



The Vista Views

Hope in a Time of Weirdness by Rev Clare Twomey

My wife and I share a very unique and pretty harmless addiction: merchandise from the ‘Life is Good’ franchise. What started as a cute, positive gimmick with one relatively gender neutral character named Jake and a yellow dog named Rocket, now includes all kind of critters, outdoor scenes and clever puns that would even challenge our resident ‘punster’ Mel! Liz and I treat one another with tees and hats, socks and dog toys for just about every occasion—whether we need another t-shirt or not. What can I say, it brings us joy!

This year, there is a specific logo reflecting 2020. Simply, “2020: the weirdest year in history”. This summary statement is both profoundly fitting and pathetically inaccurate at the same time.

It is without a doubt the weirdest year most of us have ever experienced. Stay at home, the roller coaster of emotions, the loss of the concept of time, zoom relationships, toilet paper shortages, creative coping mechanisms, etc --Insert your own weird stuff here. Never before have I had so much time on my hands and yet gotten so little done!! Ok, I have since figured out how to use the time, but I think most of you get my point. It’s just been Weird!

And yet ‘weird’ doesn’t begin to cover it.

This has also been a time of profound lament. Tragic statistical milestones have marked losses for thousands of families who have experienced the death of loved ones to an illness that just a year ago was unknown by most of us. We have watched an impotent (at best) government put their own greed and egos ahead of the needs of those they serve. Jobs have been lost, businesses closed, and homelessness number are off the hook. We have watched continued injustices perpetrated on people of color exacerbated by police, by border patrol, by policies, by oil companies, by racism, by fear, by greed. Isolation has permeated the lives of so many already feeling lonely, or anxious or depressed or any combination of mental challenges any one of us may have. And still we wait, wondering how and when things will get back to ...normal?

Yeah, weird doesn’t even come close.

It sounds like we are so ready for Advent doesn’t it?

General Information	2
Worship on Zoom	3
News from Mallory	4
Faith Formation	5
Moderator Message	6-7
Vision with Deborah	7-8
Mission	9-10
Covenantal Partners	11
Facilities	11
Our ONA and Just Peace Statements	12

Inside this issue

Special points of interest:
ZOOM

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



Wider Church – Rocky Mountain Conference

30-minute Sanctuary Sessions

During Annual Celebration a series of 1/2 hour opportunities for folks to gather on Zoom for reflection and some much-needed silence was offered. It was so well received that the RMC has decided to continue it! La Foret is taking on the role of hosting these 30-minute Sanctuary Sessions. They will be offered at 6:00 pm, every 2nd and 4th Monday in October, November, and December, and will feature contemplatives from around the RMC. [Learn More](#)

Vista Grande's Vision Statement - adopted April 13, 2020

"We covenant together to imagine and live into a world where God's Kin-dom vision of human and planetary flourishing comes to pass through the work of love, justice, peace, equality, and extravagant hospitality. We envision nothing less than a world restored to wholeness, wellness, joy, and gratitude for all of God's Creation."

Our Staff

Lead Pastor—Rev. Clare Twomey
Minister of Vision and Support—Rev. Deborah Tinsley
Music Director— COVID—19 Dismissal
Office Administrator—Donna Bristow
Nursery Attendant— COVID—19 Dismissal
Security Specialist—Timotheus Cross
Finding Home Ministry—Mallory Everhart

Lead Pastor's Hours

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

2020 Executive Committee:

Moderator – Kayan Cross; Assistant Moderator – Vacant; Treasurer – Dana Zimmerman; Financial Secretary – John Tinsley; Clerk – Erika Forshee
Members-at-Large – Carol Burbank and Jeannie Harrington

The next newsletter will be the Feb/Mar/Apr 2021 edition.
Deadline for articles is Jan15. E-mail your articles to admin@vgcc.org

Hope in a Time of Weirdness (continued from page 1.)

