

Tower *chimes*

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC | GRAND JUNCTION, CO | SEPTEMBER 2020



Race in America with Phil Vischer

Recently two different members of the congregation, David Hoefer and Jim Lauer, wrote to me to recommend a short video on Race in America. It's presented by Phil Vischer and it's an excellent overview of the roots of racism in America and the various ways it has manifested itself historically and continues to do so today. It also provides a clear and startling overview of how racism in the United States has been buttressed and supported by law and our legal system.

I would highly recommend it. It runs just under 18 minutes and every minute is well worth the investment. I consider it Racism 101. It brings together many of the issues I addressed in my recent sermon series: "How to Become an Anti-Racist Community" and demonstrates convincingly the intentionality of our racism on a governmental and legal level. Here's the link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGUwcs9qJXY>

Me and White Supremacy ...coming this September to a church near you!

As I shared in the July newsletter, this fall I'll be leading a group that will together work through Layla Saad's book, *Me and White Supremacy*. The good news is that we've already had fourteen folks sign up to participate. Since that's really too many people for a meaningful sharing group, the Rev. Beth Rakestraw has graciously agreed to lead a second group. We are going to limit the size of each group to ten individuals, so we currently have room for six more individuals. Those six slots will be filled on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Beth and I are going to offer our groups at different times, hoping to make the opportunity available to folks with different schedules:

My group will meet on Thursday mornings at 10 AM beginning on Thursday, September 17th. Each session will run about an hour. We will meet in person in the Chapel.

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

ME & WHITE SUPREMACY CONT'D

Beth's group will meet Thursday evenings at 6 pm, also beginning on Thursday, September 17th. Her group will meet in person in the Chapel.

As noted in the earlier newsletter article, there will be a couple of expectations for those who decide to be a part of this group experience:

- ◇ You will commit to both reading the book and seriously engaging (in writing) all of the reflection exercises.
- ◇ You will commit to sharing as you feel comfortable your own personal experiences and perspectives in the group.
- ◇ You will maintain confidentiality. "What happens in the group stays in the group."

How many sessions will we have? The honest answer is that we don't know. It's hard to assess in advance how long it will take us to work through the material in the book in a meaningful way. We'll continue on a weekly basis until we've finished the book.

If you are one of the fourteen who has already signed up, contact Beth and let her know which group you'd like to participate in. If you haven't signed up but would like to participate, check with Beth to see if there's still an opening. We look forward to an enriching, challenging and growing time together!

With you on the journey,

Pastor David

SERMON SERIES: GREAT WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

Beginning on September 20th Pastor David will preach a series of Sunday messages about great women of the bible. As far as we know, the bible was written entirely by men. So it's not a surprise that women were given short shrift when it came to recording the history of God's people. Despite that reality, there are many women highlighted in scripture who played a major role in their time due to their faithfulness, courage, wisdom, and leadership gifts.

I'm told that Pastor Jeffrey preached a series of messages about great women of the bible a few years ago. Do you remember them? Can you list the women whose lives he highlighted? What made each of those women great? It would be fun to compare our lists and what each of us had to say. Too bad we weren't live streaming back then!

Join us in worship this fall as we not only pay tribute to some women who helped shape the course of our faith journey, but who have much to teach us today about walking with God.

The Lord's Prayer ...

...Pious Platitudes or Radical Manifesto?

We routinely repeat the Lord's Prayer as a part of weekly worship but most of us give it little thought. It's a religious ritual we engage in that is somehow comforting, but hardly challenging, compelling or transforming. This class is for those who would like to dig a little deeper.

Using the biblical text itself, John Dominic Crossan's *The Greatest Prayer*, and a variety of other resources, we'll explore together the radical, counter-cultural journey Jesus sets out in this prayer for those who want to follow him.

Join us for five Sundays beginning on Sunday, October 4th at 11:30 AM. We will meet by Zoom and gather for about 45 minutes each week. Don't miss this opportunity to grow in your faith and in your relationships with others in our church family. And bring your ideas and your questions. Pastor David will lead the class.

ANOTHER LEARNING OPPORTUNITY



JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN, who spoke at the Holmgren lectureship last year, is offering an on-line talk titled: "Jesus: Ascension or Resurrection" on Wednesday, September 30, time to be announced. This is sponsored by the Holmgren lectureship and is free to all who wish to participate. Your e-mail address will be forwarded to Westar Institute who will then send you the link to Dr. Crossan's talk. Contact Cindy Haas or Carolyn Holmgren if you are interested or have questions.

