

# Tower chimes

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC | GRAND JUNCTION, CO | JANUARY 2021

## “Whatever Became of Sin?”



That’s the title of a book that hit the market the month I was ordained to vocational ministry in September 1973. That’s right—almost 50 years ago. And you may be interested to know that the book was written, not by some right-wing fundamentalist preacher, but by the world renowned psychiatrist, Dr. Karl Menninger, founder of the Menninger Clinic. The book made enough of a splash that you can still buy it on Amazon today!

Menninger makes the case that the contemporary church, especially in the United States, has pretty much eliminated the concept of sin from its vocabulary, its theology and, most especially, its preaching. People today, Menninger said, don’t like to hear about sin, don’t want to come to terms with the fact that they are in some ways flawed, broken. Avoiding the concept of sin, of course, does not eliminate our brokenness; it only makes it impossible for us to address it, to be healed of whatever it is that is breaking us.

One of the reasons, I think, that the church has moved so far from acknowledging and addressing sin in recent decades is that for many decades before that the church talked about almost nothing but sin. And the church talked about it in the most unhelpful and counterproductive of ways. For too many years preachers used the concept of sin to impose guilt and to manipulate Christians into behaviors that benefitted the church and helped maintain its prominent role in society. Preaching a lot about sin kept church goers on a short leash.

In the original Hebrew the word used for sin means literally “missing the mark”. Sin is about failing to live in ways that are healthy, in ways that help us thrive. Sin is to be avoided, not because God is going to strike us down or send us straight to hell, but because the behavior is self-destructive, because it interferes with a productive, holistic, harmonious life. And because it diminishes or even destroys our relationships with others.

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

## ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS WORSHIP CONT'D

On January 10th I will begin a series of messages on The Seven Deadly Sins. The seven deadly sins are not identified as such in scripture. It is a list that has been created, edited, and refined by the church over the centuries. These are the sins that the "church fathers" have identified as being most destructive to us and to our relationships with others: envy, pride, sloth, greed, anger, gluttony and, yes, of course, lust! Join me as we explore each one of these and ask ourselves: "Are these behaviors really so deadly? Or are the seven deadly sins just the creation of a bunch of uptight, manipulative old men?" Come and see!

With you on the journey,

Pastor David

## BEING GRATEFUL SPIRITUAL FORMATION TEAM

### Gratitude!

We will be offering a course on gratitude by Diana Butler Bass. The course will begin January 10 and end February 21. Participants will watch a video online during the week. Discussion will be on Zoom from 11:30 -12:15 after worship on Sundays. Please email or call the church office by January 7 to register for the course. We will send you the link to watch the video.

We all know the joy of a surprise gift, good news, or a great achievement -- all of those things eliciting feelings of gratitude. But these days, full of grief, worry, and uncertainty do not easily nurture a sense of thanks. Indeed, they seem to be gnawing away our hearts and our hopes.

So what of gratitude now? When we don't feel grateful? In a 6-part course based on her recent book, *Grateful*, Diana Butler Bass takes us into a journey to understand what gratitude is, how it can strengthen us as individuals and in community, and the surprising ways in which it subverts hopelessness and injustice. In addition to lectures and mini-practice sessions, Diana will be joined by other writers in conversation about how giving thanks has made a difference in their own lives. (You do not need the book for the course)

In this course, participants will:

- ◊ Explore the definitions and structures of gratitude, and how what we think about gratitude shapes our actions;
- ◊ Learn practices of gratitude that open us to new levels of awareness and awakening;
- ◊ Discover the power of collective gratitude practices for your community or organization;
- ◊ Understand gratitude in relationship to difficult circumstances and injustice; and
- ◊ Uncover how gratitude becomes the soil for genuine creativity for individuals and communities.

Martha Jones has participated in this course and highly recommends it. Register today!