Scene: First century Palestine. A poor carpenter and a pregnant, morally questionable young woman from the wrong side of tracks, according to their own people. A town called Nazareth which, just a few years before, watched as the town next to them was decimated by Roman soldiers. Fear permeated these people who were constantly threatened by empire. Who knows what kind of rogue viruses and diseases randomly showed up ravaging those in its path. Poverty and homelessness, unemployment and isolation, uncertainty and hopelessness abounded. And yet, out of all of that, came a story of profound hope and love which continues to feed our hearts, our souls, and our faith thousands of years later.

To be clear, there was no profound change in Nazareth in the day Jesus was born. It was a day like every other. His folk were still poor and persecuted. Rome was still in power. Rogue viruses were still lurking. Greed and hatred abounded. Every 'ism' that existed before he was born was there when he turned one. And yet, this weird, positive (gimmick?) of hope and joy emerged in a way that has had a profound effect on us up to this day. This sense that God had somehow flipped the narrative of hatred and oppression to one of love and compassion. God had flipped the narrative from despair to Hope.

Hope is and remains the first middle and last line of defense against those people and circumstances who would threaten to rob creation of what it knows to be true: that throughout history, God has a way of flipping the narrative and uses us to do it. I'm not talking about a false hope where we sit and wait for something to change. I'm talking about the active and embodied hope that we bring to those who are hungry and poor and homeless and isolated, unemployed and grief stricken, the victims of persecution and injustice. I'm talking about the hope that we know lives and grows in us and when we share ourselves with one another. The hope that comes from deep within our center of being and is shared as a virtual hug, a meal, a phone call, warm socks or sleeping bag, a gift card, a smile, a prayer, a song of solidarity—all of which has the potential to spark that sense of belonging and hope in another person.

I know, one small act of kindness bringing hope sounds weird. But remember, the birth of one infant 2000 years ago can continue to spark hope even in the most difficult, weirdest of years. In the midst of all this —whatever all this is—connect with each other, reach out, show up (safely), do what you can to share moments of hope for another.

ZOOM WORSHIP—Our Sunday morning worship meets at 10 a.m.

Use the Zoom link to join in.

The best way to get this link is through our website.

Password: VGUCC

This link is e-mailed in our Monday weekly e-blast and Thursday worship invite. If you would like to receive these e-mailing, please contact Donna at admin@vgcc.org



Beloved Vista Grande Community,



It's hard to believe we are at the end of 2020 and the birth of another year. In the church calendar, the first Sunday of Advent marks the beginning of the liturgical new year, which is followed quickly by the annual changing of calendars and resolutions. In the grand story of the church year, Advent is a season of preparation for the birth of Jesus. It draws us back to the body – to our bodies and the incarnation of the Spirit of the Christ.

If you're anything like me, being in your body in the age of COVID has been really difficult. I truly treasure the ways we have stayed connected over the last 8 months through Zoom worship, Ice Cream Social Distancing, postcards, and porch drops of all kinds, but it sure doesn't change my desire for a good hug, a handshake, or a comforting presence. Both things can be true and, as happens so often, our job is to find the gift in the tension. We do this by coming back to our breath, coming back to our bodies, coming back to each other in the ways available to us, and coming back to Advent.

The traditional themes of Advent are Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. Every year, we ground ourselves in these four attributes of faith. They are what we sing of every week and what we ask to guide us as we navigate life together. When planning for the new year, none of us could have predicted how different things would be just twelve months later and, if we are being honest, there has been much to grieve in the chaos and disruption of this time. The word *unprecedented* has been used to describe so much of what we have walked through collectively. Even so, we have been creative, flexible and, above all, faithful. I could not be prouder of the ways we as the Vista Grande family have adapted and risen up to care for each other and incarnate a more just and caring world for all.

At this turning of the calendar, we have the chance to be intentional with how we let Hope, Peace, Joy, Love, and Incarnation guide us into whatever comes next. The Spirit is calling us into a future which shifts our understanding of *how* we are together without changing *who* we are together. It is my firm belief that the way to meet that future and answer that call is through discernment, discussion, and deep listening. Beginning in Advent and continuing through the seasons of Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost, I will be hosting consistent and sustained community conversations with the express purpose of discerning the story of our roots, who we are, what is important to us, and where we go from here. One thing is certain: *wherever we go, it will be together.*

When we voted as a congregation to change the word "member" to the words "covenantal partner", we affirmed the importance of each and every individual in this networked life we are living. **You are important. Your voice is important. Your knowledge of this community, your story, your hopes, dreams, and fears – all of it is necessary as we embark on this discernment journey together.** Consider this your formal invitation to be part of the work ahead. We need you because, without you, we wouldn't be us.