BURIAL PLOTS FOR SALE

First Congregational owns four burial plots at Memorial Gardens in Grand Junction which we will be putting on the market later this fall. We wanted to offer first consideration to persons in our congregation. Please contact Martha Jones if you would like to discuss.

Martha
finance@uccgj.org
(970) 250-7960

MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS

Third Quarter Project

The third quarter project that Mission and Outreach is sponsoring is helping with Mesa County's Community Transformation by helping the students at Rocky Mountain Elementary. We will be collecting a different school supply for the next 3 months. **Throughout the month of September we will be collecting crayons.** Thanks!

A LETTER FROM THE MODERATOR MARK LONG

Building and Rebuilding

I've been thinking about all that has happened in the last several months and the new life that is springing from the ashes (literally, right now) as a result of all that has set upon our lives, both our daily lives and in our church family.

The Rocky Mountain Conference held its first virtual Annual Celebration, "Leading in Troubled Times", from July 20, to August 1 and it was filled with joy, challenges, hope and vision of the future of the United Church of Christ in the Rocky Mountain region. Because it was provided at no cost and spread across several evenings, several of you were able to join in the workshops and discussions, which I was so pleased to see.

The Church, like the world, is finding itself scrambling to learn how to do things differently, much like building Ikea furniture, with minimal instructions, pieces that don't make sense, and even a few pieces missing. But like assembling Ikea furniture, we have managed to come up with something that looks like the picture on the box. The color is slightly different, as is the design, but it has the intended function and serves its purpose even though the process has not been easy.

So many things have happened in the last five months to build and rebuild First Congregational's worship, outreach, leadership and vision. Pastor David, Beth, music staff and the leadership and ministry teams worked diligently to not only provide continued worship, but stay connected to with our church family and continue to move us into the next chapter of our journey together. I want to take this opportunity to thank every one of them, and each of you, for your loyalty and steadfastness in building and continually supporting the mission and vision of the church I love so much.

Everything in this season points to doing church a little differently in the future... new ways of communicating God's message to the world. Similarly, First Congregational is continuing to bring the message of God's love to our church family and the wider community in more creative ways. It may be a new way of offering the message and continuing the missions but the message remains the same...Love...

Stay safe, stay healthy, and stay conscious of the understanding that you are loved...

Blessings,
Mark

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY UPDATE

Did you know that the Prayer Shawl Ministry changing its name to Knitting Ministry? That's because the knitters make many different items besides prayer shawls. After taking August off, the knitters are starting up again in September, at 1:30 pm on the second and fourth Wednesdays, in the chapel. Masks are required. Come join the fun and chatter.

FCUCC YOUTH AND THE HEIFER PROJECT

Many moons ago (i.e. pre COVID19 lockdown) our youth were busy with a fundraising project of selling hot cocoa mix during "Happy Hour," the proceeds of which were to be donated to Heifer International. Even though we weren't really "done" with the fundraising yet, with the help of the congregation they were able to raise \$175.25. We held a Zoom meeting recently and our young people decided we would donate the money to purchase a "Gardener's Gift Basket". This "Gardener's Gift Basket" features tree seedlings, rabbits, chickens and a hive of bees as part of an integrated farming approach. It also includes training in animal care, fertilization and growing techniques.

"The Gardener's Gift Basket helps build sustainable farms. This donation:

- ◇ Boosts production by providing compost and fertilizer
- ◇ Provides organic pest control as chickens get rid of bugs and worms
- ◇ Pollinates crops for a more abundant harvest
- ◇ Malnutrition is a very real problem for families suffering from poverty, one that claims the lives of many children each year. When you donate a garden, you enable families to support themselves with a healthy, balanced diet. Garden baskets make ideal gifts for gardeners."

Thank you to the youth for your hard work and your desire to make the world a better place. And thank you to all who made donations for the cocoa mix to make this Heifer Project donation possible.

Blessings,
Karen

NEWS FROM THE PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE

The church council appointed a Pastor Search Committee at their July meeting. The PSC met 4 times by the end of August. Don't expect a new pastor within the next couple weeks! The first task of the PSC is to prepare a Local Church Profile form, which provides a standardized summary of the church status and vision. The completed form is used by prospective pastors to determine if we might be a good match for their skills, etc.

The PSC will occasionally seek input from the congregation as we work through this form, as some of the items require thoughtful discernment to describe what we hope to become and the ministerial support we'll need to get there. We're also using information gleaned from the Table Talks and the Council Planning Retreat. This form will take months to complete - at best. Once the form is completed, it will be reviewed by the Conference and posted to the pastor search and call site. Only at that point will the actual pastor search begin.

