

The Vista Views

Lent. Again....by Rev. Clare Twomey

I have a puppy. Well, he's mostly a puppy, 11 months old and the youngest of 4 others. He is a character as most are, more interested in running and playing than anything else. For anyone who has had a pup, you know they test your patience and resolve. There are times when they are so infuriating that while trying to remain adult and human, we run the risk of screaming like banshees while having a list of places we could drop him off running through our heads. There are other times when no matter how bad he may be, his cuteness and antics are endearing and all we can do is scoop him up. In fact, as I write this he has just pulled dirty socks out of an open washer and pranced right by me knowing full well I will get him. "FINNEGAN!!!!"

He reached an age about 2 months ago when we could almost see the wheels turning in his head. Sure, he had heard us call 'come' before 1000 times, and had simply ignored the command, completely unrepentant. But then one day, he seemed to understand what he was supposed to do. He stopped on the 'come' command. Turned around. Looked right at us. And then he actually came! It was as if he realized that the invitation to come was an invitation to be congratulated, hugged, and usually a treat. And in that moment of him finally understanding the word 'come', our world changed and he became less of an exasperating challenge and more of a companion.

I was just looking at some devotional material for Lent and was really struck by the language of 'Repentance' that echoes throughout this season which is upon us. For me, personally and theologically, this word has always been one that carries a lot of baggage...and has done a lot of harm.

Historically, the church universal has called for our repentance, the argument being that we are born of sin and therefore our lives must be geared toward begging for God's grace to be forgiven. Of course, this understanding is further perpetuated by the long sustained belief that Jesus died to ransom our sorry souls from sin. How are we supposed to believe that we are inherently loved by our God if we also subscribe to the notion that we are not worthy of the same love?! The ritualistic mantra recited at so many Ash Wed services says, "remember you are dust and to dust you shall return", followed by foreheads painted with ash crosses and a worship demanding our repentance. And then, for good measure, many traditions expect us to impose self- flagellation—that is self-punishment, or suffering or sacrifice. I was told as a child, that if Jesus died for my sins the least I could do is give up TV or dessert for a mere 40 days. For so many, this comparison to dirt and self- deprecation is in direct conflict with an all loving God, whose grace awaits us, whose arms embrace us, whose heart breaks for us, and whose tears mingle with our own. These theological mixed messages leave a lot of us in a theological tail spin, especially during this so called sacred time of the liturgical year.

And yet I must admit, I love the term repentance... (continued on page 3.)

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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**.

2018 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—

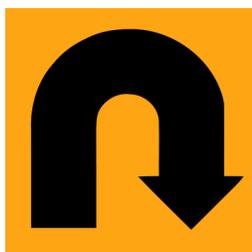
Lent. Again....by Rev. Clare Twomey (continued from page 1.)

Let me explain. The term is defined, at least on the surface, to mean: “deep sorrow, compunction, or contrition for a past sin, wrongdoing, or the like. Regret for any past action”. Well, of course we should be sorry for any past transgressions and should make amends when possible! But what happens when the transgression we are asked to be most sorry for is our own existence? Whether we have been conscious of this or not, this understanding of who we are in relation to our being and our God, often permeates our psyche leaving distrusting of anything or anyone who suggests how much we are loved because of our existence. We may be told we have no reason for shame or shunning but we don't believe it. We carry deep shame assuming that no one is less deserving of God's love than we are. And just in case we have forgotten, this liturgical season tends to remind us.

But I don't see repentance as a demand to demonstrate or come closer to proving our worthiness to our Beloved.

Author Jeremiah Unterman's interpretation of Repentance as “the activity of reviewing one's actions and feeling contrition or regret for past wrongs, which is accompanied by commitment to change for the better”, offers a closer and more accurate understanding. But one interpretation that comes even closer is: repentance is the act of turning around because of a change of mind and heart, and responding to the constant invitation to come, right into the heart of our Beloved.

If we can view a petulant puppy with love and understanding, recognizing the pup's beauty and value even in the midst of exasperation, imagine what God's intention is for us. We desire a companion who responds to our loving invitation to share our lives and our love. If we feel so compelled to try over and over with our four legged family members: to get them to understand we love them; to teach them to be safe and successful; to see them as beautiful creatures at all times, just imagine how willing and wanting God must be for us to turn around can commit ourselves to our Beloved. And in this way, the season of Lent becomes a gentle reminder of how much and how often our Creator will encourage us back.



