

Tower chimes

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

Strategic Planning Teams Making Great Progress



As we've shared with you previously, the Council and other church leaders had a very productive planning retreat together on Saturday, May 9th. At the end of that retreat, the Council formed three strategic planning teams that represented what we consider to be critical areas that we need to address in order to move forward as a congregation.

Each of those teams added congregational members that are not on Council and each has met numerous times over the past two months. At our July Council meeting, each of these teams reported the results of their work. I'd like to share the highlights here in order to keep the whole congregation in the loop on this important work:

Vision, Programming and Marketing Team

The members of this team were Dana Brosig, Karen Caton, Carolyn Holmgren, and Sally Shell. The team was chaired by Ken Puhler, our Vice Moderator.

The team has drafted a Vision statement for the congregation. Although it may be further refined, it's already a powerful reflection of who we are and want to become:

“As a progressive Christian community of faith, we seek to live with compassion, Inclusion, acceptance, bravery and understanding, as Jesus did.”

They have further identified five key areas of ministry by which we live out that vision:

- ◇ We strive to be a welcoming congregation where you are safe to be who you are.
- ◇ We strive to be life-long learners that question and challenge each other to grow in faith.
- ◇ We strive to work for peace, equity, and justice for all people.
- ◇ We strive to protect and restore the integrity of our earth and all of creation.
- ◇ We strive to be change-makers.

In each of these five areas, the team has identified ways in which we are currently addressing these challenges and ways in which we can strengthen these areas of ministry.

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

STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAMS MAKING GREAT PROGRESS CONT'D

Buildings Team

The Buildings Team is composed of Carl Jones, Mark Long, Michael Petri and is chaired by Cindy Haas, who chairs the Property and Finance Committee.

This team was charged with taking a high-level, long range look at all of our buildings and ultimately bringing recommendations to the Council and congregation regarding the use, care, and disposition of all of our facilities. Council asked them to make no assumptions about the retention of our buildings but to reflect on how we can be the best possible stewards of our facilities and land, given the current needs and ministries of our congregation.

This team is in the early stages of looking at a wide variety of options, including but not limited to:

- ◇ Selling all of our land and facilities to another church, not-for-profit, or business and relocating in another location more suitable to our current needs.
- ◇ Subdividing our property and selling the Christian Education building and its property to a developer.
- ◇ Razing the Christian Education building and constructing a facility on that land that reflects our church's commitment to justice and equity.
- ◇ Razing the Christian Education building and partnering with another local ministry to develop that land for ministry.

The Buildings Team has had one meeting so far with a commercial real estate agent to get an idea of what options might be most viable. The Council affirmed the work of the Buildings Team initial work and asked them to explore some options that would continue to utilize our buildings and land for ministries that reflect our church's values and priorities.

Given the scope of this team's work, it's anticipated that it may take a year or two to settle on a specific plan. But we also believe it's essential to the future well-being and health of our congregation that we address this issue. Our buildings can either be a great resource to us or an albatross, depending on how proactive and intentional we are in their care and utilization.

Staffing Team

The Staffing Team is composed of Andrea Bartlett, Kelly Gregory, Martha Jones, Jim Lauer, and Nancy Palubicki. Joan Levy chairs the committee. Rev. Karen Winkel from Community Spirit UCC served as a resource to the team.

The Staffing Team was asked to look at our church's entire staffing structure and assess whether we are staffed appropriately for the current needs and priorities of our congregation. Specific areas they were asked to address include:

- ◇ Are there functions or activities that are important to the health and vitality of our church that are not being carried out because the function requires professional staffing that we currently do not have?

- ◇ Are there functions or activities that we are currently staffing that are not high priorities for us or that could be done by a volunteer?
- ◇ What skills or functions are critical for us in our next pastor? Do those functions require a full-time pastor? What are the advantages and disadvantages of full-time vs. part-time pastoral leadership?

To date, the Staffing Team has focused primarily on the last question relating to pastoral staff. The Council affirmed the good work the team has done to date and asked them to also take a look at the rest of our staffing structure and bring to the Council a staffing model they believe would best suit our church's current needs and priorities. Since the Search and Call Team has now been organized (see related article from Mark Long, our moderator), these two teams will need to be in regular communication as each moves forward.