As a spiritual practice this Advent, take some time to sit with each of the four themes: Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. How do they feel in your body? Where do they show up? How do you recognize them? Bring the embodied, incarnate wisdom you are uncovering with you when we gather together early in 2021. Until then, may you be wrapped in the tender care of the Beloved. Peace, Mallory

Finding Home

Finding Home is now online! In this time of separation and anxiety, it becomes even more necessary for people to come together for connection and grounding. All are welcome to join this online gathering. We explore the intersection of art and spirituality, learning to listen for the ways the Divine is still speaking in our lives. Sundays at 6:30pm.

Finding Home has a new link for its online gatherings. Click in on Sunday evenings at 6:30 p.m.

<https://meet.jit.si/FindingHomeCOS>

Faith Formation

Adult Faith Formation “Percolate” 8:30 a.m.

Percolate is taking a break during Advent from reading Dreaming of Eden-American Religion and Politics in a Wired World by Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite. We will be reading The House That Love Built by Sarah Jackson. Sarah runs a house outside the detention center in Aurora, CO that assists detainees who have been released. This hopeful book shares her experiences in that endeavor. In January, we will return to Dreaming of Eden-American Religion and Politics in a Wired World. The next book that we will tackle will be Caste by Isabel Wilkerson.

As usual all are welcome, whether or not you’ve read the book. We meet around 8:30 on zoom before the worship service. (You have to “percolate” your own coffee.)



Worship



Sunday Dec. 6 – 2nd Sunday of Advent – Peace
Sunday Dec. 13 – 3rd Sunday of Advent – Joy
Sunday Dec. 20 – 4th Sunday of Advent—Love

Christmas Eve Service
Thursday Dec 24 at 5:30 p.m.

Sunday Dec. 27 – Worship at 10 a.m.

Here we are again and it feels to me like we are at the same place we were when I typed my last Moderator report. As I recognize this is just a feeling, I can't help but notice the truth of that we are still in uncertain times. I want to start out by reminding each and every one of you, as stated in our Vision Statement "flourishing comes to pass through the work of love, justice, peace, equality, and extravagant hospitality." As we continue to gather together for worship and share ourselves via ZOOM I want you to know that each of us get to be initiators and recipients of that flourishing. In some ways it is more crucial now for us to stay deeply engaged in the work of pursuing the vision of our church. Staying involved in this time of not being able to do the things we normally do, with the people who matter so much is a way of supporting our own mental health. It allows for continued connection, support of and participation in something and the awareness of making a difference. Vast contrasts to feelings of isolation and ineffectiveness. I want to really emphasize the importance of this if you have lost a loved one in 2020 and are struggling with a sense of isolation. At the same time, it is so important that because we are experiencing such difference in how we live our daily lives that we get to have a much different response to how we deal with life's heaviness. As important as it is to stay in relationship with the Divine and go there when life is challenging, I want to put great emphasis on the reality that we truly do not have to experience any part of life's journey alone, because the Divine has given us each other. So, today I want to say that although we don't necessarily know when this may come to pass, we can flourish in it and through it together. If you have a spiritual, emotional, or financial need for yourself; a burning desire to be involved in something more, or just some thoughts about how things are going with our church at this time, feel free to contact our Members at Large if you aren't sure where to start. They will get you some answers. Carol Burbank, 719-598-2256 or Jeanne Harrington, 719-473-6485. Of course, you can call the church and leave a message as well, 719-599-3057.