I appreciate the thoughtful sermons we've heard lately regarding the pastor search from Pastor David and Rev. Karen. I hope that the congregation is in prayer both for the PSC and the success of the process as we seek the person God is calling to walk with us in ministry.

- Michael Petri - chair of the PSC

IT'S SEPTEMBER – TIME FOR HEART ACTIVITIES TO BEGIN AGAIN

For those of you who are new to this idea, last spring we started including in alternate issues of “Church Chat” ideas for simple art activities that can be done by adults and some special ones just for children. (Which adults can do too, of course.)

The HEART acronym stands for Here we arE mAKing aRT. And the “we” is everybody. Just the other day, a friend told me she “wished she could make art, but she’s just not an artist.” Most of the great classical artists believed that everyone is artist. And Bob and I agree.

So we encourage you to try at least one of these activities each month. If it gives you more courage to have a kid around to give you an “excuse” to get out the art-supplies, get a kid. No-one is ever going to see what you make unless you share it with them. And while you’re making ... stretching yourself ... growing ... you’re also engaging in an important spiritual exercise.

In fact, some people think of art-making as a form of prayer (us, for instance). A very wise teacher of mine once said, “the Holy Spirit meets us in the place we make art.” And lots of other wise folk over the centuries have some the same thing, although perhaps with different words. Making art lifts us out of ourselves. Helps us forget some of the difficult circumstances we’re in right now. Shows us new possibilities. Lets us shout “hey, here is a little piece of beauty I am adding to the world!” So be brave ... grow your spirit ... and give it a go.



Last Fall, we went up to Dennis Weaver Memorial Park just out of Ridgway, and took a glorious hike. Near the entrance is this extraordinary piece of sculpture, and on the paths and rock walls around it, a multitude of stone cairns.

A “cairn,” if it’s a new word for you, is simply a pile of rocks that some person has stacked together. They’ve been, and still are, traditionally used as trail markers, especially in wilderness areas. A stone cairn along a trail indicates something about this being the way to go.

Since prehistory, they have also been built and used as burial monuments; for ceremonial purposes, sometimes to commemorate special events that have happened in a place, as well as to show the location of buried items, such as caches of food or valued objects; among other purposes.

They vary in size from small stone markers to entire artificial hills, and in complexity from loose conical rock piles to delicately balanced sculptures and elaborate feats of megalithic engineering. Cairns may be painted or otherwise decorated, for increased visibility and/or for religious reasons.

IT'S SEPTEMBER – TIME FOR HEART ACTIVITIES TO BEGIN AGAIN

Just last week, I came across a whole different way of thinking about cairns. Carolyn Dube is one of my favorite on-line mixed-media artists. Her approach to making art is that it should be fun, there are no mistakes, and everyone can do it. On her website acolorfuljourney.com, she offers free workshops, and weekly art-tips and art-making-ideas.

Two weeks ago, it was all about making cairns. Recognizing that not everyone is up to hiking right now, or has the opportunity to do that, she created some paper-cairns, like the one in this picture.



Quite simply, she cut round and oval shapes, and some elongated shapes that I'm not sure what to call them, out of pieces of colored paper she had left over from other art-projects.

Then she "stacked" them on a page, gluing them into place. She said for her first one, she tried to follow the rules of physics and gravity, and make sure her paper "rocks" were stacked like you'd stack real ones, with the largest at the bottom, etc. For later ones, she said to heck with the rules, and stacked the shapes in whatever order they pleased her.

Now, you may not have wonderful pieces of already-painted paper lying around, so here are some options:

- ◇ make some pieces of painted paper, using whatever paints you have on hand
- ◇ use pieces of gift-wrap; or greeting-cards you've saved
- ◇ use the insides of "security" envelopes – I'll bet you'll be surprised when you really take a look at them, and see how many different colors and patterns are used to make these
- ◇ talk your child ... or grand-child ... or friend's child out of a drawing or two they have made, letting them know you're planning to cut it up for this project
- ◇ go through magazines, and cut out shapes of beautiful landscapes, animals, people, texts, machines, natural phenomena, or whatever
- ◇ experiment with different shapes, which may capture your thoughts or feelings differently

If you want to "kick this up a notch" spiritually, once you've made or found some shapes that speak to you, label them with, for example:

- ◇ words that make you happy
- ◇ words that reflect how you're feeling right now
- ◇ descriptions of what you've missed getting to do this summer
- ◇ descriptions of things you are hoping for this fall

IT'S SEPTEMBER – TIME FOR HEART ACTIVITIES TO BEGIN AGAIN

- ◊ words describing one of the best trips you've ever been on; maybe you didn't get to go traveling this summer, but memories of good trips are wonderful too
- ◊ wishes you have in your heart right now
- ◊ brief Scripture passages that give you hope ... help ... comfort ... reassurance
- ◊ Invite a child, partner, friend to do this with you; share what you're comfortable sharing with each other
- ◊ Do this as a small group (remembering to mask and socially distance), making "stones" for each other's cairns

And remember, cairns often marked the location of unseen things ... so you can always put the words on the backs of the "stones." You'll know they're there.