I'm excited about the work our strategic planning teams have done to date and the potential that their work has for their future. In my years of ministry, I've seldom seen teams work as effectively as ours have so far.

As I've indicated, these teams are still very much in process. We have made no decisions and the timeline for decision-making will probably be different for each team. If you have either questions or suggestions for any of our teams, feel free to contact the chair of the team at any time.

Pastor David

WONDERFUL WORSHIP THIS SUMMER! REV. DAVID DETHMERS

As mentioned in a recent CHAT article, Pastor David will be on vacation a fair amount over the next month or so. What he didn't mention then is that we have a wonderful slate of worship leaders lined up for those Sundays who will ensure that your worship experience is rich and meaningful. Here's the line up for the next several weeks:

August 2nd	The Rev. Beth Rakestraw
August 9th	Pastor David
August 16th	Pastor David
August 23rd	The Rev. Karen Winkel, Pastor of Community Spirit Church (UCC) in Montrose, Colorado
August 30th	The Rev. Karen Winkel
September 6th	Dan Wilkie, chaplain at Hope West Hospice and former pastoral staff member at First Congregational UCC!

I know you'll give each of these "guest pastors" a warm First Congregational welcome!

Our Council had a full meeting agenda at its July meeting. You've heard in other articles about some of the major actions we took, including the creation of the Search and Call Team and the Reports of the three Strategic Planning Teams. Here's some additional items we addressed that you may be interested to hear about:

In Person Worship – The Council reviewed the decision it made about six weeks ago to resume in person worship with strict protocols and unanimously affirmed its continuation for the present. In doing so, we reviewed both input from the Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Church of Christ and recommendations from the Mesa County Health Department.

Our own Strategic Opening Team affirms the continuation of in person worship as one option for our worshippers. The team will tie their recommendations to the Mesa County Health Departments assessment of the current risk from the virus in our area. Currently, the Health Department rates the risk as low and gives Mesa County a green light. If the risk increases to a point where changes need to be made, they will change the light to yellow. A severe outbreak would result in a red light. If the health department changes the rating to yellow...or if any member of our congregation is identified as having the coronavirus...the SOT will almost certainly recommend suspending in person worship.

Although there has been an increase in cases in Mesa county recently, the increase has not been significant and we as a county are no where near being close to a change in status (to yellow). Assuming you have a computer or smart phone, you can check the Mesa County website for information on cases and status at any time.

Staff Evaluations – Over the past month I have completed written reviews on each of our staff members. Formal feedback was garnered from various individuals within the congregation who work with the staff member. The final step in the process is sitting down with the staff member and having a conversation about job satisfaction, areas of excellence and opportunity, and possible goals for the coming year. I, at least, found each of these conversations to be enjoyable and helpful.

Over the next month Mark Long, moderator of the Council, will be facilitating a similar process to evaluate my performance as your Intentional Interim Minister. If you have questions, comments, or input, feel free to speak with Mark.

Endowments/Memorials/Bequests Policy – It has been more than thirty years since these policies have been reviewed. Many of them were outdated, contradictory, and counter-productive to the current interests of the church. A team consisting of Martha Jones, Mark Long, Cindy Hass, and I have been working for the past three months or so to update those policies. The recommended policies were reviewed and approved by the Property and Finance Committee at their June 2020 meeting and by the Council at its July 2020 meeting. If you have questions or would like to see a copy of the new policies, see Martha Jones, our Treasurer.

AND THE SEARCH IS ON! MARK LONG

The time has arrived to begin the search for a settled pastor. Rev. David has done a wonderful job of leading not only the church, but the church leadership through some challenging times in our history, and through his shepherding, has brought us to the place where we can begin the process for finding and calling a settled pastor.

Last month, we put out the call for nominations of our church family to embark on this important task. Many of you stepped up to volunteer or nominate others you thought would be good candidates to comprise a team to begin the rewarding, difficult and time-consuming process.