On to secondary stuff. I would like to give you a brief overview of what the Executive Council, in conjunction with staff have been working on since June. I'll start by thanking Rev. Deb Tinsley and Donna Bristow for the continuous time they spend making sure our T's are crossed and I's are dotted. These two are our eyes and ears regarding operating in accordance to all guidelines we should be adhering to as a UCC church, 501(c)3 status and our own bylaws.

Pastor Clare and David Bristow have worked diligently to assure that all Covenantal Partners who want to join us online are able to do so by having adequate technology. This includes providing laptops to those who need them.

The creation of information and communication portals for Covenantal Partners on our website.

We have allocated funds for some major and minor building repairs.

We maintained our choir director, nursery attendant and security positions through October (choir and nursery; security still exists).

Clarifying of Bylaws and Best Practices

Pastor Clare's Sabbatical

Continuous envisioning of how we "do church", now and as we move forward.

Assuring that we are in the best financial position we can be in at this time.

There is much going on, as you will read throughout this Newsletter. I want to remind you to utilize the portals for information access. If you have not logged on, you can do so by using the password emailed to us all on Sep. 15 by David Bristow. Donna is working as swift as possible to upload minutes and income ledgers. There, you will find details on all of these items.

Moderator Message—Kayan Cross (continued from page. 6.)

Lastly, I want to let you know that regardless of the fact that there has not been any specific addressing of Just Peace work, I encourage you not to be confused with who we are as a Just Peace Church. In my impromptu filling the position of Moderator, the shoes of Just Peace Chair were temporarily, unintentionally stepped out of. I assure you. We are still actively doing some Justice work and specific direction, focus and actions will resume after Advent. Looking forward to your participation.

I want to thank each of you for your commitment to yourselves, each other, and our church throughout this year. It has been, big and impacting. We are in the spiritual, emotional, and financial status because of your care for each other and our communities. Blessings to All.

Vision has as much to do with looking back as it does imagining the future.....
by Deborah Tinsley

In the past Newsletter (Sept – Nov) there were four individuals lifted up who have served the church community over many years, their stories taken from one of the written histories of Vista Grande. Yes, four; not three as was written a couple times... math not being my strong suit. All jokes aside, the error was mine, and inadvertently left off was a request that *any errors, incompleteness, or corrections be brought to my attention* so that this 'recalling' might be as exact as is possible.

Another request is this: There is a reason each of you call Vista Grande UCC your home church. Could you share that reason? How did those of you who were founding members decide to literally 'Be the Church'; what was it like to take that step out in faith and start a church? And then, build the sanctuary? And for those who came later: What brought you to Vista Grande, whenever that might have been? Why do you stay? What compels you to make the effort to be engaged? What is it that you find feeding your soul? What is your connectedness? As Rev. Clare is wont to say, "These are not rhetorical questions!" Inquiring minds want to know. As you look back at your involvement, be it months, years, or decades, what have been the highlights for you? And as our symbolic bird Bono Adinka is doing when you look back what is it that you wish to bring forward that is wisdom for our times, for times to come?



This Photo by

No history is complete if it is the reflections of one individual as that history relies on that one person's observations as well as the individual's decision of what is important to include and what will be left out. In accessing one record of the church, others are neglected. Input from many individuals would be enlightening and make for a more complete record, so it is hoped that what is presented here sparks memories and recall, and that each of you will share it in whatever way is comfortable.

In the record, it was 1989 that **Carol Wisely-Puterbaugh** first shows up, helping as Assistant Moderator. Again, in 1992, 1993, 2000, 2001 Carol is Program Chair... and we'd like to know what this entailed. In 1995 Carol was Clerk, then in 2012 and 2013 was Member at Large.

(Continued on page 8)

Vision has as much to do with looking back as it does imagining the future.....
by Deborah Tinsley (contuned from page 7.)