Our Beloved wants to companion with us, sharing our lives and our love. God's desires for us are greater than anything we can imagine. There is no exception. We are all invited *back*, time and time again, to our God.

I know, we are not puppies! (yet if we spell God spelled backwards ...). But we are held, in love, by our God). Why not use this season to, Stop. Turn around. Return joyfully into the arms of our Beloved. Because no matter what, our God finds us endearing, and beautiful, and worthy of a life together.

Worship during the Lenten Season

Theme: The Sin of Shame

Wednesday Feb. 14 at 6 p.m.—Ash Wednesday Service

Sundays Feb. 18, Feb. 25, Mar. 4, Mar. 11, Mar. 18 - Lenten Path

Sunday March 25—Palm Sunday

Friday March 30 - Good Friday/First Night of Passover
Seder Meal Experience

April 1—Easter Sunday Celebration with an

Easter Egg Hunt following the worship service.



Annual Meeting!

We recently held our Annual Meeting. The Annual Report of our 2017 activities was accepted as printed; the 2018 slate of officers was approved as all continuing another year or term; and a new revision of our bylaws was introduced. Two weeks prior to that meeting, the draft document of the bylaws was available. The Annual Report is posted on our website; www.vgcc.org



Two major changes to the Constitution and Bylaws of VG were in terms of Covenantal Partners (instead of 'members') and Ministry Teams (instead of 'committees').

"The philosophy of having Covenantal Partners is expressed in our core value of "where ever you are on life's journey, you are welcomed here." This is a radically inclusive statement, accepting others as co-workers in the life of faith, not necessitating a creed or statement of faith to 'join', but to express that one shares our common values, and endeavors to walk in faith. We acknowledge that as someone 'new' comes into our midst, their presence impacts us with the possibility of change, just as their experience of 'us' holds possibilities for change. This has the potential for inviting in the 'non-churched' in working on peace and justice issues with us, without imposing barriers of denominational or theological precepts, but together with shared values.

Ministry Teams are active, can be fluid in terms of membership, and exist to facilitate the mission and ministry of the church. They can spring up out of need, or they can sustain over time to meet continual needs. One can participate for part of a project, for a limited time, or become more permanent and focused on the functioning of the Team. One does not have to be elected to a Ministry Team, but can 'self-elect' out of interest or expertise, or curiosity. Again, the concept is to include as many as want to be involved, in the way they wish to be involved, for as long as they wish to be involved. Yes, structure is important, and each team will need someone willing to take responsibility to call meetings and to report to Steering (which will be Executive Committee, a standing committee requiring election and long term commitment) but the fluid nature of a Ministry Team encourages more involvement without imposing 'lengths of term' for those unable to make that commitment. "

We were asked to look over the entire document and begin to envision the church of the 21st century, and beyond. What will that look and live like? The definitions are up to us."

After much discussion and clarification, several folks offered additional input to consider in the revision. This document is being revised in the areas with further suggestions. When the final revision is ready, it'll be posted.

Thank you to the revision team of Nancy Morlock-Hollins, Jim Price, and Deborah Tinsley.

It's not hard to
make decisions 
once you know what
your VALUES are.
~ Roy E. Disney

VGCC's Guiding Values:

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

Looking Ahead! Women's Retreat – Saturday, September 8 at La Foret.

The location is secured. Now a few folks are working on a workshop facilitator and other details that will be passed on as they are finalized.

La Foret is our UCC camp almost in our backyard – in Black Forest. It's a beautiful camp setting that has opportunity for meditation, reflection, and community building.

Mark your calendars for this fall event.

Faith Formation

Kids' Faith Formation



Kids' Faith Formation

Family Faith Formation – Saturday March 10 at 9:30 a.m.

Heifer International – The Many Faces of Easter

We'll learn about Heifer International and how this mission gives people a hands up!

Spring Youth Retreat /// March 16–18 /// \$150 /// La Foret

Theme: *Jesus and the Upside Down Kingdom*

Reflecting upon a few of the parables of Jesus, this retreat will dive deeper into how our faith calls us to see the world in a way that gives dignity, freedom, and hope to the people of our community. As always, the retreat is open to all RMC youth grades 6–12, and the volunteer staff is already well into planning an incredible few days for our campers. Youth will NOT want to miss this one! Registration is now open online at rmcucc.org.

Adult Faith Formation “Percolate”

This winter has us finishing up The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus by Amy-Jill Levine. It certainly has raised our awareness of so many misconceptions about Judaism and how much of our own Christian Heritage leans heavily on Judaism. Lots of great discussion.!