Last Sunday, July 19, at the regular Council meeting, a slate of individuals was recommended to the Council for approval. The following individuals were approved to comprise the Pastor Search Committee:

- ◇ Michael Petri—Chair
- ◇ Betty Hall
- ◇ Antonio D'Lallo
- ◇ Carolyn Holmgren
- ◇ Cindy Haas
- ◇ Nancy Palubicki

Many of these church family have prior experience with the pastor search process in other places and we are fortunate to have such depth of knowledge and experience to help bring us into the next phase of our church life. And I can't tell you how grateful I am for their dedication and willingness (indeed, excitement) to move through the process. There is a lot of love for our church exhibited by these individuals.

I want to express my gratitude personally and on behalf of your Council and the church family to each of these saints, and especially to Michael for accepting the position of Chair and I hope each of you will pass along your thanks to them as well.

Mark Long, Moderator

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 August we will be collecting glue sticks and/or glue.

Thanks!

Sally and the members of M&O

Tissue Paper Art

Tissue paper is a wonderful crafting medium. It's cheap, and with a few doo-dads to glue on, you can have such fun making art from it! All of these projects, except the very last one, can be made with regular tissue paper you can buy in any store. Tissue paper will glue onto practically anything, from paper to plastic to glass, just using plain old white craft-glue (like Elmer's). Put another coat on top when you've finished gluing on pieces of tissue, and you have art that will keep for years.

Jelly Fish Sun Catcher

I just love the bright colors in stained glass windows and this sun catcher is the next best thing. You just need some tissue paper, ribbon or yarn, glue, and black construction paper for the outline. Make your outline. Start by gluing tissue pieces to the outline so they "stick out" toward the inside. Keep gluing bits of tissue to each other. Add "tentacles" made of whatever you like. This is a great craft that's both fun and functional! Your windows will look awesome with the gorgeous light streaming through. And if you don't like jellyfish, try hearts ... flowers ... whatever you can make an outline for!



(Or mix it up and use markers or tissue paper paints instead)

Faux Stained Glass Candle Holders

The best crafts are made with stuff you already have around the house! You (or your mom or dad) probably have a few glass jars lying around that could use some beautifying, so why not turn them into "stained glass" candle holders? It's easy as can be with an empty jar (or if you want to splurge, some of the great votive-candle holders they have at the Dollar Star), some tissue paper, and some craft glue (Elmer's, Mod Podge, whatever). Just be sure to use colors you like – and shapes you like – and glue onto the outside of the jar/glass object.



Tissue Paper Painting

This art-form is great for people of any age, from teeny-tinies up to “vintage” elders (and yes, I count myself in that group)! Until I learned about this from an art-teacher, I didn't know there are 2 types of tissue paper. One is the regular kind used for gift-wrap (or crafting), and one of them is “bleeding” tissue paper. It transfers color when wet (all you use is water), and that's why this craft is so gorgeous. You can cut shapes from this special type of tissue paper (you can find it on-line on Amazon and other vendors)), dampen a canvas or just a large sheet of sturdy paper, and then place your shapes on the canvas. Let everything dry and the tissue paper will come off easily, leaving you a truly unique piece of art that's worthy of more than just going on the fridge!



Have fun with all these ... Sharyl P., your HEART (Here we Are making aRT) teacher



A TRIBUTE TO CONGRESSMAN JOHN ROBERT LEWIS REV. TRACI BLACKMON

This commentary honors the life and leadership of Rep. John R. Lewis, Freedom Fighter, Civil Rights Leader, Disciple of Jesus Christ. February 21, 1940 – July 17, 2020

President Franklin D. Roosevelt is quoted as saying: "Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the assessment that something else is more important than fear." I would also add courage is not hereditary, but rather it is forged in the fires of life. Congressman John Robert Lewis was a man of great courage. Today, he will finally be eulogized in the church he called home, The Ebenezer Baptist Church, in Atlanta, Georgia. There will undoubtedly be many watching as he lived a life worthy of such honor. Many will speak fondly of him and undoubtedly his pastor, Rev. Raphael Warnock, will eloquently and powerfully paint a picture of the man who served fully and well until his dying days. I will be watching, along with much of the nation, mourning the loss of this great leader at a time when our nation is in such great need of leadership.

