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We are

*An Open and Affirming
And Just Peace
Congregation*

We believe

*God's Love is for
All the People*

We respond

*3 Great Loves
For a Just World for All ...
Love of Neighbor
Love of Children
Love of Creation*

*Congregation at work throughout
2019...*

OUR PURPOSE

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.

Congregation at work throughout 2019

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**Vista Grande United Church of Christ
Minutes Congregational Annual Meeting**

27 January 2019

Moderator Erin Elkaim called the meeting to order at 11:22 a.m.
Mallory Everhart opened with prayer.

Quorum was established: 35 Covenantal Partners present, 23 required for quorum. One guest was present for the meeting.

Erin asked if the minutes from 2018 Annual meeting shall be approved; Crystal Karr so moved. Seconded. Minutes approved.

Erin encouraged all Covenantal Partners to review the Annual Report; she covered some highlights of the last year.

Dave Bristow reported on the Pastoral Care/Relationship Team.

Deborah Tinsley referred Covenantal Partners to the Clerk's report on the Executive Board's actions for the year.

Donna Bristow reported on Missions: All commitments that had been made were met, plus extra monies were received. From the \$1,500 additional monies, \$500 went to Casa de Paz in Denver. In Kind giving of food, clothing, gifts, was \$4,770. Miles driven for mission activities were over 1,909. Total hours donated by volunteers was 587. Total mission giving was \$36,355, \$12,000 over last year and making up about 1/3 of the budget. Many years ago a representative from the National Office asked Vista Grande to give 10% of budget for mission: Look what we have done.

Faye Gallegos spoke up concerning the work at Los Pobres, that over 4,000 served on a daily basis, and this is one of our missions. (Amended Congregational Meeting 28 July 2019 to read: "Los Pobres serves 900 registered families all the time. In any given week 200 to 225 families are assisted, and 4,000 served at Christmas.")

Carolyn Gunning reported on Women's Fellowship. Their meeting time will change to 4th Saturday starting in March. February is the Friendship Dinner.

Erin reported for Facilities, specifically mentioning the volunteer effort to re-tar the parking lot, saving the church money.

Donna Bristow reported on Our Church's Wider Mission, and that what we give to this supports 12 churches in the Southeastern Association, more than 70 churches in the Conference. Referencing page 23 of the Annual Report, we may be a small church, but we are mighty.

Crystal Karr reported for Worship, inviting anyone to become involved in the work of making the worship experience impactful. Worship Team meets on the 1st Monday of the month, 6:30 p.m.

David Hudson referred to his report for Choir and thanked all those who make the music ministry possible.

Donna Bristow reported on the new nursery attendant, Valerie Karr. During this Annual Meeting, Valerie and Evelyn had the children up in the chancel with games, crafts and a video.

Clare Twomey gave the Pastor's Report. She brought up that there is a risk in the coming year that the \$30,000 yearly lease will not be renewed, starting in July. This would greatly impact the church's budget. Pledging, both numbers and amounts, are down from years past. There was a lot of money that came in and kept us nearly in the black, but these have been donations, not pledges. She asked that all Covenantal Partners who have pledged to ask themselves "Am I really putting forward as much as I can, or is this throw away money, say for a coffee every day?" If you have not pledged, ask yourselves if putting something aside for spiritual support in the world is important to you.

Dawn Bechthold-Blueitt gave the Treasurer's Report: the total operating funds for 2019 has gone up since the printing of this Annual Report; it is now at \$104,460. On income versus expenses; it is now a negative balance of \$2,812. These corrections will be made and the corrected Annual Report will be available on the churches web site.

A question came up over the cracked windows: "Do we have a cost to fix these windows?" That figure is not known. Another question: "If SOR moves out, can we rent out the church?" Yes, but Facilities and Vision Teams are working on this for the future; all possibilities will be explored. Question: "What is the difference on money in the checking account versus United Church Fund?" United Church Fund is our mutual fund.

Jan Morgan shared that Facilities found a lower cost for the trash pickup, saving \$200 a quarter.

Dawn mentioned that all year we have been hearing "close the Fellowship room doors, turn off oven, lights, and make sure toilets are not running before you leave the church" to save money on utilities. We have spent more in utilities than the year before, and yes these expenses do go up, but please be more conscientious on leaving the church: Be mindful.

Erin then asked if the gathering was ready to vote on the deficit budget. Question; "What is the \$15 banking and finance fee?" It was explained it is a fee the bank charges for a business account. Question: "Though it is small amount, can we ask for this to be waived by the bank?" Erin replied that we can ask. "Why are banking and financial actual 2018 \$1,200 but budgeted for \$15?" The first part of the year the church started to use different financial reporting forms: \$655 should be part of the budget. Decision was to rent or purchase Quick Books software. Backtracking, we do need \$655 in proposed budget for Quick Books and a fee for payroll or \$15 for a total of \$670.

This changes the deficit budget number to \$3,482.00.

Dave Bristow moved to accept the budget as corrected. Seconded. Budget passed unanimously.

Erin presented Best Practices: This is to move VG into thinking and running like a big church. This document will be on-line, and is a living document that can be changed updated, as necessary. All Covenantal Partners are requested to input to this document, and to alert Executive Council to any changes needed.

Mallory Everhart, Intern, gave a brief statement of appreciation for how VG welcomed her, made her feel part of the 'family', willing to train her in what it means to be pastor. That VG gave her and Ethan a sacred trust. February 1st will be her midpoint review, and just to highlight what has been accomplished, Mallory lifted up the LBGTQI Clothing Swap, the Grief Workshops, the Blue Christmas service, Sacred Conversations, and Finding Home being established as an alternative to traditional church.

Erin asked that all Covenantal Partners be sure to have signed in, and that Photo Permission Forms need to be filled out. The church policy is to request that no photos taken by anyone in the church be posted to any social media; any photos put up on the church's web site are used with permission.

Erin gave a gracious thank you to all who have served on the **Executive Council** in the last year. She then presented the new volunteers and continuing Executive Council members:

Moderator: Brian Sojourner; Assistant Moderator: Kayan Cross

Treasurer: Dana Zimmerman; Member at Large: Carol Burbank

Member at Large continuing: Jeannie Harrington; Financial Secretary continuing: John Tinsley

Clerk continuing: Deborah Tinsley

Erin called the vote; seconded. Approved.

For the Good of the Order:

Correction to the Annual Report "In Memoriam": Joe Estrada was born on August 19, 1960 and died June 6, 2018.

Nancy Morlock-Hollins said that the \$25 gift cards, the many received for Los Pobres, were over and above mission totals, and that this money means so much to families who have nothing. Faye Gallegos asked everyone to remember that cooking oil, flour, diapers are all still needed.

Jeannie asked that everyone remember to buy the coffee the church has for sale.

Jackie Moore asked everyone to bring in their aluminum cans for recycling.

Clare Twomey said that as she looked around, every person in the room has volunteered to do something; she had never seen that in any other church she had been in.

Jackie Moore moved that the Annual Report be accepted with corrections noted. Seconded. Approved. Donna said that the corrected Annual Report will be on the church's web site.

Next Annual Congregational Meeting will be 26 January 2020.

First Executive Council for the new Council will be 11 February 2019, 5 p.m.

Quorum was present for the entire meeting. Meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Submitted: Deborah Tinsley, Clerk

PASTOR'S REPORT

Respectfully submitted by Rev. Clare Twomey

We have done it again! Another unprecedented year living into our call to be an all-inclusive, all belonging, Just Peace church. In a world which continues to be frustratingly challenging, we continue to join as a Beloved Community, supporting our ministries and one another, so as to remain relevant and compassionate in a world which is so desperate for both. If there was nothing else to follow in this report, this would be extraordinary...But there is more! Lots more!

We remain consistently active with our missions. (Many things mentioned here will be more detailed by specific Ministry Team leaders).

We have remained financially and relationally committed to Inside/Out Youth Services, One Nation Walking Together, Los Pobres (immigrant resource center), Family Promise, and UCC 5/5 missions. With local missions we have provided quarterly donations, volunteers, and collaboration with each agency, attending fundraising and supportive activities and by supplementing and exceeding base donations when necessary.

We continue to be a venue for the Youth Documentary Academy, upgrading our audio/visual capacity in order to accommodate them and to enhance our own media capabilities for the future.

