

White Privilege/Just Peace by Pastor Clare

“Yes, I know, We’ve Talked About This Before...”

A few weeks ago, during our regular service many of you got to hear from a panel of folks who had participated in the White Privilege class. This curriculum was crafted by our national UCC office and included such voices as our UCC President John Dorhauer and our UCC Executive director of Justice and Witness Ministries, Traci Blackmon. There were six folks on the panel, however, we had about 16 people participating. While this series was planned for 6 weeks, everyone found themselves actively engaged for 12 and we could have continued this conversation even longer. Which of course is the entire point of this curriculum.

It seems as if this is a never ending issue. And to be clear it is, primarily because we who have not experienced what it is to live in a skin other than white, have never known what that experience is or the ways in which our systems favor those who are white. The problem which tends to happen once this conversation begins, is we tend to become defensive, angry, and resentful. We, therefore, respond from a place of defending our goodness or comparing our own pain, or attempting to make comparisons with other marginalized groups, or insist that we know the real problem. The fact that racism continues to permeate our lives in so many ways is that we as a country have not yet dealt with its origins and how it continues to perpetuate the divisiveness in our culture....

Ok this is my third draft of this article and, once again, I find myself preaching. I don’t want to do that here. So let me share, instead, some of the reflections folks offered. These are abbreviated yet share some of the profound and humbling experience of our group. Each person here identifies as ‘white’.

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Daylight Savings Time ends November 5.
Remember to change your clock back 1 hour.



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Special points of interest:

- Adult education 8:30 a.m.
- Sunday morning worship at 10:00 a.m.



Core Purpose:

The Rocky Mountain Conference is a faith community of over 77 UCC congregations in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming who support and nurture one another in local and wider ministry and mission, in the name of Jesus Christ. We are an open and welcoming denomination that proclaims the Gospel of Jesus Christ, celebrates diversity, honors the gifts of all people and seeks justice and peace for all.

Our Core Values:

- Covenant – While honoring autonomy, we engage in covenantal relationship with the Holy, our neighbors, creation, and ourselves
- Enduring Faith – We express enduring faith in the transformational work of the Spirit
- Continuing Testament
- Extravagant Welcome
- Changing Lives

Check the website often for news and events!

Vista Grande Community UCC is an Open and Affirming Church.

“We, the congregation of Vista Grande Community Church United Church of Christ in Colorado Springs, CO declare ourselves to be Open and Affirming. We strive to be a congregation that includes all persons, embracing differences of sexual orientation, gender and its expression, marital status, family make-up, age, mental and physical health and ability, racial and cultural identity or background, and educational and socio-economic status. We welcome all to share in the life, leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings, and joys of our congregation's life in Christ.

Pastor's Hours

Pastor Clare is in the office on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

The hours are flexible.

If you'd like to meet with Clare, please call her at **719-351-0168**.

2016 Steering Committee consists of

Moderator – Erin Elkaim; Assistant Moderator – Jacque Bechthold-Blueitt; Treasurer – Dawn Bechthold-Blueitt; Financial Secretary – John Tinsley; Clerk – Deborah Tinsley; Members-at-Large – Jim Price and Jeannie Harrington

If you are interested in what gets discussed or planned at these meetings, read the minutes which are posted on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall. Minutes are posted monthly. Also, you'll find the Income/Expense report, too.

Our Staff

Pastor—Rev Clare Twomey

Music Director—David Hudson

Office Administrator—Donna Bristow

Nursery Attendant—Liz Bliss

White Privilege/Just Peace *continued from page 1.*

Last year our adult Sunday School chose to read and discuss the book *The New Jim Crow* which talked about all the ways our “white” government uses its privilege to oppress “non-whites”. I did not want to believe that the institution that I believed in and respected would be capable of doing the things it was said to be doing. I did not want to attend the class on White Privilege at first because of my feelings but after hearing some comments about what was being discussed in it, **I thought I needed to hear it whether or not I wanted to.

The most important part of the study for a white person, I believe, was the discussion on how to be an ally to people of color. How to step in and question when [people of color] are being treated differently than [white people] in a certain circumstance. How to speak up when someone is putting people of color down, whether it be a joke or a comment, whether people of color are present or not. And to ask how we can help them in their fight for equality instead of assuming we know how to deal with it. **Being an ally is being in discussion and standing by to help when needed.

I’ve come to realize that some of my concealed white privilege is the *choice* I have to get involved (or not) in rallies, marches, etc. with the ever-increasing racial/‘other’ unrest in our country. **Whether or not things change for these oppressed groups won’t really change my life. That’s privilege. However, my joining or not in solidarity with them, as these groups ask for help and numbers, may change their lives drastically.

Having read “The New Jim Crow Law” and the “White Privilege” study it certainly is eye opening but more **so humbling to think that my skin color afforded me privileges without explicit expectations on my part--although I expect as whites we were/are “brainwashed” to believe we are entitled.

