

Tower Chimes



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

Paul's Epistle



Dear Friends,

Courage is a special gift that helps us live in a larger world. Both Pam and I have relatives who have never lived outside the state where they were born – not even to go to college. Now, Virginia and Michigan are great states but there are 48 others to explore, learn about and appreciate. I did draw laughter on Sunday July 12th when speaking of sacred “hallowed” places I admitted I had been to the Alhambra in Granada, Spain but have not made it to Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado! I have only lived here five years so I have some catching up to do. In the busyness of life and connecting with family on vacations I have not made it to visit Denver for an opera or sporting event. We all have our personal priorities of things to see. I also notice that people over 75 often struggle to keep up with the walking required on European tours. So, if you want to see Moorish Spain do not wait until you are 80. Courage is the energy that drives us to experience a larger world. It also teaches you there are wonderful people in every nation you visit. It can heal prejudice, racism and xenophobia. The family members who never left the home state would like all non-whites deported and still claim there are no GLBTQ people in “their” churches. They live with a great deal of fear about “Those people.”

Courage helps our souls evolve. I remember the radical idea of going to a seminary outside the state of Virginia. It was going to be ok to cross the state line to go to Wake Forest, North Carolina. It was ok to do an advanced degree in Rochester, New York. I learned about my Southern cultural blinders when in Rochester I ordered tea and they brought a few sips, boiling hot, in a tiny ceramic cup. I explained I wanted “tea” – you know, ice cold, 42 ounces Big Gulp with enough sugar to kill a diabetic! I have learned to love hot tea and have enjoyed it in 11 different nations with my favorite being on a tea plantation in Sri Lanka. Courage dares us to try new things and see past cultural blinders. Anais Nin wrote “Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one’s courage.” That has been my experience.

For some of you coming to the “No-King’s Protests” has been a spiritual experience of courage. On Wednesday August 12 from 11 until 12:15 our church will host a zoom on

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

PAUL'S EPISTLE

“Learning to Be Brave: Speaking Truth to Power in the Public Square.” It will feature Bishop Mariann Budde drawing from her recent book, *We Can Be Brave: Decisive Moments in Life and Faith*. The seminar will invite us to:

- ◇ Recognize moments that call us to speak or act
- ◇ Practice courage without losing our compassion
- ◇ Allow faith to keep us balance when the daily news overflows with greed, narcissism and cruelty to the poor
- ◇ Support one another with encouragement
- ◇ Take meaningful action on a local, national and global level

The truth is this describes what our church hopes to do each week. I look forward to sharing the zoom of a great bishop of courage and compassion.

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

THANK YOU FROM MARIE KOONTZ

Thanks you for the cards and kind words. It has been a great privilege and pleasure to have worked throughout the years at a church filled with wonderful people who are kind, generous and supportive.

Love to all, Marie

TWO FOR TEN (\$\$) TACOS SUNDAY

Sunday, August 9 | 11:00

Help us raise money in support of a local immigrant family to help offset their legal fees. See Elizabeth Montgomery-Anderson, lizohn@gmail.com, for more information.



MAY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES RACHEL SEIFF, CLERK

June 14, 2026

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

A quorum was established. The meeting was opened with prayer by Beth Rakestraw at 11:40am.

Review of Agenda

On motion, the minutes of the May 17, 2026 council minutes were approved.

Ongoing Business

- ◇ Pilgrim Hall and Sanctuary Roofs
 - The Property team and Paul met on June 7 to address possibly replacing all or portions of the asbestos roofing on Pilgrim Hall and the Sanctuary. We will be going ahead with repair.
 - Michael will liaise with the insurance company, and challenge their initial decision to only pay 50% of the cost of replacing the sanctuary roof.
 - The Church will still experience significant discount and there are enough funds in endowment.
 - The original report from the insurance says our asbestos is friable. But our roof is not crumbly.
- ◇ Finance and Stewardship Report
 - After discussion and voting at the June 3 meeting, the valuation of church property will not be included in the financial statement.
 - The committee is looking at incoming high-priced needs over the next year or so.
- ◇ Pastor's June 2026 Report
 - Provo Annual Conference.
 - The conference is anticipating a full-time president as soon as next year.
 - Current leadership team is functioning, but with exhaustion.
 - The UCC conference is healthy, but with fewer volunteers AND multiple committee positions leads to burn out. This situation mirrors many churches!
 - The seminars were good.
 - Margaret Wheatley's author talk was only 15 minutes, but should have been much longer!
 - There will be a webinar June 24 11-noon. It is a progressive church response to the Freedom 250 chaos.
 - Meaningful movies continue this week on Wednesday
 - We will have a special thank you to Marie Koontz on Sunday June 28.
 - If you know someone working on the roofing project- say THANK YOU. It's been a large time commitment.