We have gained more community visibility by our marquee signage and flying various justice flags. These flags continue to inform the community who we are and for whom we stand. As such we have seen an increase in attendance by those who have found those flags invitational. Additionally, we have been identified as a safe haven for those for whom US immigration policies pose a threat. As such various groups have chosen to hold their meetings and trainings at VG: DACA recipients, (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), CIRC (Colorado Immigration Rights Coalition), and the Sanctuary Church Coalition, totaling 5 gatherings, over 100 individuals, including a worship service. Additionally, our Black Lives Matter flag prompted media attention from the Gazette and local TV news which identified VG as a church dedicated to eradicating racism. This visibility extended our ministry beyond church walls and identified us as an authentic ally in the fight for racial justice. This is further exemplified by our participating in the Sacred Conversations 2 End Racism (SC2ER) study and extending this conversation to those in the community who wish to participate. Additionally, numerous congregants joined NAACP and participated in their annual meeting on Policing our Police.

Our Just Peace Church identity was further demonstrated in our participation in protests and rallies in the city. Members of this congregation participated in: racial justice rallies and police shooting protests for De'Von Bailey; rallies demanding justice for undocumented immigrants and against separating families at the border; climate change protests; gun legislation rallies and gun violence protest (in addition to a gathering at VG in response to a school shooting in Denver); a protest against Westboro Baptist Church in support of Queer folk and rallies for Trans soldiers. (I also attended City Hall meeting to demand an independent investigation regarding the De'Von Bailey shooting.)

This past year, in addition to providing supervision for our intern, pastoral care for our congregation, and leading worship, I have led Bible study and Coffee and Conversations each week. In addition to planning and implementing worship, your pastor has also been involved in a few wider church activities. I mentor a Member in Discernment from a sister church. I continue to act as Moderator of the Southeastern Association (SEA) of the Rocky Mountain Conference (RMC), and sit on the Committee on Ministry (COM) for the SEA. As such I have participated in: numerous ordinations, installations, situational supports, and SEA annual meeting and RMC annual meeting. Additionally, I am the current SEA delegate to UCC Synod and was a committee chair last June in Milwaukee. I have recently completed the certification process for SC2ER out of UCC national office and have been asked to become a national trainer for those who wish to become certified in the same program. This spring, a colleague and I will initiate a Racial Justice—SC2ER study in collaboration with LaForet and the RMC. Additionally, I have been asked to lead a weekend Restorative Justice Class with this same colleague in New York this February. I was invited to attend and present at the Governor's Prayer Breakfast last winter. I have updated my Healthy Church Relationships requirement(formally boundary training), maintain connection with our Pastoral Relations Team, accessed supervision from our Conference Minister and collegial support as indicated , and meet monthly with my Spiritual Director-- all for self-care and so that I may remain faithful to the work I do with you and for you.

Our former ministerial intern, Mallory Everhart, began and continues to lead Finding Home. Additionally, she has offered outreach services to those in the LGBTQIA community who have historically been rejected by church.

We installed Rev. Deborah Tinsley as Minister of Vision and Support, whose gifts and talents have been critical in envisioning how to live into our proactive call to be Church in the 21st century.

We have recognized that our just-peace orientation in this world is susceptible to pushback and vitriol and thus we have hired a security person, Timotheus Cross, in order to assure the safety of all who enter here.

We have had 3 weddings (including my own!). We had one memorial service celebrating the life of Kristine Renae Johnson. And we have welcomed Covenantal Partners.

We had the largest number of participants in the SEA at Congregations Alive 4.

We have dedicated our back wall dedicating our commitment to "All are welcome here"

We have dedicated our memorial garden to our beloved Bob Howard.

We have resolved our uncertainty regarding the permanency of our location and then in response, our Facilities Ministry has gone above and beyond to create a safe and beautiful space for all!

You, Church, have made so many things possible. I remain continually amazed at your willingness to step out of your comfort zones and truly do the work of the church as it was intended. I remain so proud of this Beloved community and humbled to be your pastor.

MODERATOR'S REPORT

Kayan Cross

Mallory Everhart completed her Internship with us this year. Her presence and time here have been so positively impacting. She began Finding Home: A Community for Spiritual Outsiders, An LGBTQ+ affirming recovery community of spiritual seekers; began in our Fellowship Hall on a Friday night in January. It continues to be a space where some seek and some find solace and community in Mallory's ministering.

In the spring, with Pastor Clare facilitating, participants from within our congregation and the wider community began Phase 1 of Sacred Conversations to End Racism: a Restorative Racial Justice Journey created by the UCC to address and dismantle racism within the Christian Church and Society. Phase 2 began in the fall.

We added three new staff this year; In January, Valerie Karr was hired as Nursery Attendant, In October, Reverend Deborah Tinsley was installed as Minister of Vision and Support, and in November Timotheus Cross was hired for Security. We are equally blessed to have them as they enable us to continue fulfilling the needs of our Church.

We participated in a number of conferences this year. Synod, in Milwaukee, WI; the Rocky Mountain Conference Annual Meeting in Grand Junction; Southeastern Association meeting, in Buena Vista and Congregations Alive 4 in Englewood, CO. Pastor Clare and up to 8 Covenantal Partners participated and represented VG at these conferences, sharing our voice and views and bringing back information and insight to assist us in our progress as a UCC church

In February, Executive Council had a retreat to begin its year of working together with 4 new council members. I will venture to say that this was a great asset to our ability to work collectively throughout the year. Very informative and a useful way to bring the new members into the existing "workings" of VG. In July, the Assistant Moderator and Moderator switched positions. The council worked very well together this year. A necessary amount of time was allocated to updating our Best Practices document that designates specific responsibilities, job descriptions, and accountability for Council Members, Staff and Ministry Teams.

The pace and space in which we do Justice work increased significantly this year. In response to the mass shooting at the STEM school in Highlands Ranch, VG hosted a panel on gun control. We continue to maintain our relationship and support of Café Justo in Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico by managing coffee orders and sales at the church. Our participation in Colorado Springs Pridefest surpassed all previous festivals. We were joined by three other UCC churches: Black Forest, Broadmoor, and First Congregational in the parade. This made for a nice UCC presence. We sponsored and provided volunteers to staff our first booth at Pridefest. The booth supported awareness and information regarding Transgender health services at Children's Hospital in Denver. This resource was well received by many festival goers. Pastor Clare and several Covenantal Partners participated in multiple Justice rallies and marches; including but not limited to: Immigration rights, Climate change, Justice for De'Von Bailey and The Women's March. Beginning with Pridefest, all of this was done while proudly wearing the newly acquired Vista Grande T-Shirts. In November, a Press Conference for

DACA legislative status was held at VG. An Immigrant's rights attorney and several DACA were there with the assistance of a translator to update and answer questions for those concerned about the current status of DACA and its impact. One of the last pieces of justice work done by VG was at the Las Posadas service, there was a panel presented, made up of Sanctuary Coalition, Mennonites, an immigration lawyer, and Rev. Pat Dolin. They did a thorough job of informing us about sanctuary rights and needs in Colorado Springs.

Recognizing our small but mightiness has been good for VG. It allows us to pursue getting some things done in collaboration with others and not just see ourselves as ineffective because we are small. We worked steadfast with, Inside Out, UCCS, Physicians and Therapists to bring Transgender health services to Colorado Springs. Although it's not a done deal it is still on the table and closer to happening than not. We purchased and installed a large screen TV, primarily to continue to provide space for Youth Documentary Academy (YDA) showings. We have begun intensely working with other Social Justice, Human Rights organizations, and individuals locally to establish accountability of County and City Law Enforcement Agencies. Another UCCS collaboration has been providing a platform for Soul for Soul to keep us apprised of what is actively happening at the border and their work to assist the detainees.

The dedication of our statements took place in November. The affirmations of occupying borrowed Native Land, that ALL are welcome here, who we are in our intentions and efforts to create a just world peacefully and our recognition of those who have and continue to serve in the Military have been placed on the wall at the top of the stairs in the rear of the Sanctuary.

Shrine of Remembrance did not choose to buy the property and therefore remains our tenant for at least another five years because we are not selling or moving. Due to the decision to remain at this location buildings and grounds maintenance increased. A number of projects were undertaken this year: The backflow system for the sprinkler system at South Hall was completed. French drains were installed. Our big cottonwood shade tree overhanging the parking lot was removed due to its frailty on windy days and the potential for injury and or damage to persons or personal property. Front doors were sanded and refinished. The parking lot was repaved by Covenantal Partners and a Vision Arts group was formed as part of Vision to focus on the aesthetics of the church. This is why our T-shirts match our tablecloths. The lower garden was recreated as the Bob Howard Memorial Garden. The layout, plants and the engraved bricks being used to partially pave it, have made this not just a desired space but one that can easily be seen as desirable.

We continued our various methods of support to One Nation, Los Pobres, Inside Out, Family Promise, and Our Church's Wider Mission. In cases where needs increased due to active social injustices, we actually increased our support, as in the case of Los Pobres. This year was particularly challenging for migrant families and those working with them and for their rights.

I invite all to reflect on what can happen when we join together in the spirit of Faith, possibilities, miracles and Love.....if you are not sure of that I leave you lastly with the reminder of our Stewardship Team and how they led us to be great resources at bringing Vista Grande United Church of Christ forward in great preparation for 2020.

MEMBER AT LARGE

Carol Burbank

As new to the executive council, I acted as the liaison between Shrine of Remembrance, our tenant in South Hall, and the church covenantal partners. This year required our tenant to exercise the purchase option on the lease, or forfeit that opportunity as spelled out in the lease. Correspondence was sent requesting their intent on the purchase. We received a delayed response from our tenant indicating that the City inspectors were requiring a back flow valve installation, as the one in place did not meet code. David Bristow and I met with Demetri Rombocos and Olson Plumbing to obtain an estimate. Olson Plumbing is the current provider of church plumbing needs for our back-flow valves. They installed the required and obtained certification from City utilities that the building was now in compliance with the Code. No written response from the tenant was received regarding their intent to exercise the purchase option. As July 1, 2019 came and passed, we received a letter regarding their request to not increase the rent as outlined in the lease. A response was sent stating that we would be holding to the rent as outlined in the lease signed by both. We subsequently received the rent shortage for July and have been receiving the increased rent monthly. The purchase option expired.

One problem they have brought to our attention previously was water in the men's bathroom in the lower level. This was inspected when we also met regarding the back flow valve. At this time the wall was covered and no obvious sign of water was evident in the utility room. The facilities team discussed possible corrections to this problem, ranging from installing a French drain to a less invasive approach. It was decided to install a channel drain on the sidewalk by the planters as it appears rain, melting snow, and water was running toward the front door. We also discussed burying the drain tube from the downspouts and ending it in a dry sump. During the summer, a contractor was hired and the channel drain was installed. Caulking was put around the east corner of the front door area to prevent water seeping down to the building. The facilities team also dug a channel and dry sump to bury the drain tube and have it drain in the sump underground. This does give a better appearance to the front area. At this time no additional letters have been received regarding the water, but without confirmation, we are not sure if the problem has been resolved.

A survey was given to those attending the 2019 Annual Meeting in January to get ideas and information regarding potential fund raising interests. The information has been collated, but no fund raising has commenced. We encourage ideas, those interested in chairing a project, and participation by all.

MEMBER AT LARGE

Jeannie Harrington

The members at-large express gratitude for the vibrant ministry here at Vista Grande UCC. Covenantal Partners were willing to make suggestions to better our ministry and offer thanksgiving.

PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Submitted by Dave Bristow

The team of Dave Bristow, Carol Burbank, Jim Price, and Nancy Morlock-Hollins remained the Pastoral Relations Committee during 2019. Unfortunately, late in the year Jim resigned from the committee.

Ministers are called to embody and encourage the faith of the Church and its members. The relationship between a pastor and congregants should be tended deliberately, so that ministries of both pastor and congregation complement each other and further God's grace in the world.¹

The Pastoral Relations Committee exists in a congregation to advise, assist, and promote the growth of this vital relationship.

This committee serves in two principal ways:

- as an advisory group to the pastor and as support for the pastor's leadership by sharing ideas, dreams, hopes, expectations and concerns of the congregation, and
- as support for the pastor by interpreting roles, functions, and needs of the pastor to the congregation.

The committee works in a context of confidentiality, support, care, and honesty with the pastor, while promoting healthy communication in the congregation.

We met with Pastor Clare several times during the year.

In 2017 the PRC developed and conducted a "Vitality and Clergy Excellence Survey" and reported the results in the summer of that year. In consultation with Pastor Clare we decided to conduct the survey in 2020.

CHURCH CLERK'S REPORT

Deborah Tinsley

Executive Council met twelve times in 2019, with two additional work sessions and a "New Executive Council" retreat that was held in February.

Brief highlights of the minutes taken are as follows:

In January the newly elected Executive Council consisted of Brian Sojourner as Moderator, Kayan Cross as Assistant Moderator, Treasurer position vacant, Member at Large (MAL) Jeannie Harrington and one MAL position vacant, Clerk Deborah Tinsley, Financial Secretary John Tinsley.

¹ "A Sure Foundation" produced by Ministerial Excellence, Support & Authorization (MESA) Ministry Team 2018 United Church of Christ.

Valerie Karr was hired as the Nursery Attendant. Logistics of the future of the physical plant discussed.

In February the Executive Council had all positions filled with Dana Zimmerman as Treasurer and Carol Burbank as Member at Large. Each member was asked to share their vision for the church. The continuing issue of pledges needing notation of going to General Fund or to Missions discussed with plans to educate the congregation on why this is an issue. Quick Books was investigated for use by the church. It was established as policy that no action will be taken by either MAL on anonymous reports. Every member of Executive Council takes an auxiliary role as a liaison to a Ministry Team. Liaison to Real Estate and Facilities is Carol; Mission is Kayan and Jeannie; Vision is Deborah; Worship needs a liaison. Brian was approved to be presented to the Committee on Ministry of the Southeastern Association as a Member in Discernment. CBI background checks are to be completed for each member of the Council. Just Peace, formerly a part of Missions, is now its own entity. A policy was established that no posting on any social media of any pictures taken in church by anyone in attendance will be observed. The flags at the top of the stairs are to have the ONA statement and the Just Peace statement, along with the words "Vista Grande UCC honors our service members."

At the Executive Council Retreat on February 22, some topics were all possible scenarios that may take place in July when SOR could purchase the property, could renew their lease for five more years; the condition and maintenance of the facilities; fund raising; board function; finances.

In March, the minutes reflect that all CBI checks were completed. A letter on lease renewal was sent to SOR. A Media Team for Live Streaming was established. A possible True Identity Center was being developed with Inside Out. A new standing meeting time for executive Council was established as the second Monday of the month, 5:00 p.m.

In April it was reported that the Annual Taxation Report for Exempt Property for Religious purposes was signed and mailed with the fee. The copier was reported as not working properly and was beyond repair. The Rocky Mountain Conference granted an "In the Mud" grant to Vista Grande to be used for the Youth Documentary Academy mission. Vista Grande met its first quarter mission gifts to our four local missions as well as our 5 for 5 missions. Quick Books for MAC was purchased. SOR indicated they will be renting for five more years. A backflow valve in South Hall is required by the City. A request was made to the Vision Team to work on a Mission and a Vision statement.

In May Mallory Everhart gave a very appreciated review on her time as an intern with Vista Grande. There is a problem with communication on the deadlines for inclusions in our different media: For inclusion in the Newsletter, all items are to be given to Donna by midmonth; for the Eblast, deadline is Sunday for that week; to be included in the bulletin, all announcements must be to Donna by Tuesday. This is an issue of living into our Best Practices. Dana and David B. will be our delegates to Conference Annual Meeting in Grand Junction. A panel was held at VG in response to the latest mass shooting. Two work sessions will take place for Executive Council to go over Best Practices: May 20 and June 3. A June 10 vote at Executive Council will take place to adopt Best Practices.

In June Jan Morgan (Facilities Team) presented a proposal for the Bob Howard Memorial Garden. VG tee shirts with UCC logo will be made available for purchase. There will be a Congregational Meeting following worship on 28 July to present updated information on South Hall and SOR's intentions. Dana volunteered to head up a stewardship campaign to begin in August. A call to Deborah to the position of Associate Pastor was adopted. A motion to ratify the email vote for Deborah to establish an Arts Group was approved. There will be a booth staffed by VG at the Pride Parade to promote the True Identity Center.

In July there will be further expenditures for the Garden Project; this expenditure was approved. Kayan took over as Acting Moderator as Brian had to step aside: Brian will take on Assistant Moderator. Carol developed a form to involve the congregation in Fundraising. The cost of a channel drain in the sidewalk at South Hall to mitigate seepage into the basement was discussed. The decision was that River Concrete will be doing the work. Jeannie has stocked a limited food pantry in the kitchen for assisting immediate crisis needs of anyone stopping by the church. The Annual Picnic will be 25 August. SOR passed the deadline for purchasing the property. Best Practices were adopted as reviewed and as noted corrections made.

August began with Boy Scout representatives presenting information to the Council on VG becoming the chartering organization for a troop. Just Peace reported that the church survey shows Mental Health as the top issue of concern, with Immigration second. Deferred maintenance on the facilities addressed. The old cottonwood tree is a liability issue and must be address; refinishing the front doors became the second consideration, and the completion of the Memorial Garden the third. These will be funded; other issues such as the leaking windows to be deferred. Nine new Covenantal Partners will be recognized on 15 September. There is one person interested in Confirmation. October 27th was chosen for Deborah's installation. Approval for the sale of Memorial Bricks for the Garden approved.

In September the previously referred to True Identity Center is now the Gender Diverse Health Care Clinic, and a space on Tejon Street may be the location. A Realtor approached VG on increasing the easement to the property south of South Hall. Our brief relationship with the Boy Scouts has ended as they are disbanding due to lack of numbers. Southeastern Association meeting will be in Buena Vista on October 19th. A vision statement was presented but the Council felt it was too narrow. A statement of the church being on Native Lands will be included on the honor wall. Communication issues in the church need attention; Donna is the person to inform as well as check with. Each group needs to be more intentional about clear communications between groups. Church aesthetics were addressed.

In October Los Pobres received undesignated mission money from Dec 2018. The position of Assistant Moderator is open for a two-year term. Dana and John worked on the design and construction of a new name tag holder. Moderator informed the Realtor that VG is not able to sell him any part of his request to acquire part of the church property for an easement increase to his proposed development. It was decided a small Trans flag will be put into the marquee. YDA will be back at VG in January. There is a possibility that a Racial Justice Institute will be established at La Foret.

In November a motion that VG will not sign a Realtor requested Notice of Consent to a Right of Way Easement was approved. Jan presented a Facilities list of required maintenance and

“dream” projects; the total was about \$35,000. There was a request that the last person out of the church check ALL lights in the building, ALL faucets for leaks. Finding Home is now Sunday evenings at 6:30 p.m. Purchase of a large screen TV to better facilitate YDA will be covered by the grant. A security person will be present Sundays at VG; this has not been budgeted, so a request to the congregation to increase their pledges to cover this expense will be made.

The minutes for **December** have not been approved at this writing. Highlights were discussion of a raise and bonus for Pastor Clare; the need to fill the Assistant Moderator and Clerk positions at Annual Meeting in January; a copy of security procedures emailed to the Executive Council which will be the topic of discussion in the new year; the decision that the logo for name tags will be the UCC “comma.”

This is a very truncated report on the work of the Executive Council and the many volunteers that are part of Ministry Teams. This is the employment of so many hands and hearts that keep the lights on, the grass mowed, the church clean, the choir singing, the ‘extravagant welcome’ of food and friendship to all who come to be together on Sundays, the book studies and so, so much more. It behooves each of us to consider what gifts or graces we have been given that might be used for the betterment of not only the physical church, but to the church as community, the church as outreach, the church as the safe place for all to come together on their spiritual journey. For more information and more detail on what has been accomplished in the last year, please read the Executive Council minutes, a copy of which is posted each month on the bulletin board in Fellowship Hall. For previous minutes, please contact the Church Clerk or the Administrative Assistant.

ADMIN REPORT

Submitted by Donna Bristow

New Personnel:

Valerie Karr has served a year as our nursery attendant. The children are excited to spend the worship hour with her.

Timotheus Cross has served as our security attendant for the past several months. He will be brought on staff in January.

Rev. Deborah Tinsley was installed as our Minister of Vision and Support.

Contracts and W-4s for our pastor, music director, administrative assistant, and nursery attendant are kept current. Meeting minutes, policies, and other pertinent documents are kept on file.

In working toward best practices in finances and safety measures, we performed background checks on our financial folks and nursery care providers through Praesidium, Inc, contracted through our UCC Insurance Board and viewed online “safe church” training modules through Armatus.

Lease Agreement: The Shrine of Remembrance (SOR) continues to lease South Hall.

Our property insurance is maintained through the United Church of Christ Insurance Board.

VISION MINISTRY TEAM

Submitted by Rev. Deborah Tinsley

If there is a slogan for the work the Vision Team has been doing in 2019, it may very well be “Fits and Starts”. It turns out that crafting a Vision Statement for the church is much like cooking a souffle, without a recipe.... and at altitude: Yes, if you preserve you may well put a lovely meal on the table, but it is going to take a number of iterations to accomplish.

Since April of 2019 when the Executive Council asked the Vision Team to come up with a new Vision Statement for VG, three different statements were presented over the next months. While the work that went into these statements was appreciated, it was felt they just did not encompass the totality of a Vision for the church. With supportive critique and direction from the Ex Council, the Vision Team will be meeting again in 2020 to fulfill its primary goal of an encompassing and stimulating Vision not only for this community of faith, but one that the greater community can feel inspired to join in the work of moving the world in the direction of justice and peace for all God’s creation.

For those interested in being part of the work but are unable to commit to meeting with the Team, you are invited to try your hand. It might be helpful to have the direction shared by the Executive Council to the Vision Team. That direction is as follows:

What is it that VG strives to achieve? Vision is about purpose and relevancy, the ‘why’ of why we are here, the purpose of us being here, what we are working toward, what we represent. Our identity as an inclusive community is part of the vision but identifying what our purpose is in the world is key. How do we see ourselves in the world? Peace and Justice are key, but love is the bigger point. The vision statement needs to be grounded in theology and scripture. It will have action, goals. Using words that spark emotion, the vision statement should point to the day that we are marching toward, the day that the teachings of Jesus will come to life. The statement should lift up the intimacy with the Divine. It may help to view the vision statement as a bridge of how we ‘go there’ with statements that evoke ‘this is where I want to get to.’

Give it a go! If you wish to email to me, as the liaison person to the Vision Team, please do so at revdeborah2@gmail.com. You may also simply pin your offering to the Vision Board in Fellowship Hall. This statement will be pointing our way for the next five years at least, and the more of us involved in that effort the clearer and more inclusive the statement will be. If you can meet with the Vision Team, those meetings will take place at VG on one Sunday a month following worship. All persons interested in the work are invited to attend as they are able.

To those who clean, to those who sing, to those who bring food to gather and feed us, and those who show up in support, to those who step out in faith, and those who challenge our hide bound perceptions... to all who make up this community of faith, I offer my deep appreciation for all the gifts that each bring to encourage and enhance the work of VG. Peace, grace and the blessings of the Divine be with you.

LOVE GROUNDED IN FAITH AND HOPE

WORSHIP TEAM MINISTRY

Submitted by Crystal Karr

2019 was a fun and awe filled year at VGUCC. We hope you have enjoyed and been inspired by worship in 2019 and into 2020. We are blessed with a prophetic pastor who challenges us with her sermons to fully live out our faith. We are also blessed with a phenomenal choir and music director that opens our hearts with song. Thank you Rev. Twomey, David Hudson, and each choir member!

Thanks in LARGE part to Mallory, we now have a list of best practices for the Worship Team so that if you are new it's an easier role to step into! Thank you, Mallory!

The Worship Team experienced some changes in membership in 2019 as people found new ways to serve at VGUCC. We'd like to thank Judy, Jackie, Carol P., Mallory, and Deborah for all that they have contributed to the team for part of 2019 and long before. Currently, the team consists of Rev. Clare Twomey, Carolyn, Lori, Jane, and Crystal. We are small but mighty, as the saying goes! We would love to welcome new members! If you're interested please contact Crystal at 719-247-0320 or ckarr97@gmail.com. The Worship Team meets at VGUCC on the 2nd Monday of each month at 4 pm.

We look forward to an exciting year and would love for you to share your ideas to help us grow!

Some special worship events were:

Jazz Sunday, Outdoor Worship and Picnic, Blessing of the Animals, Children's Sabbath
Recognition of Retired Clergy Ministry, Las Posadas

VGCC Choral Music

Submitted by David Hudson, Music Director

While trying not to sound like a broken record (or a scratched CD for the non-baby boomers), I have to say 2019 was another banner year for the VGCC music program. We introduced a variety of new song selections throughout the year with many wonderful live performances, hosted our third annual Jazz Sunday, and finished off the year with a phenomenal Christmas Eve show featuring a treasure-trove of talented in-house artists. I also wish to express a note of thanks to John Tinsley for helping me overhaul our Roland keyboard and to Ross Sickbert of Rosstronics for sharing his technical insights.

One of the things I love most about serving as VGCC Music Director is the variety of music that passes my way on a regular basis. Ideas come from every direction; a suggestion from someone during fellowship, a particular choice from an upcoming soloist, hearing some random song on the internet, something Clare learned at a UCC conference, or a perfectly appropriate tune from a new hit movie...there's always something fun and different to learn! Here's just some of the song titles that were performed at VGCC for the first time in 2019 (and who sang): *This is Me* (choir), *Ave Maria & I Believe* (choir), *My Sweet Lord* (David H), *Bless the Broken Road* (Carol B), *A Million Dreams* (Evelyn), *You Raise Me Up* (Phil), *Time of Our Lives* (Audrey), *You Say* (Jan), *Follow Me* (Nancy), *Greed* (Nancy & Deborah), *The Difference* (Amanda), *I Can Only Imagine* (David H), *Could I Have This Dance* (Carol B), *Who Am I* (Phil), *Talk to the Animals* (choir), *The Impossible Dream* (David N), *Let Justice Roll Like a River* (choir), and *I Will Sing of Your Love, Love, Love* (congregation). Looking back on all of this, I can't wait for all the new tunes we'll tackle in 2020!

The third-annual Jazz Sunday was held March 3rd, which also happened to be a regular communion day...our first Jazz communion! It was our largest Dixie band yet with nine musicians: trumpet, saxophone, trombone, clarinet, banjo, guitar, piano, bass and drums. A ton of gratitude to the returning artists along with a couple of new faces (Boyd Sweeney & Rose Dunphey) and guest vocalist (Merri McGarry). Once again, a rousing rendition of *When The Saints Go Marching* got everyone into the Dixieland spirit and the entire 10-song program was a smashing success! 2020 Jazz Sunday is just around the corner and still in the early planning stage so I definitely have my work cut out!

This was my fourth Christmas Eve service since becoming music director and I'd have to say it was the best ever. VGCC choir depends on those who volunteer their time and energy. We're a smaller church and life happens so it's not always certain who'll be available each week. That said, what made Christmas Eve most memorable for me was having a full 10-voice choir backed by the support of four multi-talented musicians! Everyone jumped in to help do their part and the end result was both emotionally and spiritually uplifting. Our a capella rendition of *Carol of the Bells* was a joy to sing; Amanda's composition, *The Manger is Stranger*, was well received; and Erin's flute solo of *Mary Did You Know* was out of this world...great job everyone! I'd also like to give a shout out to Matt's fantastic performance of *O Holy Night* on the Sunday service prior to Christmas Eve!

FAITH FORMATION

Vision for Faith Formation

VGCC will provide stimulating, participatory educational experiences for all ages – children, youth and adults. Shared discoveries may include bible studies, study of church history, literature and other media that nurture our spiritual growth. While our educational experiences may be held at different venues we will seek to connect our learning to our daily lives.

Adult Faith Formation - Beyond Sunday Morning

Vista Grande hosted two Youth Voices Community Conversations led by the Youth Documentary Academy (YDA); a panel discussion “If not us, who?” in response to recent mass shootings; a rapid response team training for ICE raids; a sanctuary coalition training; and a panel on Colorado immigrant rights about deferred action for childhood arrivals. Vista Grande also participated in several protests and rallies.

Adult Education: a.k.a. Percolate (Sunday Morning @ 8:30)

Submitted by Nancy Morlock-Hollins

This year, we continued to pour over Rev. Kelly Brown Douglas’ book: Stand Your Ground- Black Bodies and the Justice of God. She has us use a new lens through which to see history and to recognize our own complicity in the oppression of people of color. Each week’s discussions tackled new questions and challenged our old ways of seeing things. The book is transformative! She helps us learn how to eradicate the violence of white exceptionalism. I am sure we shall often refer to this book.

Each year before the James White Lectureship Series, we read something by the guest speaker. This year’s speaker was Miguel de la Torre and we read Burying White Privilege: Resurrecting a Badass Christianity. In the book he makes the case that white evangelical Christians are choosing profits over prophets and calls Christians nationalists to repentance. De la Torre talks of the Christ as the biblical partner of those on the margins.

As a rule, we start around 8:30 on Sunday morning. We read and briefly discuss the day’s scripture; we read a UCC daily devotional and then start the book. All are welcome, even if you aren’t caught up on the reading. The coffee’s perkin’ and there’s always room around the table.

Kids' Faith Formation
Submitted by Donna Bristow

During 2019, we continued MultiGen worship where the children remain in the worship setting along with the adults. Children are invited to sit with their family or sit together at tables positioned in the worship space. There is usually an activity on the table which helps the children to center while sitting with their friends. The children are always encouraged to participate in interactive sermons, too.

This year, we ran into conflicts with other activities so were unable to successfully plan Faith Formation Saturdays.

Aug. 25 – During the Outdoor Worship and Picnic, the children were included in the worship experience by participating in intergenerational activities throughout the worship time.

Oct. 20 – Sara Weatherman planned a Children's Sabbath Sunday. Several children participated as worship assistants and were engaged in the many facets of the worship service.

Dec 15 - *Las Posadas*

"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."

This tied in perfectly with the sanctuary coalition as we heard stories of families seeking asylum to begin a better life in a new country. Long ago, Mary and Joseph were looking for a new home when Jesus was born and they were welcomed in.

A special thank you to all the moms and dads and other congregational members who sat with the children on Sunday mornings to provide a welcoming smile.

ACCEPTANCE WHICH INCLUDES RESPECT AND WELCOMING

COVENANTAL PARTNERS/MEMBERS

Vista Grande UCC began the year with 78 recorded covenantal partners/members and affiliates. Eleven new persons were received as covenantal partners. Six were removed by request, nine were moved to inactive status, and we had one covenantal partner death. Vista Grande ended the year with 73 covenantal partners. Average worship attendance for 2019 was 53. Let's see if we can boost that number up this year.

In Memoriam

Mary Ellen Kohlhagen (August 25, 1930 - March 18, 2019)

A graveside service was held at Evergreen Cemetery in Colorado Springs on March 29, 2019 with the Rev. Steve Baxter officiating.

We all met Mary Ellen at Vista Grande Community Church UCC. During her 41 years connected with Vista Grande as a member and then associate member, she served as Assistant Moderator, Moderator, Member-at-Large, Membership Chairperson, Historian, and Fellowship Chairperson. She shared her time, talents, and treasure to help Vista Grande maintain a vital ministry.

Mary Ellen was an avid tennis player so she and her husband Lynn shared their passion for a healthy lifestyle with Colorado Springs by building the Lynmar Tennis Club.

The first memorial garden was in memory of one of her sons, Tom, who died of cancer as a young man. The large wooden cross in the sanctuary was also in memory of Tom.

Mary Ellen was a student of theology at Elmhurst College IL and married Lynn Kohlhagen of Frankfurt, Illinois in 1950. Her career path changed as she raised her five children.

She died while living at her retirement location of Pompano Beach FL.

Kristine Renae (Moss) Johnson (January 10, 1972 – February 28, 2019)

A family memorial service was held at Vista Grande UCC on March 30, 2019 with the Rev. Clare Twomey officiating.

The lovely daughter of Carol Burbank died suddenly in Montgomery TX. Kristine was a beloved daughter, sister, mother, and aunt. Her children were the love of her life. Keiran, Reagan, and Hannah miss her every day. She was remembered as the spark of light in the family.

An excerpt from *If Tomorrow Starts Without Me* by David Ramano which was read at the memorial service; "When I walked through heavens gates, I felt so much at home. God looked down and smiled at me from the great golden throne. God said, "This is eternity and all I've promised you, today your life on earth has passed but here life starts anew." A family memorial was held in Iowa in July. Our prayers of comfort are extended to her family.

FINDING HOME

Submitted by Mallory Everhart

As of January 18th, Finding Home will have been meeting consistently for an entire year. Over that time, we have shared meals, deep conversation, meditation practice, mutual support, and have discovered in large and small ways the mystery of God's movement in our lives. The group has remained relatively small, averaging anywhere from 3 to 6 attendees per week, and the intimate setting has made space for a number of powerful experiences, including candid discussions about mental health, addiction, recovery, racism, poverty, suicide, toxic and harmful theology, shame, trauma, vocation and calling, hope, belonging, and more.

Aside from meeting once a week, Finding Home has also co-hosted several events in the VGCC fellowship hall, including: a queer clothing swap, several open mic events, and a Longest Night/Blue Christmas. In the immediate future, we are planning to host an event supporting Spreading Smiles and Sandwiches, a spirituality of tattoos event, a recovery open mic, and another clothing swap. The work we are doing is being noticed in the community and has resulted in two recognitions by area organizations, including Poetry 719's Community Member Friday and a recent feature in the Colorado Springs Independent's column Queer and There.

From the start, the guiding principle of Finding Home has been accessibility. The food, the space, the spiritual practice, and more have all been carefully selected to be as accessible as possible. Originally, Finding Home met on Friday nights, seeking to provide a space where people who needed a sober space could find community outside of bars. Through conversation with the larger community, we have learned that meeting on Fridays makes Finding Home less accessible, as Fridays usually have many events competing for people's time. To honor this feedback, we have recently moved our weekly gathering to Sunday nights in an attempt to be as accessible as possible.

If you are interested in getting involved in Finding Home or need an intimate space where your unique story is heard, please feel free to contact Mallory at findinghomecos@gmail.com.

Open and Affirming (ONA)

Opening and Affirming (ONA) Statement

(Approved by Vista Grande Community Church Steering Committee – September 15, 2009)

(Adopted by the congregation – Oct. 25, 2009)

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 socioeconomic 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. "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here."

Just Peace

Submitted by Kayan Cross

In January 2019, Vista Grande Covenantal Partners Nancy Morlock-Hollins, Kayan Cross, and Pastor Clare began meeting and working in conjunction with Inside Out, UCCS, and some local pediatricians to establish specific health care services to transgender youth and young adults in a safe space. When Nancy Morlock- Hollins discovered that such services were available in Denver and many young Trans people in Colorado Springs needing them weren't able to access them she decided to take action.

Within a couple months we were meeting with Dr. Daniel Reirden, of the TRUE (Trust Respect Understand Emerge) Center in Denver located inside of Children's Hospital. They are set up to support and care for every aspect of the gender-diverse experience that individuals and their families are going through. They have experts in adolescent medicine, endocrinology, nursing, psychology, and social work.

At the May 9th meeting, the director of the TRUE Center, met with us at UCCS and shared intent to provide some staff to Colorado Springs to expand their services! This is very exciting. There are other details to work out before these services begin. There is some funding available through Children's Hospital Colorado, There is space available at UCCS. The need for safety and easy access will be factored in as well. Currently Children's Hospital is considering allocation on Tejon. The communication with the TRUE center diminished in the last few months of 2019 due to Dr. Reirden not being a part of Children's Hospital location planning team, his development of these services is mainly in the area of hiring service providers and services. We are currently seeking ways to participate in the location and service discussion with Children's Hospital.

Just Peace met in March 2019. It was decided that since the Covenantal Partners voted to be a Just Peace Church that they should participate in how we live up to this designation. With that in mind our first challenge was to figure out how to get that input considering a limited number of partners were able to attend that initial meeting. In May, we created and distributed a questionnaire to all active and interested partners. Return and completion was scheduled for Sunday, June 9. The results of the survey indicated that Housing and Mental Health are the top concerns of the congregation at this time.

As a result of this, the Just Peace Team has dedicated itself to begin participation in the meetings of the Coalition of Homeless Advocates and Providers (CHAP). This will provide us with much needed awareness of activities, resources, legislation, and needs in our community.

In regard to Mental Health, the decision was made to get in touch with the local National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) chapter and Rev. Amy the Wise Congregations for UCC facilitator. NAMI can help us navigate through our individual experiences and facilitate educational components for Vista Grande Covenantal Partners to participate in and possibly host.

In June, The Executive Council approved a design for church T-shirts. The Just Peace committee proposed this idea so we would be a visible and unified presence at rallies, marches, picnics, and other gatherings.

On July 14, Vista Grande marched in the Parade as part of a UCC contingent of churches that included, Black Forest Community Church, Broadmoor Community Church and First Congregational Church. This was the first time that four UCC Churches in Colorado Springs organized and collectively participated in Pridefest together!

We also partnered with the TRUE Center located in Denver; to sponsor a Pridefest booth informing the Colorado Springs community of the services provided by the Center. Over 20 VG folks participated at Pridefest this year.

Things slowed down for Just Peace during the fall. Our committee dwindled down to three active members. Each of us are extremely busy with several facets of VG and two of us are working full time. After a few months of struggling to proceed, we met and decided we will meet bi-monthly on the third Sunday after church. beginning February 16, 2020.

We will start 2020 with the intention of bringing continued awareness of current justice issues to the congregation by offering information sessions in-house at the church.

VGUCC Just Peace Statement

(Accepted August 5, 2018)

We, the Covenantal Partners of Vista Grande Community Church United Church of Christ, declare ourselves a Just Peace Church. As a congregation and as individuals, we prayerfully strive to live out Jesus' non-violent words and actions in treating all people and the environment with dignity and respect. With humility, we seek to establish relationships with others through what maybe uncomfortable conversations. While calling attention to imbalances of power and privilege, we will promote peacemaking and work to resist and dismantle religious, political, economic and social systems of oppression. We acknowledge that peace and justice work is a dynamic process, and we will need to grow continually in our empathy in order to have a positive impact in our homes, neighborhoods, communities, nation and world.

CARING RELATIONSHIPS – FAMILY, CHILDREN, COMMUNITY, FRIENDSHIP

MISSION MINISTRY

Submitted by Nancy Morlock-Hollins, Jeannie Harrington, and the Mission Coordinators

NEW 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 Three Great Loves: Love of Neighbor, Love of Children, and Love of Creation.

Our local missions for 2019 were Family Promise, Inside-Out Youth Services, Los Pobres and One Nation Walking Together. All these missions are relational, in other words several of our covenantal partners have hands-on involvement with each mission. Based, proportionally on previous giving, we also allot a certain amount of our mission budget to each of these missions and we commit to pay each one quarterly. We also support the UCC's 5 for 5. Out of our mission budget, again based on previous giving, we financially support Neighbors in Need, One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen the Church and The Christmas Fund. The 5th UCC 5 for 5 mission, Our Churches' Wider Mission, is supported by our general budget.

In addition to the above missions, we have been able to help out several DACA young people in paying their annual renewal fee. We have also supported Casa de Paz in their mission to help former detainees, from the Aurora detention center, transition to living with friends or family. Throughout the year we ask the congregation to pick up children's books and donate them to LOGO (Literacy on the Go). We then donate them to Dr. Barbara Swaby whose goal is to facilitate every child in Colorado Springs having their own library. During Advent, covenantal partners bought "special" books to add to the collection. Also during Advent, we collected socks for Sole 4 Soul. We continue to buy fair trade coffee from the border. And this year we have created an emergency food pantry.

All our meetings are open. And we generally meet after church on the last Sunday of the month. Please join us. If you would like to submit an item for the agenda, please see Jeannie or Nancy.

Inside-Out Youth Services

Submitted by Nancy & Bob Hollins

2019 has been a banner year for Inside-Out Youth Services. Under Jessie Pocock's leadership, Inside-Out has been able to increase their staff to include an outreach director who is a liaison to our local schools. In October, their Ally-Up Breakfast was the most successful ever and Vista Grande filled two tables. Bob & Nancy continued to volunteer on Wednesdays at the Qmmunity dinner. Also in the works is the establishment of a TRUE Center for gender Diversity here in the Springs.

One Nation Walking Together

Submitted by Judy Druelinger

One Nation is one of the missions that Vista Grande Community Church –UCC supports. It is a local non-profit that serves the Native American population locally as well as reservation communities in 8 western states. Vista Grande has helped by beginning a discussion about the treatment of Native People both in the past as well as currently. Our church proudly displays a statement about how our own location impacted the lives of those who came before us. In support of ONWT, we have contributed a quarterly gift from the mission fund, collected school supplies and filled Elder boxes. One Nation also sponsors a local Pow Wow that is well attended by many people. They are located at 3150 N. Nevada Ave., Colorado Springs, CO 80907. Their phone number is 719-329-0251.

Los Pobres

Submitted by Faye Gallegos

Another year and another blank mind! How do I say the same thing over again but in a different way? Los Pobres again saw a few of our congregation visiting, listening, taking donated items and getting acquainted with the miracle that is Sister Nancy Crafton and some of the amazingly dedicated volunteers who keep Los Pobres (Center for the Poor) a caring and committed agency of the immigrant community in and near Pueblo.

Our Lenten emphasis 2019 was the "Frivolous Funds" collected and netted \$500. Enough to help one DACA young woman apply for another year of possibilities.

As always, we ask for flour, oil and diapers to be donated along with clothing, household goods, etc. We have an average of 90 or so new babies born each year into the community of approximately 300 family units.

Each time you donate I ask that you PLEASE make a very brief note of items and include with your donations. Donation receipts are always available by request.

So much gratitude to the giving and caring Vista Grande families who give gifts, offer prayers of support to the whole community of Los Pobres at Avondale. Sister Nancy expresses tremendous 'Thank you' for each and every one.

Family Promise

Submitted by Jeannie Harrington and Donna Bristow

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. Parents work with a case manager to acquire employment and affordable housing, regain independence and self-sufficiency. Vista Grande is a support network. We provide a meal on the weeks that Central United Methodist hosts the families.

Family Promise continues to expand offering more models of stable affordable housing which empowers families to thrive.

This year, we served meals three times on our scheduled days at Central United Methodist Church. We are always open to assist on an emergency basis. However, all the churches who host were able to keep up with their schedule without needing extra assistance.

We sponsored a table for 10 at the 22nd Annual Hope, Hearts, & Home Benefit Luncheon.

Fundraising Walk – “Every Child Deserves a Home”. Several of us raised money for this fundraiser and several more walked to bring awareness to this cause.

Christmas Wish List – We volunteered to provide Christmas presents for a mom and two children, VG stepped up and filled the need in a big way. Our family was in the Non-traditional Rotational Model Family Shelter living a week at a time in host churches while the parent/s are either looking for employment or saving money to get started in a settled situation.

Thank you to everyone who supported Family Promise by preparing meals, serving meals, walking to bring awareness, and buying Christmas gifts. Thank you for opening your hearts to the mission of ending Family Homelessness.

The UCC 5 for 5 Missions

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) – supports international programs of health, education and agricultural development, relief, and refugee assistance.

Strengthen the Church - This offering grows the UCC’s future by funding *The Stillspeaking Ministry*, new and renewing churches, youth and young adult ministries, and lay and pastoral leadership formation.

Neighbor in Need (NIN) - This offering supports the UCC’s ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States.

The Christmas Fund - Proceeds are used to provide gifts to clergy and lay employees in all stages of their lives and ministries to and through the UCC.

Our Churches Wider Mission (OCWM) - This was paid through our General Budget. Unlike mission-directed giving, OCWM Basic Support allows the Conference to retain a staff that provides necessary guidance and resources to support the health and vitality of our churches. 78% remains in the RMC and 22% supports the National Office.

Funding missions:

Many folks pledged to our missions in 2019 and others gave to special appeals.

Our group mission results:

Financial Giving Directly to Mission Programs - \$18,850

(This number is higher than the treasurer’s report on page 31 as it includes cash donations that were given directly to the mission recipient.)

In Kind Giving to Mission Programs - \$7,726

Mileage traveled (1227 miles) to support Missions calculated - \$328

Volunteer Hours (694.5 hours) spent to support Mission Activity (@ \$24/hr) - \$16,668

Total for Mission Giving: \$43,572

COMMUNICATION AND ADVERTISING

Submitted by Donna Bristow

Our outdoor sign and Facebook have been our most frequent ways to advertise. Thanks to Nancy Morlock-Hollins and Erin Elkaim for keeping these updated. Check out the bulletin board on the easel in Fellowship Hall. It continually has a new flyer. Also, check out the large calendar in the entry way for upcoming meetings and activities.

Our bi-monthly newsletter, *Vista Views*, was available through our website and paper copy. Communication to the congregation was also made through our weekly e-blast and the printed announcement sheet in the weekly bulletin. Pastor Clare continued a weekly Pastor's Blurb which is also on our website; <http://vgcc.org/pastors-prose/>

Please let us know if you have any ideas to expose us in the community!! Our website is www.vgcc.org and Vista Grande is also on Facebook! Our e-mail address has changed to admin@vgcc.org

FELLOWSHIP REPORT

Submitted by Carolyn Gunning

We started out the year with 7 of us meeting on Jan. 19 at 8:30 a.m. We had a lovely brunch at the First Watch on North Academy (formerly The Egg and I). February was our annual Friendship Dinner held again in the private "party room" at the Mi Mexico Restaurant on Academy at Austin Bluffs. This proved to be a favorite with the congregation as 24 people attended.

Lunch at Jose Muldoon's on Powers on Saturday March 23 at 11:30 had to be cancelled and we didn't meet again until The Women's Retreat on September 7 at 9:00 a.m. This was a program on the Environment, arranged by Judy Druelinger, and was held at the best possible spot to discuss sacred environment, La Foret, and facilitated by Reverend Deborah Tinsley.

In December we met for our Annual Christmas Brunch/Cookie Exchange. On Saturday December 14, 12 of us gathered at Carolyn's home and began the event with a group activity (Guess the name of the Christmas song!) and the following prayer: Dear Lord, as we gather together in this season of love, looking forward to the day that symbolizes the re-birth of hope, we pray that this special community of women will continue to be the embodiment of that love and hope in your world. Amen

MEN'S BREAKFAST

The men routinely gathered for breakfast at a local restaurant on the second Wednesday of the month.

ALL CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

On February 15, we gathered at Mi Mexico on North Academy for our annual Friendship Dinner.

Sunday March 3, the youth held a Pancake Brunch fundraiser to raise money for camp scholarships. This was held on Jazz Sunday.

On August 25, we held our Annual Picnic at Fox Run Regional Park.

November 24, we held our Annual Thanksgiving Dinner, and

On December 15, we gathered for our Mexican Feast in celebration of Las Posadas.

Sunday morning fellowship is well attended following the worship service.

FACILITIES MINISTRY

Submitted by Jan Morgan

Members: Jan Morgan, Carol and Richard Burbank, John Tinsley, Phil Puterbaugh, Jerry and Jackie Moore, David Bristow

We called 2018 "The Year of the Parking Lot" slop-a-thon!

This year 2019 was "The Year of the Bob Howard Garden".

Our biggest project to date, the Garden was quite an undertaking. Beginning in early May and including other ongoing projects such as snow storm clean up, this project wrapped up in early October. Total volunteer hours were 365 including task force and congregational help. This translates to \$8000.00 in value.

Ongoing weed control, mowing, fertilizing and tree trimming occurred. The huge cottonwood tree between the parking lots was deemed dangerous to persons and property and was removed.

Garden work included removal of the tree and its roots. Electrical was run to give an exterior outlet by the pergola. Removing all old pavers, weeds and edging was finished. A French drain was installed along the cement patio. The whole garden was tilled, graded and leveled. Fabric, new edging and mulch was laid down. Plants were donated. A pergola was assembled and installed with pavers cut and placed in masonry sand then compacted in place.

Other projects were the refinishing of the lower exterior doors by Carol and Richard Burbank. We also had the front exterior doors sanded, stained, and sealed. The outside parking lights were painted and a downspout trench was installed.

We accomplished a lot this past year and we have more on our plate for 2020. The task force has met to develop a list of projects. This property needs constant monitoring and updating to show our commitment to stewardship!

Fund Raising Reminder the pergola area has space for memorial bricks to be purchased and installed. Contact Pastor Clare or John Tinsley.

Please keep your eyes peeled for bulletin and newsletter announcements regarding outdoor work days this spring and summer! Thanks for all your help in 2019!

IN KIND GIVING

We are very grateful to folks who gave “in kind” items and volunteer hours to the many ministries at Vista Grande; program, property, worship, faith formation, and office. These were estimated at \$2,300 in items and 567 hours which translates to \$55,200. We could accomplish a lot more because of these gifts.

Dedication of Memorial Garden Held Sunday October 6, 2019

Shared by Pastor Clare

“Beloved, we gather in this sacred space made so by holy work done by those here who labored with deep love to create this memorial garden. We gather to remember with love and affection the man and family who made this possible, your faithful servant Bob Howard. Bob dedicated his life to doing your will and seeking to be your presence in the world. We gather in gratitude that we have been graced to know this wonderful man withier directly or by the legacy he has left this place. His humor, his wisdom, the depth and breadth of his knowledge, and his joy in seeking that understanding with his colleagues and friends. We are grateful to have this place dedicated to his memory and all he shared with this community.

Help to be seekers as Bob was; seeking to know your ways, your love and your mission so that we may be the manifestation of Bob’s memory and resurrection. Help us to use this space to recognize his never-ending presence in our lives and in the life of Vista Grande. May we strive to achieve an equivalent legacy for all these with whom we are in contact.

With gratitude, we dedicate this space, the Bob Howard Memorial Garden in his memory. The memory of his beloved wife, Evelyn, and in gratitude for their son Jeremy who with his parents gifted us the resources to make this space come to life. In your name we pray O Beloved. Amen.”

THE WIDER CHURCH

Submitted by Donna Bristow

Vista Grande continued to be well represented at Wider Church activities during 2019.

On February 7-9, 2019, ten folks from Vista Grande attended Congregations Alive 4 at First Plymouth UCC in Englewood, CO;

On June 6-8, seven folks attended the Rocky Mountain Conference Annual Celebration, *Embracing the Spirit of Joy and Light*, held in Grand Junction, CO. Dave Bristow, Donna Bristow, and Dana Zimmerman shared the voting delegation responsibilities;

Later in June, Pastor Clare was a delegate to the UCC Synod in Milwaukee and Kayan Cross attended as a visitor; and

On October 19, eight folks from Vista Grande attended the Southeastern Association Annual Meeting. Our voting delegates were Kayan Cross, Crystal Karr, and Sara Weatherman.

There were several clergy installations and one ordination which we also attended. Feb. 24, Logan Bennett was ordained; Sept 8, Logan was installed at La Foret as Director of Transformational Programming; Sept. 22, Mary Williams was licensed to serve FCC in Pueblo; and Oct. 27, Deborah Tinsley was installed as Minister of Vision and Pastoral Support at Vista Grande.

2019 Participants on Association and Conference Teams:

Pastor Clare serves on the Committee on Ministry and is the Southeastern Association (SEA) Moderator. Clare was also the SEA delegate to General Synod 32 held June 21-25, 2019 in Milwaukee, WI. (Read the Pastor’s report for all the other ways our pastor is engaged with the wider church mission!)

Nancy Morlock-Hollins serves on the Committee on Ministry. Donna Bristow volunteered to take on the file keeping for the SEA until the RMC is ready to manage all files in Denver.

Donna Bristow served on the Planning Team for Congregations Alive 4 which was held in Englewood, CO on Feb. 7-9, 2019.

David and Donna Bristow serve on the Conference “So That” team working on Best Practices for the local churches in the conference.

The folks at Vista Grande act on our covenant with the wider church.

FINANCIAL SECRETARY

Submitted by John Tinsley

As can be seen from the table below, both the number of covenantal partners pledging in 2020 as well as the amount pledged is substantially above that of 2019. This is due in part to the Stewardship drive as well as the commitment and vision of our congregation for the future of our church.

Year	# Pledges	Pledged		Pledged Collected		Non Pledged Collected		
		Operating	Mission	Operating	Mission	Operating	Mission	Plate
2019	27 ¹	59,412	14,134	60,987	14,424	13,209	475	2,736
2020	35 ²	80,260	18,359	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note: 1. Final tally at end of year
2. Tally at beginning of year

The numbers reflect pledges as of 01/01/2020.

TREASURER'S REPORT
Submitted by Dana Zimmerman

Coming off a very successful Stewardship Campaign Vista Grande United Church of Christ will be able to accomplish a number of our goals in 2020. Pledges were up 40% for the general fund and 32% for Missions.

We are able to give Pastor Clare a well-deserved 5% raise, bring on a security person, and offer a stipend to our former intern, Mallory, who leads a very successful specialized ministry at VGUCC. We are able to fund that specialized ministry of Finding Home as well as expand our outreach through our Just Peace Ministry Team. We will also be able to accomplish some of the repairs and upgrades to the building. The proposed budget has a deficit of less than half what it has been in the past and we are confident that with some extra energy put into fundraising we can bring the budget in balance.

VGUCC continues to be a “5 for 5” church which means we support the 5 areas of mission within the UCC denomination. This year we have moved the contribution to Our Church’s Wider Mission from the general budget to the mission budget where it is more appropriately covered by mission pledges. We are excited about the increased mission pledging that will allow us to continue to support our four local missions which are near and dear to our heart.

As always, mission pledges and any other monies given to a restricted fund will only be used for those purposes. Restricted funds roll over to the following year.

Our bank account is healthy and allows us to operate without cash flow issues. We have a nest egg invested in United Church Funds which continues to grow.

Part 1 – General Fund

	2019 Budget	2019 Actual	2020 Budget (Proposed 1/26/20)
Income			
Plate	\$ 3,000.00	2,736.10	3,000.00
Pledged	\$ 60,960.00	60,987.00	83,360.00
Non-Pledged	\$ 4,000.00	13,208.99	6,000.00
South Hall Rent	\$ 30,000.00	32,400.00	34,800.00
Other	\$ 1,500.00	1,791.45	1,600.00
Fundraisers	\$ 5,000.00	2,610.00	2,500.00
Misc.	\$	2,408.00	3,500.00
TOTAL	\$ 104,460.00	116,141.54	134,760.00

	2019 Budget	2019 Actual	2020 Budget Proposed 1/26/20
Expenses			
Faith Formation	\$ 225.00	60.10	425.00
Banking/Finance	\$ 670.00	1,024.97	910.00
Covenantal Partners	\$ 1,317.00	1,335.60	1,250.00
Mission **	\$ 2,550.00	2,500.00	-
Office & General	\$ 2,270.00	2,878.49	2,819.00
Programs	\$ 150.00	1,599.53	3,150.00
Property	\$ 17,753.00	24,166.73	27,445.00
Worship	\$ 300.00	283.79	750.00
Payroll	\$ 82,692.00	85,616.93	99,487.80
TOTAL	\$ 107,927.00	119,466.14	136,236.80
Income vs Expenses	\$ (3,467.00)	(3,324.60)	(1,476.80)

Part 2 – Restricted Funds – Missions & Special Projects

Contributions to specific missions and special projects were submitted directly to that fund after it was received and the balances carry over from year to year.

RESTRICTED ACCOUNT	BALANCE 1 JAN 2019	INCOME 2019	EXPENSES 2019	BALANCE 31 DEC 2019
Missions	2,444.13	16,579.00	13,803.22	5,219.91
Pastor's Discretionary	1,233.44	751.42	770.00	1,214.86
Youth	698.74	220.00	0	918.74
Choir-Special	950.94	100.00	158.00	892.94
Women's Retreat	38.40	720.00	719.40	39.00
Prayer Shawl	446.54	0	0	446.54
NCS-U Grant	1,740.64	0	405.00	1,335.64
In the Mud Grant	1,900.00	0	1,316.24	583.76
Intern Grant	2,500.00	0	2,500.00	-
Memorial Gifts	10,000.00	0	1,777.61	8,222.39
TOTAL	21,952.83	18,370.42	21,449.47	18,873.78

Mission giving continues to be a strong indicator of the VGCC commitment to serving others. Our giving supports a variety of social causes as listed below. The starred (*) items in the following list receive non-cash donations in addition to monetary contributions.

MISSIONS DETAIL		Paid in 2019
Family Promise*		1,500.00
Inside – Out Youth Services*		1,100.00
Los Pobres*		2,327.13
One Nation Walking Together*		1,317.00
5/5 Our Church’s Wider Mission**		
5/5 One Great Hour of Sharing		1,320.00
5/5 Strengthen the Church		900.00
5/5 Neighbors in Need		1,174.00
5/5 The Christmas Fund		2,436.00
Mission Speakers		150.00
Benefit Programs		629.09
King Soopers Cards (Los Pobres)		450.00
Misc. (Casa de Paz)		500.00
TOTAL		13,803.22

VGCC continues to be a United Church of Christ “5 for 5” congregation. We budgeted \$2,500 for Our Churches Wider Mission in addition to the four UCC missions; One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen the Church, Neighbors in Need, and The Christmas Fund.

Part 3 – Bank Account and United Church Funds

Account	31 December 2018	31 December 2019
Checking	\$ 33,370.26	\$ 26,966.61
United Church Funds	\$ 34,045.20	\$ 40,575.60