Many of us have read the novel The Lilac Girls by Martha Hall Kelly (thank you Carolyn). We will discuss the novel upon completion of The Misunderstood Jew.

Our next book will be Original Blessing by Matthew Fox who is an American priest and theologian. Formerly a member of the Dominican Order within the Roman Catholic Church, he became a member of the Episcopal Church following his expulsion from the order in 1993. Fox was an early and influential exponent of a movement that came to be known as Creation Spirituality. In Original Blessing, “Fox shows how Christianity once celebrated beauty, compassion, justice, and provided a path of positive knowledge and ecstatic connection with all creation. He provides a daring view of historical Christianity and a theologically sound basis for personal discovery of spiritual liberation.” (Good reads) This book may be enlightening as our congregation pursues becoming a Just Peace church.

Mission

As we start 2018, our Mission Ministry team has written our amended Vision:

Vision for Mission

Mission/Outreach is an integral part of VGCC ministries. We will pursue opportunities that are denominational and ecumenical, local and global, participatory and financial. Our mission and outreach will make a difference – empowering recipients and inspiring givers to act in the spirit of Christ; exemplifying the 3 Great Loves: Love of Neighbor; Love of Children; Love of Creation.

The missions for 2018 are Family Promise, Inside-Out Youth Services, Los Pobres, and One Nation Walking Together. We'll also continue to support the UCC 5 for 5 missions; One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen the Church, Neighbors in Need, the Christmas Fund, and Our Churches Wider Mission.

Ongoing missions include purchasing Fair Trade coffee to be used at Vista Grande as well as your home use; LOGO (literacy on the go) where you are encouraged to bring gently used children's books which are given to children to encourage a love of reading; and Change for Change, which is pennies or other coinage that is collected for our pastor's discretionary fund.

Check out the mission informational tables in Fellowship Hall. We strive to keep these updated with current information.

All our meetings are open. Please join us.

UPDATE on our Mission Pledges

All pledges from our 2017 giving were sent to our mission partners.

The warmth tree items (mostly hats and mitts) were sent to Los Pobres and Family Promise. The recipients were very grateful for the new items. Thank you!

A UCC Initiative—The Three Great Loves

Los Pobres

3 Great Loves – A just world for all. The 3 Great Loves is the UCC's opportunity to express how our Love of Neighbor, Love of Children, and Love of Creation work together to address the inequities in our current world.

The Vista Grande Children have been busy making tie blankets for the children of Los Pobres. This activity celebrates Love of Neighbors and Love of Children.

The last activity was to decorate the gift bags with pictures of Hope and Happiness from our children to Los Pobres. The blankets will be delivered soon.

WE ARE THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST.

To love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves. – Matthew 22



Just Peace: Living and Behaving in our Love of God.



In 2015, the 30th General Synod held in Cleveland, OH marked the UCC's 30th anniversary as a Just Peace Church and called for a renewal of the UCC's Just Peace witness.

The Just Peace Church vision is a hallmark of United Church of Christ theological identity. For 30+ years, the Just Peace Church pronouncement has inspired a grassroots movement of UCC congregations committed to corporately naming and boldly proclaiming a public identity as a justice-doing, peace-seeking church. The Just Peace pronouncement articulated the UCC position on war and peace distinct from other approaches such as crusade, pacifism, or "just war." Grounded in UCC polity and covenantal theology, the position focuses attention on alleviating systemic injustice of all types using non-violence and calls us

to offer the message, grounded in the hope of reconciliation in Jesus, that "Peace is possible."

Justice and Witness Ministries is committed to a revitalized Just Peace Church movement and to empowering and resourcing congregations to create a stronger justice and peace witness. Now is the time to rekindle our commitment to Just Peace and make visible our longstanding witness to this approach.

Since the inception of our Mission Task force we as a congregation have made significant strides in our direct impact to those who experience injustice in numerous ways. The lives of others have been touched as well as our hearts and minds. Not only have we made strides it seems as if we have arrived at the point of no return. Personally, I am excited and driven by the awareness of the relationships formed as a result of this work. Be proud of yourselves. Because of our success, or should I say our great capacity to do this work collectively, it seems only natural that we consider strongly designating Vista Grande Community Church a Just Peace Church.

What is Just Peace you may ask? Well the Short definition is: the interrelation of friendship, justice, and common security from violence.

A Just Peace Church is grounded in biblical concepts of covenant and shalom. The following Scriptures can be read and reflected on as part of our basis for actively participating in a Just Peace Movement; **Ezekiel 37:26, John 10:10, Ephesians 2:14, and 1 Peter 3:15.**

Throughout this upcoming season of Lent, a core team of VGCC Covenantal Partners will undertake an in-depth process of looking at what it means for us specifically to become a Just Peace Church. This process will include creating opportunities for the congregation to develop a more in-depth understanding of the Just Peace Vision, discerning potential ways our church can actively participate in this designation once obtained and the development of a covenant for endorsement by VGCC to be a Just Peace Church.

To access more information on the UCC's Just Peace Church Pronouncement and what it means to be a Just Peace Church you can go to www.ucc.org/just_peace You can also contact **Kayan** 719-221-4479; kayan.kan.do@gmail.com or **Rev. Clare** 719-599-3057; revclare1@gmail.com

Membership and Wider Church

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 is an opportunity to share our spirituality outside of the traditional worship setting. It is not necessary to attend every meeting in order to participate."

February Birthdays

05 Brigit Cherney
11 Sandra Gates
16 William James
16 Cailyn Pope
19 Skylar Garcia
21 Kyelie Bechthold-Blueitt
27 Lori Gardner



March Birthdays

5 Kristi Pfeiffer
10 Eddy Parker
13 Peyton King
17 Amy Gunning
24 Tracy Berry

Anniversaries:

Feb 14 Carol and Phil Puterbaugh

March 20 Richard and Carol Burbank

Cleaning Schedule

Feb 3 and 10 —Donna and Dave Bristow
Feb 17 and 24—Carol and Phil Puterbaugh
Mar 3 and 10 —Erika Borboa and Jon Forshee
Mar 17 and 24 —Jackie and Jerry Moore
Mar 31 and Apr 7 —Kelli and Tim Baptist



The Wider Church – The Rocky Mountain Conference and The Southeastern Association

The Rocky Mountain Conference Annual Celebration will be held at La Foret on June 7-10, 2018.

The Southeastern Association Annual Gathering will be held at First Congregational UCC in Colorado Springs on Sunday, Oct. 21, 2018.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Sunday Schedule 8:30 am Adult Faith Formation 10 am MultiGen Worship 11:15 am Fellowship				1	2 	3 9:30 am Family Faith Formation
4 Sunday Schedule Communion 11:15 am Mission Ministry	5 5 pm Executive Council Mtg	6 6 pm CC	7 9:30 am Prayer Shawl Ministry 4:00 pm Choir 5:30 pm Worship Ministry	8 5:30 pm Family Promise Dinner (off site)	9 5:30 pm Friendship Dinner at 3 Margaritas	10
11 Sunday Schedule Jazz Sunday and Mardi Gras Celebration	12	13 6 pm CC	14 8 am Men's Breakfast at Wade's Café 4:00 pm Choir 6:00 pm Ash Wednesday Ash Wednesday Service	15	16	17
18 Sunday Schedule	19 5:30 pm Family Promise	20 6 pm CC	21 4:00 pm Choir	22	23	24
25 Sunday Schedule Family Promise Fundraiser Lunch (Off site) 	26	27 6 pm CC	28 4:00 pm Choir	KEY: CC—Contemplative Conversations		

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11 Sunday Schedule	12	13 6 pm CC	14 8 am Men's Breakfast at Wade's Cafe 4:00 pm Choir	15	16 Youth Retreat at La Foret	17 
18 Sunday Schedule	19	20 6 pm CC	21 9:30 am Prayer Shawl Ministry 4:00 pm Choir	22	23	24
25 Sunday Schedule 11:15 am Mission Ministry Mtg Palm Sunday 	26 Holy Week	27 6 pm CC	28 4:00 pm Choir	29 Maundy Thurs	30 Passover Seder Good Friday	31



VISTA GRANDE COMMUNITY CHURCH

United Church of Christ

Location: 5460 N Union Blvd
Colorado Springs, CO
Mailing: PO Box 26030 COS 80936
Email: vgcc.ucc@att.net
719-599-3057
www.vgcc.org

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.

MISSIONS

Ongoing missions include purchasing Fair Trade coffee to be used at Vista Grande as well as your home use; LOGO (literacy on the go) where you are encouraged to bring gently used children's books which are given to children to encourage a love of reading; and Change for Change, which is pennies or other coinage that is collected for our pastor's discretionary fund.

Check out the mission informational tables in Fellowship Hall. We strive to keep these updated with current information.

All our meetings are open. Please join us, usually the last Sunday at 11:15 a.m.

Read pages 6 and 7 for other mission articles.