Donna and Dave Bristow's involvement begins to appear in 1991 when Dave is Worship Committee Chair and Donna is Membership Chair. In 1992 Dave is Assistant Moderator and Donna continues with Membership. 1993 Dave was Moderator and Donna was Clerk. Dave becomes Treasurer in 1994 and Donna moves to Assistant Moderator. Donna is Moderator in 1995 with Dave continuing as Treasurer; Dave continues as Treasurer in 1996, 1997 and Donna is Worship Chair in 1997, 1998, 1999. Dave becomes Financial Secretary in 1998 to 2000. Donna takes the staff position of Administrative Coordinator in 2001 to present. Both Dave and Donna are listed under Renew and Move Forward Task Force in 2004, with Dave as Treasurer through 2006.

Bob Hollins is first mentioned in 1995 in the position of Membership, continuing through 1998, and again on the Renew and Move Forward Task Force in 2004. Interestingly both **Jerry** and **Jackie Moore** are listed as Membership in 2000. Jerry is Member at Large in 2005, possibly Co-Moderator in 2006 and Co-Assistant Moderator as well (this would be interesting to sort out!) Jerry is Treasurer in 2007-2011. These individuals are listed in a history of the church only by the positions they held on the Executive Council: all of us know that they, and the others previously mentioned, have served the Vista Grande UCC community in a myriad of ways in addition to these positions. That history, long in service to this community, is not noted in the record. In my memory, wasn't there a food drive that Jackie helped coordinate for many years? And who can forget Bob's incredible fruit sculptures for every occasion, be it a grand event or simply Sunday Fellowship time? Jerry was the 'go to' guy for how to get out stains on the concrete, replace the light, and so, so much more. Dave has been the media guy, has served on Association and Conference committees, has been a delegate to National, has been the tech guy on the mysterious console that runs the sound system (something akin to the Wizard of Oz, he is the man behind the curtain.) Carol has stepped up and stepped in for so many things around the church; she has cleaned, she has been in choir, she has helped with worship... and the list goes on. I won't even try to list all that Donna has taken on, well beyond her duties on staff: She has been the heart of the programing for the children for so long, acting as membership clerk, has been the liaison to Association and Conference committees, serving with distinction.... and will start editing heavily if the list goes any further.

I don't mind saying that I get verklempt just thinking of the human hours invested in this idea of a progressive UCC church not just surviving but *thriving* in Colorado Springs; a church that proudly states it is Open and Affirming, a Peace and Justice church, and has been a Five for Five in terms of mission giving long before there was a Five for Five designation. Vista Grande is known in the Conference for its lay leadership within the church community, in its outreach to the greater community, to the Association, Conference and beyond. All VG has been and continues to be is because of the people that are invested here, planted here, and flourish here. This is the long line of the Saints in Light (those who walk in the way of Jesus) right here, right now; their memories reach back to embrace those most of us do not know; they stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before even as they reach down to those who come after, pulling us up with them. They truly are able to look back to bring forward the bigger story of Vista Grande UCC, to share how VG began as the germ of an idea to what is now.

If there is one thing for me that stands out as what I'd like to 'go back and get' to bring forward, it would be the stories and the examples of these (and many others) who have committed their time, talent and treasure unstintingly that Vista Grande UCC might be a force for justice, peace, compassion and outreach. They live into the invitation that all are welcomed here, wherever you are on life's journey, that there is a place for you to offer whatever it is you have to this adventure in faith. The example they have been, and continue to be, lives long with us as it inspires us to be more than we ever considered we might be.

Next time: A few more from the history book... and hopefully some recollections and reflections from others sharing what their connectedness is, why they are invested in and with Vista Grande UCC. Send these to revdeborah2@gmail.com, or call (719) 439-2321

Vision for Mission

Mission/Outreach is an integral part of VGUCC ministries. We will pursue opportunities that are **reflective of Justice and Peace**, 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.

We are celebrating the fact that we were able to meet ALL our financial commitments for the 3rd quarter and are on track to do so for the 4th quarter as well! We have maintained our relationships with our four local missions (Inside-Out Youth Services, Family Promise, Los Pobres and One Nation Walking Together) even during this pandemic. In 2021 we are considering adding two more local missions: Sandwiches and Smiles (a once a month distribution of emergency food and clothing for homeless people) and The Chinook Center (a safe place for racial/social justice groups to gather).



Inside-Out Youth Services– Submitted by Nancy Morlock-Hollins

The virtual Ally-Up “Breakfast” fundraiser was held on the evening of October 8th. Over 800 guests came to the streamed lined event that celebrated 30 years of creating a safe/brave space for LGBTQ+ youth. Together 300 donors raised \$67,069!

Inside-Out youth are especially impacted by the effects of chronic isolation, having lost the ability to connect with peers at school and may be unsafe at home. LGBTQ+ youth experience high rates of bullying, violence, substance abuse, and adverse academic outcomes because of bias against their identities. The good news is that Inside-Out is providing evidence-based programming and a safe and accepting space LGBTQ+ youth in El Paso and Teller Counties and have had no gap in services since our temporary closure! We are delivering food boxes, bags of clothing, grocery gift cards, providing rent support to counter the devastating effects of COVID-19. Inside-Out has welcomed 50 new youth this year. We just keep expanding the capacity and community impact through adult education, outreach, and activism, all building equity and power for youth, like the Phoenix, to spread their wings and fly toward their full potential

Inside/Out receives a quarterly check from our mission budget.

El Centro de Los Pobres (immigrants & low income) Submitted by Faye Gallegos

Faye had a conversation with Sister Nancy at Los Pobres...

"We are "iffy at this crucial time! Pueblo MAY go into another lock down. But IF we stay open we will be closed the three Thursdays of the coming holidays. Those weeks we will extend the Tuesday hours to 2:00 pm, NO CHRISTMAS TOYS!

We hope to give each family \$100 Walmart gift cards (of various amounts). The virus has hit our families hard. They are front line workers in many instances ... and live in multifamily houses due to rents and utilities. We appreciate Prayers."At this point I just think IF any Vista Grande UCC covenantal partners wish to give a special gift to Sister Nancy just please send the check or gift cards directly to her with a greeting from your family. Sister Nancy Crafton, El Centro de Los Pobres, Inc. PO. Box 304, 212 East US Hwy 50, Avondale, CO 81022 Los Pobres also receives a quarterly check from our mission budget.



December Birthdays

- 5 Maurine Hale
- 5 Nic Siebert
- 5 Maggie Tanner
- 6 Ruth Eastwood
- 7 Mel Druelinger
- 10 Jan Morgan
- 10 Charlie Morgan
- 10 Ellen Berry
- 13 Amanda Udis-Kessler
- 19 Brenda Griffin-Collins
- 23 Erin Elkaim
- 26 Evie Martin
- 26 Corinne Anderson #13!

January Birthdays

- 12 Jeanne Harrington
- 12 John Tinsley
- 12 Jon Elkaim
- 18 David bristow
- 20 Bev Price

Anniversaries
 December 18—Jon and Erika Forshee
 January 9—Jud and Maggie Jusell

FACILITY MAINTENANCE



The Facilities Task Group has been busy even during these times of Covid. We have done projects both inside the building and outside on the grounds. Please help us out by being observant every time you are in and around the building. Since we are not using it as much, we need eyes to keep us aware of issues that might crop up this winter. Broken pipes being the main

concern! If you are at the building please look around at the floors, windows and general areas. A quick walk through isnt too much to ask to be good stewards of our property. Donna, Jan, or John can be called if you see a problem. Thanks.

The kitchen wall has been painted along with the lower bathroom ceilings .Broken windows on south of building are being replaced. Hand railings are being tightened down and carpet was glued where it was pulling up on stairs. We held outdoor workdays in Sept and October with weed and trees being the focus. Security cameras and signs have been installed to deter vandals. Soon the memorial bricks will be installed. The balcony drainage issue is still being worked on to help keep damage to the 4 lower doors at a minimum. Thanks to the TEAM for all their hard work. Carol and Richard Burbank, John Tinsley, David Bristow and Phil Puterbaugh. New Members are always welcome so get your gloves and lend a hand, Must be under the age of 70!!!



**Vista Grande
United Church of Christ**

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COME, GROW WITH US

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

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

Vista Grande 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.

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

Vista Grande UCC is a **Just Peace** Church. “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 may be 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.”