However you choose to do it, do it with a playful heart! Joy and laughter can take you to some very deep, profoundly important places in your soul.

Best Wishes,
Sharyl and Bob Peterson

“But What About Black on Black Violence?”

Editor's Note: Carolyn Holmgren shared this resource with me. It was originally published online via email in Progressing Spirit, Explorations in Theology, Spirituality and the News, for which Carolyn has an online subscription.

- ◊ You can find them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/ProgressingSpirit/>
- ◊ Visit their website at <https://progressingspirit.com/contact/>
- ◊ See this issue of the publication at <https://progressingspirit.com/2020/08/20/humility-the-key-to-our-salvation/>

~~ Beth

Q: By Marion

One thing I fail to see addressed anywhere is the mayhem of blacks upon blacks in cities such as Chicago. Do black lives matter only when death is caused by a law enforcement officer?

A: By Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer

Dear Marion,

The red herring of 'black on black' crime often gets cited when the Black Lives Matter movement gains a foothold.

I call it a red herring largely because it's raised exclusively by whites as a way to resist exploring the source and origin of racial bias in law enforcement in general, and more specifically the on-going epidemic of white police officers murdering unarmed black and brown detainees. It wants to deflect attention away from this very serious matter by focusing on something else. Doubt can be cast on the ethical capabilities of the black community writ large by reinforcing the notion of black on black crime. Whites don't really care about 'black on black' crime except as a trope they can use to perpetuate the larger narrative of the black man as savage beast. The simple ut-

“But What About Black on Black Violence?”

terance of 'black on black' crime is intended to remind white audiences that the black male is an animal who cannot control his rage. This is intended to create a context in which the violence perpetrated by white police officers against unarmed black bodies is justified.

For white police officers who are sworn to serve and protect, the order to shoot to kill is mandated when they feel that a detainee or suspect is a real and present danger to the police officer or the community. By perpetuating tropes and narratives that consistently reinforce white fear of black bodies, whites - police or otherwise - have a long conditioned and internal fear of black skin. The black skin itself is perceived as threat. When on the job and calculating whether a real and present danger persists, the color of the skin itself factors into whatever calculus is used to determine the level of fear/danger. Black bodies are easily and often perceived as dangerous by white officers. Rehearsing narratives of black on black crime reinforces this.

According to the 2018 Criminal Victimization report published by the Department of Justice, the offender in a violent crime was of the same race as they victim in 70% of violent incidents involving black victims and 62% of incidents involving whites. However, never do whites think about, talk about, ask about, show curiosity about white on white crime - even though it is almost as likely to be the case in the majority of violent crimes.

What is ignored is that in far larger numbers, black voters favor stricter gun laws. The vast majority of gun deaths in the US are not homicides, but suicides - and over half of those are committed by white men. Whites are largely silent about this. In addition, over the last two decades the trauma of white on white mass shootings in schools and malls and churches has not garnered enough white support for gun control. Whites continue to focus more attention on the trope of 'black on black' crime than on the largely white violence of suicide, mass shootings, and police homicide of unarmed black suspects.

Do blacks commit crimes against blacks? Yes. And those really interested in this pattern should read all they can about what sociologists, anthropologists, and criminologists have to say about the reasons for that. But if they are not AS interested in white on white crime, they should interrogate their motive for asking the question. When the question is offered as a defense for white police brutality that stems from racial profiling, the more profitable exploration should be the internal race bias behind the question itself.

~ Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer

Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer was granted a Doctoral Degree in White Privilege Studies in 2007 from United Theological Seminary in Dayton, OH. He also has degrees in Theology and Philosophy. He is the author of two published books, *Beyond Resistance: the Institutional Church Meets the Post-modern World* and *Steeplejacking: How the Christian Right Hijacked Mainstream Religion*. He is a recipient of Eden Seminary's "Shalom Award," given by the student body for a lifetime of committed work for peace and justice. John was ordained as a Christian minister in 1988. He currently serves as the 9th General Minister of the United Church of Christ, one of the USA's most progressive faiths, whose vision is "A Just World for All." He is a frequent speaker on the subject of white privilege, and is especially committed to engaging white audiences to come to deeper understandings of the privilege. He is particularly interested in how whites manifest privilege every day and how it impacts people of color, two things whites remain largely either ignorant of or in denial about. He has been devoted to his bride Mimi for over 36 years, and they have parented three children - a composer/musician, an author/painter, and a poet. John and Mimi have two grandchildren they dote on constantly.

INTENT VERSUS IMPACT: A REFLECTION ON PAIN AND OPPRESSION

As I begin preparing for our September journey into *me and white supremacy*, Layla F Saad's book, I have been reading through some of the briefer articles listed on the Middle Collegiate Church website on their anti-racism resource page.

While I was reading Jamil Smith's article in Rolling Stone, *Blackface Is Just One Part of the Problem**, I remembered one of my learnings from my years of ministry in Metropolitan Community Church and as an LGBTQ activist.

This is also a learning from my own life experience as a member of a still-marginalized group in the United States. Finally, it is also a learning from my experience being a spouse, sibling, friend, co-worker, etc. Perhaps it will resonate with you.

A phrase I have heard –and, sadly, have said—often is, “I did not INTEND to” The point of saying this phrase is to suggest that, because we did not intend to hurt someone, that somehow lessens our responsibility for the pain we have caused. Sometimes, we also say it to imply that, because we did not intend to hurt someone, that person should not be angry –or as angry-- about the pain we have caused them. Worse still, we all too often say “I did not INTEND to ...” to silence or in some other way minimize the response of our victim and to excuse what we have done.

The problem with this kind of communication is that it does absolutely nothing to address the IMPACT, the hurtful, painful consequences, we have caused someone, and reinforces patterns of behaviors or thoughts that damage relationships of all kinds.

To be blunt, my lack of intent to harm someone not only does not address the problem, it also conveniently shifts the focus away from my victim's feelings of pain and discomfort to MY pain and discomfort, making my pain and discomfort more important than theirs. It becomes all about me.

How this plays out in the anti-racism work our community is doing and will continue to do is that, when we respond to people of color that we did not intend to say racist words or behave in racist ways –regardless of when those incidences occurred—we have once again shifted the focus onto the comfort, feelings, and well-being of white people! And we have done nothing to address the pain our systemically racist speech and actions cause. It becomes all about we white people ... and ultimately, it means that we have failed to do the anti-racist work that loving our BIPOC neighbors and seeking justice for THEM requires of us.

Given that a lack of intent does not excuse or lessen impact, how then shall we respond when we as a majority white community are confronted by BIPOC people [or even other white people] about our systemic racism?

I look forward to discussing this and other questions, sharing experiences [boy, have I done/said some very racist stuff!] and, most importantly, learning from Layla Saad with many of you in September's book study.

Grace and peace, y'all!
Beth Rakestraw

*<https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-features/blackface-is-just-one-part-of-the-problem-789635>,

SEPTEMBER 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
August 30	August 31	1	2	3	4	5
10:00 Worship		4:30 Mission & Outreach by Zoom			10:00 Women's Coffee by Zoom	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
10:00 Worship	Office Closed for Labor Day		1:30 Prayer Shawl –Chapel		10:00 Women's Coffee by Zoom	
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
10:00 Worship		11:00 Property & Finance by Zoom 5:00 Worship & Celebration by Zoom			10:00 Women's Coffee by Zoom	
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
10:00 Worship 12:00 Council Meeting by Zoom	Tower Chimes Deadline		1:30 Prayer Shawl—Chapel		10:00 Women's Coffee by Zoom	
27	28	29	30	October 1	October 2	Oct 3
10:00 Worship			Crossan Webinar, time TBA.		10:00 Women's Coffee by Zoom	

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

9/1 Norma Roscoe
 9/3 Katelynn Marth
 9/4 Marjorie Graham
 9/5 Len Allen
 9/6 JoAnn DeVergie
 9/7 Joan Fifield
 9/8 David Hoefer
 9/14 Kelly Gregory

9/14 Judy Jones
 9/16 Jane Findlay
 9/16 Betsy McLoughlin
 9/21 Helena Clark
 9/21 Russell Day
 9/27 Susan Hartman
 9/28 Lee Allen
 9/30 Andrea Bartlett

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!



Go Green! Get your Tower
Chimes via email!



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