## A LETTER FROM THE MODERATOR MARK LONG

Ahhh...2020 is done and over! Though we're not out of the woods yet, hopes run high that 2021 will be a better year for all of us! Last year, in my Tower Chimes January article, I suggested spending more time in contemplative silence. I had no idea how much silence we could be able to have once we were no longer able to meet together as a congregation without restrictions...or at all!...We have certainly had plenty to contemplate in 2020, and much of that has been depressing but many joyous opportunities have presented themselves!

So let me begin 2021 with a different idea. Consider moving into this new year with the idea that this is a new start...a clean slate...a time to think "outside the box" and be innovative in different aspects of your life. Much of what was commonplace in 2019 became non-existent in 2020 at First Congregational...but we all kept the church going...and kept our lives going! We changed the way we did things to fit into new restrictions. We came together to find a way to worship together while apart. We spent more time connecting with each other outside the normal time in the sanctuary...reaching out...being Church!

Our entire population was thrown into a total social and economic upset, and churches were no different. Pastors had to find new and innovative ways to bring their message to their congregations and found that their efforts and innovations surprisingly opened the doors to a population outside the sanctuary walls, sometimes thousands of miles and even continents away! Church Treasurers had to entertain other ways of receiving gifts and tithes and found that online giving was neither that difficult to set up, nor was it that expensive! Churches found that the only way to bring their congregations together was through video services and someone stepped forward to figure out how to stream or record the services! Members of the church family who were novices at anything computer have found motivation and methods to stay connected with each other through the use of video!...even those who eschewed any notion of communicating other than face-to-face! In every case, someone in the congregation stepped up to make it happen...to do and be Church differently!

We all found out that being the church does not have to be in the church building. So in 2021, perhaps we should work more toward meeting people, new and old, where they are, whether physically or emotionally and spiritually. There is so much potential lying at our feet...so much opportunity! Is this a time that God is helping us realize how important we are to each other? Is God encouraging us to evangelize in ways we thought we weren't equipped for by showing us how just a little change can bear great fruit?

So, picking up on my January 2020 message, take this past year of silence and contemplation and use what we've found in our scarcity to bring the abundance of love to the world around us. We all can be agents of change in bringing the message of love and peace to this troubled world. And we can do it from our homes if necessary. Just reach out and touch someone you know casually and let them know you have cared enough to contact them. It is magic...the magic of the love of God...Be the Church!!!

Peace and Blessings  
Mark

# NOVEMBER COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

**November 15, 2020**

The church council of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ met on November 15, 2020 for the monthly stated meeting. The meeting was conducted on-line. Present were council members Cindy Haas, Martha Jones, Joan Levy, Mark Long, Nancy Palubicki, Michael Petri, Ken Puhler and Sally Shell.

A quorum was established. The meeting was opened at 12:34 p.m. with a reflection by Mark.

Minutes of the October 18, 2020 meeting were approved, on motion.

The following reports and documents were distributed prior to the meeting:

Mission and Outreach Team November meeting minutes

Worship and Celebration Team October and November meeting minutes

Finance and Property November meeting draft minutes

Strategic Opening Team November 4 and 5 meeting minutes

Tech Team follow-up report

Vision, Planning and Marketing (VP&M) Team short-term goals

Spiritual Formation Team November report

Draft Pastor Job Description from Pastor Search Committee

Martha reported that our financial status is good, with no need to tap the reserves.

## Membership

Michael noted that it's time for the annual membership review. Due to the pandemic and building closure, it would be impossible to do a thorough membership review this year based on attendance. A light review due to pandemic situation was suggested for obvious changes.

## Pastor Search Committee

Michael reported that the Local Church Profile form is expected to be ready for review by the congregation in December. The form asks for up to three references. After some discussion, the council suggested asking Ginger Taylor, Rick MacArthur and Karen Winkel to be references.

## Stewardship

Martha updated the Council on the stewardship campaign.

## Building

Archway housing (part of UCC) contacted by Mark – they provide low income housing. They are interested in discussing the possibilities for the CE building property.

The fall cleanup was successful, but there are more projects to do. Work is continuing to repair the water-damaged studio rental in the CE building.

## Endowment policy update

Some efforts are being made to update the restrictions in the endowment policy.