... the white privilege discussion group helped me to overcome some of my own blindness on racism in our country, in our community. I think my definition of “racism” itself has expanded to include contentment with our national socioeconomic system as it is – which I’m seeing is heavily stacked against people of color to a much greater extent than I had realized... **my definition of “white privilege” has actually shifted from some notion of white people heartlessly taking advantage of a system that favors their own white culture, to a much subtler sense of complicity and even defensiveness about one’s place in that system.

** I didn’t really understand that I was afforded privileges because of my skin color or even orientation. I was always under the impression, if you were educated, demonstrated good values, and reached out beyond yourself, life would not necessarily be easy but rewarding. **This course was an eye opening to hear the stories of what my fellow church members experienced on this road of life which for some relates to survival.** Unless you are in one of those minority groups, it’s hard to understand.

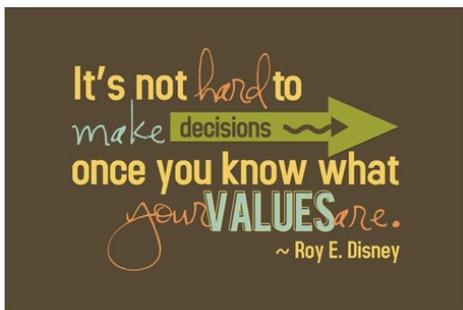
** Just listen – and hear what is asked of allies, rather than assume you/we (as a white person) know what is best. Because again, **what you think is ‘best’ is predicated on a lifetime of white privilege, and probably doesn’t apply to those whom you would be an ally for.**

White Privilege/Just Peace *continued from page 3.*

**** I'm now much more aware of the obstacles which pervade our society and which people of color endure which I've never had to worry about. But this is so ingrained in our society that there appears to be no obvious or "easy" path to make it right. I've got to think more and work more on what I can do.**

This particular class required that participants engage the topic and one another with respect and humility not to mention courage and compassion. It is impossible to fully articulate the genuine and sacred conversations which were shared over those twelve weeks. Suffice it to say that we recognize that these conversations must continue if we are to "be the change we wish to see in the world". I am hopeful that we can offer this sacred conversation again in the future and have similar profound examples of compelling transformations followed by actions designed to change our oppressive systems. Thank you to all who participated in these conversation and to those who have listened to their stories.

(The rest of the reflections will be sent to the national office of the UCC as they would like to know how churches have participated. The UCC is planning to provide curricula regarding other topics challenging our suppositions and pushing us towards those three great loves of Neighbor, Children and Creation)



VGCC's Guiding Values:

Love, grounded in Faith and Hope;
Acceptance that includes Respect and Welcoming;
Caring Relationships
(Family, Friendship, Children, Community)



Mission Task Force – Mission Giving

Over the past quarter, we have participated in our missions.

One Nation Walking Together held a fundraiser at our building in support of its mission. Shelley Morningsong and Fabian Fontenelle performed for the community.

Inside Out Youth Services held its Ally Up Fundraiser and Information Breakfast. Vista Grande sponsored a table or two. Around a dozen folks gathered at the DoubleTree Hotel.

We'll be supporting **Family Promise** in November as we prepare and serve a meal to the families in the program.

Faye Gallegos has made many trips to **Los Pobres** to deliver clothes, food items, and offer support. Our children are working on making blankets for the children of the migrant workers.

We continue to support the **5 for 5 United Church of Christ** missions through our monetary donations. A special offering was taken in September to help with Disaster Relief after several hurricanes hit Southern US mainland, Puerto Rico and the surrounding islands. Around a \$1000 was sent to the Wider Church.



Reminder ... we have entered our 4th quarter of the fiscal year. We thank you for keeping up your pledged giving.

Mission

As you may remember, during the 2017 stewardship drive we pledged to the operational budget and to missions. The mission pledges go directly to our mission activity. The mission committee made the commitment to send support money each quarter as funds are available.

The 3 Q checks will be mailed out shortly. The report of giving is posted on the mission bulletin board at church. As a reminder, if you did a mission pledge, please help us honor those pledges. Several of our support missions also ask for hands on items. Perhaps this works better for your budget.

Family Promise – Nov 20

Family Promise is a support network of churches providing homeless families with children, a safe, homelike shelter where the family can stay together and share meals, as parents work with a case manager to acquire employment and affordable housing, regain independence and self-sufficiency.

We are a support congregation and will provide the meal on Monday November 20. There's a signup at church for menu donations.

Fellowship

Thanksgiving Dinner – Nov 19 at 11:15 ish



Come one, come all to the Thanksgiving Feast on Sunday, November 19 following the worship service. Bring your favorite Thanksgiving dish to share. A signup poster will be available so we are assured to have everything we count on for Thanksgiving. Dinner



Decorating – December 2 at 9 a.m.

Today, we will gather to decorate the building for Advent and Christmas. The tree will be trimmed and all of our favorite decorations will be unpacked for another season of preparation and anticipation.

We'll gather for a soup lunch.



Mexican Feast Potluck—Sunday December 17

Coming Up ...December 17, we will have a very special worship service.

The **Las Posadas** celebration commemorates the journey of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem and their search for shelter in preparation for Jesus' birth.

We will also participate in the traditional Mexican parade of Las Posadas, followed by a Mexican meal/potluck and festivities. Bring a Mexican dish to share potluck style.



Adult – Sundays at 8:30 a.m.

The Percolate Group is exploring *The Misunderstood Jew* by Amy-Jill Levine. In this book, the author helps Christians and Jews understand the “Jewishness” of Jesus so that their appreciation of him deepens and a deeper interfaith dialogue can take place. Levine’s informed truth-telling provokes honest conversation and debate about how Christians and Jews should understand Jesus, the New testament, and each other.



Contemplative Conversations

meets on Tuesdays at 6 p.m.

"Contemplative conversations in an informal group that meets weekly to explore personal, spiritual journeys. We talk about pertinent topics which influence our spiritual lives. This group in an opportunity to share our spirituality outside of the traditional worship setting. It is not necessary to attend every meeting on order to participate."

Children – Family Faith Formation – Oct 21

The children gathered on Saturday morning to learn about Children’s Sabbath. David Hudson joined us and taught the children the song, *You’ve Got a Friend in Me* by Randy Newman. The children helped Pastor Clare plan her sermon for the next day and practiced some readings. The children were seen AND heard on Sunday October 22.

Youth Fall Spirit Retreat – Nov 3-5, 2017

The Theme: *Living for a Reason: Trust, Purpose, Hope.*

As we spend a weekend building this sacred community, we will be exploring some of the spiritual practices of the Christian tradition—and at the same time, inviting campers to dig deep to discern what they believe, and why they believe it.

Along with facilitating powerful discussions, our vetted, trained, and committed staff will plan and lead games, arts & crafts, music, worship, a dance, experiences in nature, and so much more.

Registration Deadline is Monday Oct 23. Cost is \$150.

Family Faith Formation – Dec 2

This is the 4th Family Faith Formation in 2017. This gives an opportunity to focus on the children’s experiences and stories. We learn together as we explore a topic that fits in with the church calendar and/or the mission activities we support.

On Dec. 2, we’ll be planning for our Mexican Parade and Feast, Las Posadas.

Facilities and Membership

Facilities/Trustees

The cleaning team keep the building looking tidy. Several folks keep the outside looking trim as well.

You may have noticed that the entryway into the building has been leveled out. We hired "Crackerjack Mud Jacking" to fix our sunken concrete problem.

Cleaning Schedule

Sept 30 and Oct 7—Erika Borboa and Jon Forshee

Oct 14 and 21—Jackie and Jerry Moore

Oct 28 and Nov 4—Carolyn and Lyn Gunning

Nov 11 and 18—Carol and Phil Puterbaugh

Nov 25 and Dec 2—Donna and Dave Bristow



Birthdays for October

- 5 Evelyn Cherney
- 7 Carol Lawson
- 9 Xachary Martin
- 11 Richard King
- 14 Ethan Elkaim
- 15 Nora Barnes
- 19 Carrie Barnes
- 20 Jeffrey Kolm
- 22 Kayan Cross

Birthdays for November

- 1 Patience (PJ)
- 1 Elly Siebert
- 9 Mary Fulster
- 15 Meghan Harrison
- 15 Melissa Bongirno
- 22 Lucille Derr
- 22 Erika Borboa
- 29 Maggie Forth

November Anniversaries

Nov 14 Eleashia Martel and Kord Ball

Nov 22 Dawn and Jacque Bechthold-Blueitt

The Wider Church—At our recent Southeastern Association (SEA) Fall Gathering, Rev Clare Twomey was nominated to be the SEA Moderator and Dana Zimmerman was nominated to be the SEA Treasurer.

Vista Grande Community Church UCC is connected to the Wider Church!!

November

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 4:30 pm Choir	2	3	4
5 Sunday Schedule 8:30 am Adult Faith Formation 10 am Multigen Worship 11:15 am Fellowship				8 8 am Men's Breakfast at Wade's Café 4:30 pm Choir	9	10	11 Veterans Day
12 Sunday Schedule				15 9:30 am Prayer Shawl 4:30 pm Choir	16	17	18
19 Sunday Schedule Thanksgiving Potluck Dinner				22	23	24	25
26 Sunday Schedule				29 4:30 pm Choir	30	Coming Up: Dec 2—Family Faith Formation and Decorating for Advent Dec 17—Las Posadas Feast	





**VISTA GRANDE COMMUNITY
CHURCH**

United Church of Christ

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COME, GROW WITH US

We are a caring church for thinking people, an inclusive community of faith, united in our common quest to know God, inspired by the spirit of Jesus, and committed to sharing that love in ways that will make a difference in the world.

We are the Open and Affirming (ONA) Church in Northeast Colorado Springs.