MAY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

RACHEL SEIFF, CLERK

- ◇ Update: Personnel Committee for Succession Planning from Cindy
 - So far, two volunteers are willing to serve on committee with Cindy and Terri. Annie Rucker and Beth Avery. Greg Biehn might be interested.
 - They will meet sometime during the week of June 29 to start planning.
- ◇ Children/Youth Position
 - We looked a recruitment flyer from BAM! and Paul's draft of a position description.
 - BAM poster is a great way to draw in applicants, as opposed to the full job description. We will see where BAM! recruited from.
 - On flyer, we will make sure to have direction for where to apply for the job
 - The sooner we get the personnel committee up and running, the better. It means that we can get going on hiring staff and onboard them around fall.
 - Working with BAM will help us find candidates that work with our church's spirituality.
 - Need to be sure we can hire someone with ability to commit for at least 2-3 years, in order to give the project a fair run.
 - At the upcoming congregational meeting, we need to ask for funding for the next 2 years, as this year is partially covered with money from Stephanie Goode. It would be unfair to wait until budgetary prep season to do so, especially if we have already hired someone and started the program.
- ◇ Pew Cushions
 - We will be prioritizing replacing the Roof as a safety issue and funding the youth position
 - We can look at funds for this and similar concerns in future budgetary years.
- ◇ Consent Agenda: Ministry Team Reports/distributed prior to the meeting, as noted.
 - Fellowship & Hospitality Meeting, June 2026
 - Mission & Outreach Meeting, June 2026
 - Worship and Celebration Meeting, May 2026 meeting
 - Property Team Meeting, Regular meeting June 15
 - Gardens and Grounds, Verbal Report
 - Flowers look great. Peter did lot of fertilizing last fall!
 - Tuesday morning meetups from 8:30-10 are continuing.
 - Current focus is on perennial plants and chipping some of the beds.
- ◇ New Business

Next Meeting: Congregational Meeting will be on July 19. Any other agenda items for council, we will discuss after its conclusion.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 12:20pm
Minutes submitted by Rachel Seiff, clerk

ABC: APPETIZERS, BEVERAGES, CONVERSATION

This month's ABC social meets from 6:00 to 8:00, Saturday, August 15, at the home of Ron and Annie Rucker, 2059 Stagecoach Ct, Grand Junction. Attendees are invited to bring appropriate appetizers and beverages to share.

MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS

THIRD QUARTER 2026 MISSION UPDATE: LA PLAZA

LA PLAZA is a nonprofit organization that supports the health and well-being of migrant and Immigrant communities in Mesa County. Through empowerment and advocacy, members are ensured that they and their families are able to equitably access and benefit from resources that will make their lives better.

Specifically, La Plaza facilitates members' access to health clinics and tax preparation, as well as supports hunger and economic relief programs. La Plaza also provides direct resources onsite, such as educational programs, a food pantry and a clothing closet.

La Plaza fosters community building through resource nights, social gatherings, a variety of events, and volunteer opportunities so that members can learn from each other and feel a sense of belonging. La Plaza supports members in their efforts to increase their potential to self-navigate resources in the future. As an immigrant-led organization, La Plaza empowers its members to become community leaders themselves.

During the month of August, we will be shifting our focus to soliciting food items which you may choose from the attached grocery list. However, if you wish to continue donating health and hygiene items as you have been so generously doing during the month of July, they would also be gratefully accepted, as they are especially helpful to farm workers during this unusually hot summer season. There will be a labeled bin opposite the church office where you can place your donations. The list of suggested donations will be attached to the bin.

Thank you in advance for your generosity in supporting La Plaza's vital mission.

Mission & Outreach Team

Editor's note: *If you attended church in the last two weeks, you were made aware that the La Plaza Board of Directors fired executive director Iriana Medina Leo under some very questionable circumstances, and many of you signed a letter Ellen Bradley wrote on behalf of our congregation. Pastor Paul and Ellen did attend the La Plaza board meeting last week, along with about 20 other very unhappy, possibly angry people. Paul was able to speak and Ellen presented the letter that many of our congregants signed. The Mission and Outreach committee meets this week and will likely discuss the church's next steps as a part of their meeting. **But it is very important to remember that, in the meantime, the population that La Plaza serves still needs our help.***

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!

