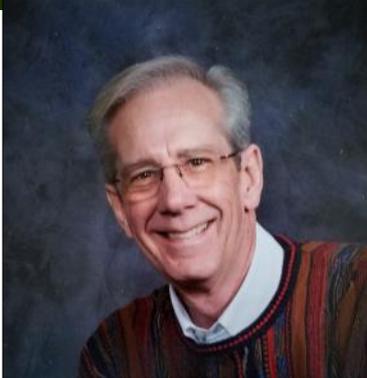


Tower chimes

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



Holy Week Worship

On Holy Thursday you are invited to gather in the sanctuary at 5 PM for a service of Tenebrae. This, of course, is the night on which Jesus gathered with his disciples for the last time before his death, the night on which he shared with them a last supper, a Passover meal to which he gave new significance.

As a part of our service, we too will gather around that communion table. And we will view the events of Holy Week through the eyes of several of those who were close to Jesus: the woman who anointed Jesus; John, the son of Zebedee; a nameless child; the Syrophoenician woman; Peter; James, the son of Alphaeus; and Mary, the mother of Jesus. What did they make of the events swirling around them? How would those events change their lives? How will they change yours?

On Easter Sunday at 10 AM we will gather to celebrate the rising of the Son and the new life we are all invited to share in. We will view the Easter event through the eyes of Peter, that impetuous disciple who both proclaimed Jesus to be the Messiah and later denied he even knew him. We will celebrate the Easter event through some wonderful music. And, since Easter falls on the first Sunday of the month, we will also celebrate together the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Join us for a wonderful worship experience!

MISSION & OUTREACH NEWS

A huge shoutout to everyone for helping with the first quarter project. We supported Catholic Outreach to help make lives a little better for people in our valley who are struggling with food and housing insecurity. We will continue to support Catholic Outreach throughout the year by supporting their food pantry. Be on the lookout for Sharyl's poetry about what we are collecting for the pantry.

Our second quarter project will be helping to support the work done by Homeward Bound.

In April we will be collecting **face masks (cloth or disposable)** and **earplugs**. Please consider helping us with this worthwhile project.

March Collection Numbers —As of 3/23, we have collected 975 "clam shells" [restaurant jargon for to-go containers] and --TA DAHHHHH! 4396 forks!

~Sally Shell

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

SHAREFEST 2021!

SATURDAY, APRIL 24TH: 9 AM to 12 NOON

For the second year, First Congregational UCC will be joining other churches in the community in serving those around town who need a little help around their homes. Because of Covid-19, all projects this year will be outside only and will be kept relatively simple. We're talking mostly yardwork, perhaps some window washing, maybe a little simple touch up painting.

SHAREFEST this year will really be very similar to the workday we had here at church last week. If you were able to handle that, you'll be good for Sharefest. If last Saturday didn't work for you and your schedule, here's your chance. Plus, this an opportunity to put love into action and a chance to stand in solidarity with other churches in the community. In some ways we are quite different from many of the other churches who will be participating. But we share a common commitment to Jesus as Lord and we all believe in being the hands and feet of Jesus within the Grand Valley. It's important, I think, to affirm what unifies us in a time when there is so much division—within our nation and within the Christian church.

Last year, because Covid-19 had just hit, First Congregational was able to pull together just one team. That one team invested just two or three hours, had a lot of fun together, and brought significant joy to the local family with whom we partnered. We're hoping that this year our numbers will grow and we'll be able to deploy several teams around the community.

There is a sign-up sheet in the Gathering Space just outside the sanctuary—near where you pick up your bulletin on Sunday morning. Please sign up there, letting us know that you're available and what you're able to do. If you're not currently attending in-person worship, you can email (david@uccgj.org) or call (520-528-0855) Pastor David and let him know you're on board. Let's make a difference and build some community while doing it!

SPRING CLEAN UP DAY THANK YOU AND NEXT STEPS

Thanks to everyone who has helped to clean up and beautify the outside of the church over the past few weeks, especially our

- ◇ Wonderful Window Washers - Dave D., Kathy V. and Michael P.
- ◇ Lovely Leaf Removers - Julie K., Janice W., Zoe B., Dana B., Andrea B.
- ◇ Perfect Pruners & Willing Weeders - Cindy H., Carolyn H., Mike S., Ellen & Ron B.
- ◇ Likeable Lawn Mowers/Edgers - Linda R. and Dave H.

And a special thanks to those who provided their expert opinion and helped to organize our Spring Clean Up Day: Betty H., Mike S., Dave H., Julie K., and Kathy V.

We finished everything except 4 garden beds, so for 30-60 minutes after church on 3/28, 4/4 and 4/11 we will be removing dead stalks/brush, snapping off yarrow seed heads, clearing out volunteer grass and plant starts, etc. in the following areas:

- ◇ Front Peace Pole garden bed
- ◇ Labyrinth area
- ◇ Front garden bed between sanctuary doors and church office door
- ◇ Front garden east of Pastor David's office

And of course if anyone wants to stop by at any other time during the week, this would be greatly appreciated.

~Julie Krueger

LETTER FROM THE MODERATOR

MARK LONG

I was about to write this month's article about the inconsequential occurrences in our lives that have such great impact on our lives but the killing of ten people in Boulder one week after the killing of eight people in Atlanta has changed the entire course of my thoughts for this article.

I have guns. I don't use them anymore and have given most of them away to other family members. They are memories of an earlier time in my life. I'm a good shot, rated distinguished expert and was at one time the 122nd best shot in the nation. I competed shooting trap. I hunted birds, antelope, deer and elk...none of which I needed to feed myself or my family.

Do I need guns to protect or feed myself?...NO! Is there a good reason for me to own a gun?...NO! Do I want to take guns away from others?...NO! Has easy gun ownership made our population safer?...NO! Is the cost of a weapon better use of funds than mental health resources, helping feed the food insecure families or providing safe and affordable housing to those millions who are homeless?...NO!

I know a fellow who straps on his 9MM every time he goes to the store. To me, it's tantamount to putting on a watch...and it's a lot more expensive! He says he wears it "just in case..." He's never been in a gunfight. He has no training like my brother, a career state trooper, did in handling an active shooter situation. This fellow also has several long guns though he doesn't hunt. He has replaced the original stocks with assault-weapon-like stocks. His ammo runs about \$1/bullet and he has replaced the original magazines with ones that hold 20 rounds. He will go out and easily burn through \$100 worth of ammo in the space of a half hour. Is it providing a better life for him and his daughter? Other than the stress release...NO!

I'm having trouble finding a YES for owning a gun. The only YES's I find are that families will suffer, for their entire lives, the loss of someone they loved. Society will miss the gifts of all those 19,000+ people killed in gun violence in 2020. The economy will suffer. More people will live in fear of an act of gun violence. And more people will doubt the presence of God and how God can let these tragedies happen to the children God supposedly loves so dearly...

From 2009 through March, 2021 to date there have been 302 fatalities in 20 mass shootings according to Reuters. Consider 2 ½ churches of the size of our church family being completely wiped out! And the number of wounded far exceeds the fatalities!

Do I have an answer or idea of how to end the carnage and pain?...No! Unfortunately, fervent prayers haven't helped...Today I feel at a loss and deep sadness, and the clergy throughout the Rocky Mountain Conference and beyond are truly hurting. So, I ask for your prayers for the victims, the survivors, the families and all those who witnessed these horrible events...and for my broken spirit...

Peace and Blessings...

Mark

FEBRUARY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

February 21, 2021

The church council of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ met on February 21, 2021 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, intentional interim pastor David Dethmers and guest Barbara Eyler.

A quorum was established. The meeting was opened at 12:32 p.m. with a reflection and prayer.

Minutes of the January 17, 2021 meeting were approved as distributed, on motion.

The following Ministry Team Reports/Minutes were distributed prior to the meeting as noted:

- ◇ Mission and Outreach/JAM, no meeting
- ◇ Congregational Life, no report
- ◇ Worship and Celebration, no report
- ◇ Spiritual Formation, no report
- ◇ Property and Finance, draft minutes from February 2021
- ◇ Personnel Committee, no report
- ◇ Strategic Opening Team, no report
- ◇ Marketing Team, minutes from February 2021

The Interim Minister February 2021 Report was distributed prior to the meeting.

Martha and David started discussion about proposed revisions to the Endowment Policy. The main goals are to:

- ◇ allow greater access to the interest and principal as part of the normal budgeting process
- ◇ provide a mechanism for obtaining donor or heir approval to remove existing restrictions on gifts

The current value of the endowment is about \$311,000, with about 50% restricted. About 40% is specifically designated for support of a pastoral assistant. The income from the fund currently provides only about 1% of the church budget. The council discussed the changes and will vote on the proposal at the March meeting. The Finance & Property Team has reviewed and recommends council approve the changes.

Martha completed the 2020 financials. The church ended up with income exceeding expenses by about \$4,000, even without tapping any of the reserves for income as budgeted.

Other Business/New Business

- ◇ Disposition of Buildings – David distributed a list of options for the CE building as determined in conversation/research by the Building Committee. The viable options seem to be:
 - ◇ Status quo (do nothing) – the main concern is deterioration of the building over time
 - ◇ Give entire property to Archway for development as low-income housing –This option likely will not provide any income to the church, and there would probably be lots of issues with zoning. Archway was not interested in just the CE parcel because it is too small, and even the entire property is smaller than they'd like.
 - ◇ Give CE building to another non-profit – loss of income and loss of parking.
 - ◇ Sell CE building property to developer. No ministry for property, but may result in substantial income from the property sale (an estimate of about \$250,000). It is currently zoned single family residential. We'd have no control over use of the property. Some

FEBRUARY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

MICHAEL PETRI, CLERK

portion could be designated to mission – David suggested this be determination of mission would be determined by the Mission and Outreach team. Getting rid of the building would reduce our maintenance work.

