing, hygiene essentials, period products, and facilitated access to education, health care, shelter and housing stability.

"Born from an immediate need to fill support gaps during the 2020 pandemic, MAP's work has evolved into a deep-rooted commitment to nurturing sustainable projects that are equity-driven, lower barriers, and create systemic change, demonstrating that MAP's impact goes beyond meeting basic needs."

ONGOING COLLECTIONS

October Catholic Outreach Collection | Because colder weather is coming, Catholic Outreach has asked for any and all tomato products, including spaghetti sauce, for October!



Stop Bringing Jugs for Solidarity Not Charity | However we continue to collect personal size toiletries and other personal hygiene items for SNC.

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.

You May Resume Bringing Egg Cartons until the food bank tells us to stop.

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.

MORE MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS

A Letter from Guadalupe, Our El Salvadoran Student



From: Guadalupe del Carmen Miranda Rodriguez

To: My sponsors

Date: 08/06/25

Dear sponsors, please accept this friendly greeting. I hope that you are all very well.

I am a 16 year old young woman and I have a small family comprised of my grandparents. I am in my first year of high school and I have one year left until I graduate from high school. I have several goals and dreams to achieve, one of which is to graduate and have a career as a nurse or teacher so that I can get a job and be able to help my grandparents.

You know, I love English because it helps me stay informed and learn new things. In my free time, I practice cooking since it is one of my favorite hobbies. I also like dance and soccer.

I am thankful for you because through the Foundation you are supporting me with the resources that are a huge help to me that I use for my educational materials.

Godparents, thank you from the bottom of my heart for having chosen me. I ask God to bless you greatly and give you good health and prosperity.

I would love to have the opportunity to hear from you and learn more about you someday.

I'll say goodbye with a big hug from a distance.

STEPHANIE GOODE MEMORIAL FUND



The Mission and Outreach Team is pleased to share that gifts for 2025 from the Stephanie Goode Memorial Fund have been distributed to support those in need within our community. In honor of Stephanie's legacy of compassion, \$1,000 was given to The Community Food Bank and \$1,000 to the Catholic Outreach Soup Kitchen.

These contributions will help provide food and nourishment for many individuals who are facing difficult times. We give thanks for the opportunity to remember and honor Stephanie's life among us and her spirit of care and service through these donations.

EMPTY BOWLS

Save the Date

30th Annual Empty Bowls



Tickets available here,
Catholic Outreach, online at
www.catholicoutreach.org,
and on the day of the event

Saturday, October 11, 2025

11:00am – 1:30pm

Grand Valley Catholic Outreach

245 S. 1st Street

Grand Junction, CO 81501

\$25.00 ticket buys:
Soup, Dessert and a
Handmade Pottery Bowl
of your choice to keep!

"Feeding the Hungry in the Grand Valley"

A limited number of tickets are presently available in the church office, or you may visit <https://www.catholicoutreach.org/bowls>.

CHURCH HALLOWEEN PARTY

In an effort to provide more social opportunities, the church is excited to host a Halloween party on Friday, October 31st, from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm. The event will take place at Julie and Linda's clubhouse in Spyglass Ridge, located at 2694 Lookout Lane. We will provide a selection of spooky drinks, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic. All we ask is that you bring a frighteningly delicious dish to share. For inspiration, you can visit the Best Halloween Recipes and Food Ideas 2025 website. While costumes are suggested, they are not mandatory. However, there will be a costume contest with prizes for the best-dressed participants. Following the party, there will be an optional game night for those night owls interested in staying.

P.S. If anyone has any large Halloween decorations, call/txt Linda at 303-717-7256.

OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

10/9 Greg Biehn
10/10 Beau Koontz
10/13 Mary Wilkie
10/15 Clee Sealing
10/21 Marilyn Day
10/22 Sophie Koontz
10/28 Carolyn Holmgren



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!

OCTOBER 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Sept 28	Sept 29	Sept 30	1	2	3	4
9:00 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour		10:00 Women's/ Men's Coffee	2:00 Mission & Outreach 3:30 Handbells	2:00 Fellowship & Hospitality		
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
9:00 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour		10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffees	3:30 Handbells			<i>Empty Bowls</i>
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
9:00 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour	1:00 Property Team	10:00 Women's/ Men's Coffee FOTL Set Up	Friends of the Library Booksale, 9 am — 6 pm			
			3:30 Handbells	11:30 Berna B's		9 am — 2 pm NO ABC Social
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
9:00 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 Council Meeting/Survey Forum		10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffee	12:00 Finance Committee 3:30 Handbells			
26	27	28	29	30	31	Nov 1
9:00 Choir 10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour		10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffee	3:30 Handbells		Halloween Party at Randolph- Krueger Clubhouse	

LOOKING AHEAD

November 4 | Election Day, School Board Seats
 November 15 | Fall Clean Up Day
 November 15 | Friendsgiving at FCC
 November 27 | Thanksgiving Dinner w/ UU at FCC
 November 30 | First Day of Advent
 December 13 | Women's Christmas Luncheon



First Congregational UCC
1425 N 5th Street
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CONTACT US!

Pastor:

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X104

Children's Ed:

Marie Koontz
She, hers, her
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Church Office Hours

Monday through Thursday
9am—3pm
Reach us at :
(970)-242-0298
www.uccgj.org

Church Administrator:

Beth Rakestraw
They, theirs, them
office@uccgj.org | X 105
[Monday through Thursday]

Organist/Pianist:

Ellen Bradley
She, hers, her
[Starting in September]

Director of Choirs

Karen Caton
topcatkc@aol.com

Part Time Custodian:

Matu Hedwall
He, his, him
custodian@uccgj.org

Pianist/Music Coordinator:

Martha Jones
She, her, hers

Volunteer Financial Clerk:

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