But the truth is Congressman Lewis has already preached his eulogy. From the red dirt roads of Troy, Ala., he began re-writing his expected end by reading and studying his way out of the cotton fields to Fisk University. Inspired by the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Congressman Lewis began organizing sit-ins at segregated lunch counters in Nashville, Tenn. He volunteered for the Freedom Rides of 1961 in spite of the dangerous threat of violence present with each journey. He rose to leadership in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) organizing student freedom fighters to end segregation and to secure voting rights denied Black Americans.

By the time the Congressman reached the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala., to lead with his friend and colleague the Rev. Hosea Williams 600 people across the bridge in protest of the state-sanctioned murder of Jimmie Johnson in Marion, Ala., courage was embedded in his soul. It is said Congressman Lewis asked Rev. Williams, as they stood on that bridge over the Alabama River, if he knew how to swim. Neither young man knew how to swim but they marched forward anyway. Facing rows of Alabama troopers intent to stop their progress, they marched forward anyway with courage forged in the fires of life. Bloody Sunday should have killed him but it only made him stronger.

I believe Congressman Lewis knew at an early age that physical death is not the worst thing that can happen to us. To live a cowardly life in the face of injustice quenches the Spirit of the Divine within, and to be spiritually deprived is worse than death. So he chose to march forward. For all of his days, Congressman Lewis marched forward. In spite of over 40 arrests, and opposition often on every side, he marched forward. All the way to the halls of Congress he marched forward. But marching is not his most courageous act. It is the fact he never lost his love. Congressman John R. Lewis was a man of great courage because he was a man of great love.

As I viewed his horse-drawn casket, draped in the flag of a country that still fails to fully see the interconnectedness of all of humanity, cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge one last time, I was mindful the same bridge that was splattered with his blood 55 years ago was now scattered with rose petals to adorn his final journey. I wondered if the fragrance of the fresh rose petals crushed under carriage wheels would be enough to mask the stench of the blood that paved the way. I believe the ancestors are watching and Congressman Lewis is among them too. I believe he is telling us keep marching forward, don't ever lose your courage, and don't ever lose your love, and never go alone. Walk together children, don't you get weary; there's a great camp meeting in the Promised Land.

Thank you, Congressman Lewis. Onward We March!

<http://www.ourfaithhourvote.org>

The Rev. Traci Blackmon is the UCC associate general minister, Justice & Local Church Ministries.

AUGUST 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
10:00 Worship 11:30 Anti-Racism Discussion, Zoom		4:30 Mission & Outreach by Zoom			10:00 Women's Coffee by Zoom	
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
10:00 Worship		11:00 Property & Finance			10:00 Women's Coffee by Zoom	
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
10:00 Worship 12:15 Council Meeting by Zoom		5:00 Worship & Celebration by Zoom			10:00 Women's Coffee by Zoom	
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
10:00 Worship	Tower Chimes Deadline				10:00 Women's Coffee by Zoom	
30	31	Sept 1	Sept 2	Sept 3	Sept 4	Sept 5
10:00 Worship		4:30 Mission & Outreach			10:00 Women's Coffee by Zoom	

NOTE: The Church Office/Building will be closed for Labor Day, Monday, September 7.

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

8/1 Sandy Fox
8/2 Knute Knudson
8/4 Dorothy Segrest
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 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!



CONTACT US!

Intentional Interim Pastor:

Rev. Dr. David G. Dethmers
david@uccgj.org | ext. 104

Office Administrator:

Beth Rakestraw
office@uccgj.org | ext. 105

Volunteer Financial Clerk:

Martha Jones
finance@uccgj.org | ext. 103

Christian Education:

Karen Caton
topcatkc@aol.com

Nursery Attendants:

Angela Hill
nursery@uccgj.org

Facilities Manager:

Rick Smith
rick@uccgj.org

Music Leaders:

Karen Caton
Martha Jones

Office Hours

Monday through,
Thursday 9-3_{pm}
Reach us at :
(970)-242-0298
www.uccgj.org



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