- ◇ There were concerns about how this would impact the CE building renters. Groups such as AA could probably be accommodated in the church building. Some funds from the sale could be used to reconfigure the church buildings for better use.
- ◇ A motion was made that council approve, in principal, the idea of recommending to the congregation sale of the CE building. The council refers to the building team determination of further delineation of the process and details prior to bringing the sale to the congregation for approval. The motion was approved.
- ◇ Mark brought up the need to form a nominating committee in preparation for the May congregational meeting. He asked all council members to consider serving for another year.
- ◇ Michael reported the Pastor Search Committee has reviewed 15 pastor profiles and is fairly interested in 8 of them. They continue to work through the process.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at 1:48 p.m.

The next meeting will be March 21, 2021 at 12:30.

Michael Petri – Council Clerk

February 24, 2021

The church council of First Congregational Church United Church of Christ met on February 24, 2021 for a special meeting. The meeting was conducted on-line. The meeting was called for the purpose of acting on the recommendation of the Strategic Opening Team to resume in-person worship services on March 7. Present were council members Cindy Haas, Martha Jones, Joan Levy, Mark Long, Nancy Palubicki, Michael Petri, Ken Puhler and Sally Shell, intentional interim pastor David Dethmers, and church administrator Beth Rakestraw.

A quorum was established. The meeting was opened at 6:30 p.m. with a reflection and prayer.

Joan reviewed the reasoning behind the recommendation to resume. This included the number of parishioner who are vaccinated, and the decline in new cases and positive test results in the area. The recommendation includes the same safeguards (mandatory masks, no congregational singing, maintaining social distancing, etc.) as last summer, and perhaps enhanced enforcement. Discussion followed.

One concern about resuming in-person services is that the live-stream worship service quality (viewed on-line) is considerably worse than the pre-recorded services. Since some of the problems are specifically related to live-streaming, it was agreed to instead try recording the service and making it available for on-line viewing within a few hours.

A motion was made to affirm the recommendation of the SOT and reopen for in-person worship services on March 7. The motion was passed with one no vote and one abstention.

There being no other business, the meeting was closed at 7:21 p.m.

Michael Petri – Council Clerk

ADULT SPIRITUAL FORMATION OPPORTUNITY

CHRISTIANITY AFTER RELIGION: THE ONCE AND FUTURE CHURCH APRIL 18 THRU MAY 16

Churches in the United States are closing at an alarming rate. Every week scores of churches close. With every passing generation, fewer look to the church as a place to nurture their spirituality or their faith. "Spiritual but not religious" has become the mantra of our culture.

So where is the church in our country headed? Does she have a future or is her demise inevitable? What will the church look like in a decade? Will it even exist when our grandchildren come of age? How does the church's experience in America compare to that of other churches around the world? Are there lessons to be learned from the body of Christ in Asia? Africa? Latin America? Europe?

These are some of the questions that I will address in a five-week sermon series that will begin on Sunday, April 18th. Each week we'll look at the evolution of the Christian church from a different perspective. And each of those weeks I will lead a sermon feedback/dialogue session immediately following the service. Because of Covid-19, we will hold the conversations in the sanctuary. After worship concludes, we will take a five-minute stretch break and allow folks who won't be participating to leave. Then we'll spend a half hour to forty-five minutes interacting around the theme of the day.

Please understand that I won't be coming to this series with all the answers. My job will be to raise some important questions, share some information, perhaps challenge some of our assumptions, and encourage all of us together to wrestle what it means to be the church in the 21st century. I expect it to be interesting and engaging. I hope you'll want to be a part of it!

With you on the journey,

Pastor David

LOOKING AHEAD

GJHS AP Testing Begins	May 4
GJHS AP Testing Ends	May 17
Pentecost	May 23
Church Building Closed for Memorial Day	May 31
Rocky Mountain Conference Annual Celebration	June 7 – 13, 2021
UCC 33rd General Synod	July 11-18
Labor Day	September 6
Thanksgiving Day	November 25
First Sunday of Advent, Year C	November 28

APRIL 2021

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
March 28	March 29	March 30	March 31	1	2	3
10:00 Worship				5:00 Holy Thursday Communion & Tenebrae	10:00 Women's Coffee, Zoom	
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Easter & Communion 10:00 Worship		4:30 Mission & Outreach	4:30 Christ in Crisis Book Discussion, Zoom		10:00 Women's Coffee, Zoom	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
10:00 Worship		9:00 Worship & Celebration 1:00 Property & Finance	4:30 Christ in Crisis Book Discussion, Zoom		10:00 Women's Coffee, Zoom	
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
10:00 Worship 11:10 Christianity After Religion 12:30 Church Council Meeting					10:00 Women's Coffee, Zoom	
25	26	27	28	29	30	May 1
10:00 Worship 11:10 Christianity After Religion					10:00 Women's Coffee, Zoom	

APRIL BIRTHDAYS

4/1 Chloe Pierce
4/2 Michael Petri
4/12 Lynn Simpson
4/14 Jessie Ragsdale

4/19 Jeanne Christianson
4/20 Carl Jones
4/22 Lexi Taddeo
4/24 Marty Arnold

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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