MORE MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS

STAMPS NEEDED!

Do you want to help with this year's post card writing Get Out The Vote (GOTV) effort but aren't able to write post cards at this time? Here's a way you can help: We need post card stamps as we plan to mail as many as 1200 cards between now and the November election. A sheet of twenty post card stamps costs \$13.00, and since many of our volunteers write twenty cards at a time, donating sheets of 20 would be a huge help, although any number of stamps you can donate will be gratefully accepted. Another alternative is to donate money for stamps.

The stamps should be completely apolitical, so please avoid stamps with flags on them. (I know, it's a shame it's come down to this, but it's a requirement I've received from the state coordinator.) Sailboats, autumn leaves or barns would be preferred. See Ellen Bradley after church or leave the stamps and/or money in the church office.

If you have any questions, you can text Ellen at 970-640-6981 or email at meb712002@yahoo.com.

Thank you!
Ellen Bradley

ONGOING COLLECTION ITEMS

- ◇ **Catholic Outreach.** For the month of August, CO wants us to bring them **more canned vegetables.**
- ◇ **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.



First Congregational Church United Church of Christ

1425 N. 5th St.
Grand Junction, CO 81501
(970) 242-0298
email: office@uccgj.org
website: www.uccgj.org

We're Hiring a Part-Time Children/Youth Spiritual Care Director.

Work Hours:

Approximately 7-10 hours per week including

- ◇ 2 hours Sunday mornings, 9:30 to 11:30 am
- ◇ 2 hours preparation time each week
- ◇ Special events or community building with children and their families, 6 to 8 per month

Compensation: \$15.50 -- \$20 per hour

Primary Requirements:

1. Provide a spirituality-teaching experience for children and youth using lessons from the Progressive Christianity curriculum.
2. Coordinate the planning of special events like movie nights, going for pizza after church, art projects, social justice programs, serving the hungry or homeless outreach events.
3. Welcome all children to share in the program that is Open and Affirming to all.
4. Evaluate the needs of children and the teaching facilities and share your ideas with staff and church leaders
5. Attend council meetings on 3rd Sundays after worship and share a brief monthly update
6. Recruit adult volunteers to assist with Sunday morning programming and special events
7. Be trained in Safe Church policy, assure volunteers are trained and all staff/volunteers working with children and youth have appropriate background checks.

Check us out on www.uccgj.org/beliefs.

For more information or to express interest in the position, email:

Cindy Haas, Moderator, oprc1h1954@gmail.com OR

Beth Rakestraw, Church Administrator, office.fcucc@gmail.com.



AUGUST 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour		10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffees	2:00 Mission & Outreach	1:00 Fellowship & Hospitality		
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour 11:15 <i>For Such a Time as This</i> Spirituality Study	1:00 Property Team	10:00 Women's/ Men's Coffee	11:00 Finance Committee Mtg <i>11:00 Learning to Be Brave Webinar with Bp Budde</i>			<i>ABC Social 6:00 — 8:00</i>
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour		10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffee	Paul on vacation/study leave			
				11:30 Berna B's		
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Paul on vacation/study leave						
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour		10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffee				
30	31	1	2	3	4	5
Paul on vacation/study leave						
10:00 Worship 11:00 Happy Hour		10:00 Women's/ Mens' Coffee	2:00 Mission & Outreach			

LOOKING AHEAD

September 7 | Office closed for Labor Day holiday

September 19 | Paul returns from vacation/study leave

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

8/2 Knute Knudson
8/6 Felix Braz
8/8 Larry Woodley
8/10 Shirley Kodis
8/17 Brian Mahoney

8/18 Janet Spomer
8/22 Linda Mahoney
8/22 Betty Hall
8/25 Ellen Bradley
8/26 Jean Yale

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



First Congregational UCC
1425 N 5th Street
Grand Junction, CO 81501

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

CONTACT US!

Pastor

Rev. Dr. Paul Ashby
He, his, him
revpaulashby@yahoo.com
ext. 104

Church Administrator

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

Director of Choirs

Karen Caton
topcatkc@aol.com

Pianist/Music Coordinator

Martha Jones
She, her, hers

Children's Ed:

*Hiring for this position begins
SOON!*

Organist/Pianist:

Ellen Bradley
She, hers, her

Part Time Custodian:

Matu Hedwall
He, his, him

Volunteer Financial Clerk:

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