## Staffing

Pending any specific questions from the council or David, the Staffing team is probably done.

## VP&M

Ken reported that four people have agreed to be on the Marketing team. Some effort is being made to connect with members with Christmas cards.

# NOVEMBER COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

## Display of American Flag

The motion from the last council meeting to display the United States flag to the right of the Black Lives Matter and Pride flags in the east side of the building (facing Grand Junction High School) was brought back up for discussion. After a long discussion, the question was called. The motion was approved on a 4 to 3 vote. Following that vote, Sally offered her resignation from the council and left the meeting – to the surprise of the other council members.

Joan also left the meeting. After more discussion about the divisiveness of this issue, a motion was made to rescind the motion. On a 4 to 0 vote (with one abstention), the motion was approved. Mark will call Sally and Joan to discuss this change.

The meeting was adjourned with prayer by Michael at 2:33 pm.

Michael Petri  
Council Clerk

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## November 29, 2020

The church council of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ met on November 29, 2020 for a special meeting. The meeting was called for the purpose of reviewing the 2021 church budget. Present were council members Cindy Haas, Martha Jones, Joan Levy, Mark Long, Nancy Palubicki, Michael Petri, Ken Puhler and Sally Shell, and Intentional Interim Rev. David Dethmers. The proposed budget was sent to the council prior to the meeting.

A quorum was established. The meeting was opened at 12:33 p.m. with prayer by David.

Martha noted that most of the council had already seen the budget in detail in the Property and Finance Committee meeting. There was an extended discussion about the proposed pastor's compensation package to be used for the pastor search. It was agreed to increase the compensation to make the package more attractive by including SECA relief and \$12,000 towards health insurance.

The revised proposed budget was approved, on motion.

Martha proposed having a Zoom question and answer session about the budget prior to the Congregational meeting. The council was amenable to the idea.

The meeting was adjourned, on motion, at 1:29 pm.

Michael Petri  
Council Clerk

## HERE WE ARE MAKING ART: WOODEN SNOWFLAKES

You may remember that last year our church started offering monthly art activities in our newsletter. We called these "HEART" (Here we Are making aRT) projects, because everyone can make art. And art-making is a wonderful spiritual growth practice. Partly because it's just so much fun! So, with the New Year, we're going to start including a once-a-month art activity in either the Chimes or in "Church Chat," which can be made with simple materials you probably already have, and



give you some quality time with a young'un ... or all by yourself! For January – because it is now officially winter – we're going to make snowflakes!

### Basic Supplies:

- ◊ 1 pack of wooden clothespins (from a Dollar Store)
- ◊ White glue/school glue/Elmer's
- ◊ Craft acrylic paints (white, other colors)
- ◊ Glitter (if you like to jazz things up)
- ◊ Stick-on "gemstones" (also from Dollar Store)

These look wonderful hanging in windows this time of year!

### Instructions:

1. Remove the wire from each clothespin (may need adult help).
2. Turn the two halves of each clothespin so they are "back to back." Glue them together in this direction.
3. After they have all dried, make a "cross" with four of the glued-together sets, and glue that together in the center.
4. Now glue a glued-together (from step 2) pair into each corner of the cross, so you end up with an 8-pointed snowflake.
5. If you have another set of larger clothespins, you can repeat this, then glue the smaller snowflake onto the bigger snowflake (like the picture).
6. Paint your snowflakes with acrylic paint, or (with an adult's help) with spray-paint. When the paint is dry, decorate with glitter, stick-on gems, or whatever.
7. Add a ribbon or string, and hang somewhere you can enjoy it!

~Bob & Sharyl Peterson

# MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS

## Thank You!

A special thank you to our wonderful church for the outstanding job of helping others this month. We have successfully completed our 5 for 5 giving for our wider church family. We donated 256 cans of soup and 50 bottles of salad dressing to Catholic Outreach. (Our basket is full again so another trip of various food items will be delivered soon. We "sold" over \$900 worth of alternative gifts for RAW. And there are two shelves of donations for project 1.27 that haven't been counted yet. We truly appreciate everyone supporting these great causes.

The Mission and Outreach committee has decided to really focus on 4 groups this next year that deal with feeding and sheltering those in the greatest need. The first quarter we will be supporting Catholic Outreach. Be sure to read Sharyl's creative poetry about what we are collecting. Thank you again for your support to helping our wider community with its needs.

## January Food Collection for Catholic Outreach

What with it being the holidays as I write this, I thought a little seasonal music might be in order. So ... "Raindrops on roses, and whiskers on kittens, bright copper kettles, and ..." Whoa! Whoa! No! Those are Julie Andrews' favorite things. Not so much Catholic Outreach's Soup Kitchen's faves.

Instead, let's imagine:

Peaches and pears, and lovely red cherries,  
Mandarin oranges, all kind of berries,  
Pineapples, mangoes, now let us all sing,  
These are the Soup Kitchen's favorite things...

Chorus: It is winter ... Cold and dreary ... Time for vitamins ...  
So let's bring in good fruit of every kind  
in packets and bags ... and tins\*!

Down at C. Outreach, the cooks in their goodness  
Making fruit salads, perhaps pies and puddings,  
All full of healthy stuff, and tasty too ...  
Here is what with your help, those folks could do.

Chorus: It is winter ... Cold and dreary ... Time for vitamins ...  
So let's bring in good fruit of every kind in packets and bags ... and tins\*!

So, we did such an astonishing job on canned veggies and soups, let's do it again ... if one standard-size can of fruit will feed three people, how many people would you like to feed?

# MORE MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS

\*I watch a lot of British television. "Tins" in Britain means "cans" here. And if you haven't seen them, you really should check out "Midsummer Murders" or "The Yorkshire Vet." ~Sharyl

## It's Winter ... Let FROST abound!

While most of us reading this are fortunate enough to be able to stay clean and healthy, many people in our community — especially many of those served by Catholic Outreach (our mission partner for the first quarter of 2021) — are not. So, for January-March — in addition the soup kitchen — we'll be collecting "FROST" items.

F = Fingernail cutters

R = Razors

O = de-Odorant

S = Shampoo

T = Tooth-care (paste and/or brushes)

All of these items can be obtained inexpensively at the Dollar Store. How 'bout setting ourselves a goal of, say, at least 25 of each? Or ... whatever strikes your fancy. Everything we collect will be welcomed, and is needed.

Thanks, Your Mission Team

## LOOKING AHEAD

Ash Wednesday [Lent begins]

February 17, 2021

Palm/Passion Sunday

March 28, 2021

Easter

April 4, 2021

Pentecost

May 23, 2021

UCC 33rd General Synod

July 11-18, 2021

## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

1/8 Linda Randolph

1/29 Tess Linakis

1/9 Janis Woodley

1/31 Gina Giannone

1/12 Sveto Djokic

1/12 Vicki Brickey

1/19 Carol Oglesby

1/23 Barbara Endres

1/26 Greg Biehn

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](mailto:office@uccgj.org). Thanks!

# JANUARY 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>December 27</b>	<b>Dec 28</b>	<b>Dec 29</b>	<b>Dec 30</b>	<b>Dec 31</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
10:00 Worship					<i>Church Office Closed for New Years Day</i> 10:00 Women's Coffee, New Years Edition	
<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
10:00 Worship		4:30 Mission & Outreach, Zoom			10:00 Women's Coffee, Zoom	
<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
10:00 Worship 11:30 Being Grateful		10:00 Worship & Celebration 1:00 Property & Finance			10:00 Women's Coffee, Zoom	
<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>
10:00 Worship 11:30 Being Grateful 12:30 Church Council Meeting	<i>Church Office Closed for MLK Day</i>				10:00 Women's Coffee, Zoom	
<b>24/31</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>
10:00 Worship 11:30 Being Grateful <hr/> 10:00 Worship 11:30 Being Grateful					10:00 Women's Coffee, Zoom	



Go Green! Get your Tower  
Chimes via email!



## CONTACT US!

### Intentional Interim Pastor:

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UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST