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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
2020 ...*

OUR VISION

"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."

Congregation at work throughout 2020

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

Date: 26 Jan 2020

Time: 11:30 a.m.

Location: V.G. Church

Moderator Kayan called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m.

Thirty-four Covenantal Partners and nine affiliates were present.

Kayan opened with prayer.

Kayan asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the January 2018 Annual meeting; Carol Burbank made the motion, seconded, approved.

Kayan asked for a motion to approve the July 28, 2019 Congregational meeting; Carol Burbank moved, seconded, approved.

Kayan introduced the Executive Council members: John Tinsley, Dana Zimmerman, Deborah Tinsley, Jeannie Harrington, Carol Burbank.

Kayan gave a review of the accomplishments of Vista Grande for the last year; while extensive it was not exhaustive of the work accomplished and Kayan referred the congregation to the Annual Report for more information. Pastor Clare lifted up the work Kayan and Nancy Morlock-Hollins have been doing with the True Center for Gender Identity in Denver to bring a similar center to Colorado Springs, that as a Just Peace church our focus is working with those on the margins, and this work comes with risks. That there has been push back from the community (support as well) and taking the risks seriously, the Executive Council hired Timotheus Cross for security: Timotheus received lengthy applause.

Kayan mentioned the work Mallory Everhart has accomplished over the last year with the ministry Finding Home. Valuing that she has established a safe space for those wounded by past experiences in other churches, for those in recovery or Twelve Step, where respect for each individual is demanded, the Executive Council voted to offer a modest stipend. Further, the congregation is challenged to make possible a larger amount in the future for this valuable and unique ministry here at Vista Grande for the Colorado Springs community.

Kayan challenged everyone to step out of their comfort zones and change the world, beginning by showing up over the next year for at least one meeting of each of the ministry teams, Finding Home, and other meetings at Vista Grande in order to experience this for themselves.

Treasurer Dana presented the budget. There is a deficit, but with a little extra effort in Fundraising the church can overcome this amount. One way to increase income that costs nothing and is something everyone can do is to designate Vista Grande UCC on their King Sooper, Kroger, or City Market 'loyalty card', and encourage friends and family anywhere

in the U.S to do the same. Bricks to memorialize or honor a family member or loved one can be purchased for inclusion in the Rev. Bob Howard Memorial Garden and is a fund raiser. Dana did point out that the budget reflects a 5% raise for Pastor Clare, who has not had a raise in three years, as well as responsibility for the annuity that had been covered in previous years by a grant, Mallory's stipend, and salary for Timotheus. Mission was \$18,659, an accomplishment. The church has about \$8,000 in the bank, which is less than one month's expenses. Good, but no real extra. While a pledge is great, it is only as good as the follow through, so please do your best so Vista Grande is able to honor our commitments and remember to keep up your pledge when you are away on vacations. There is a tension between all that we hope to accomplish and having enough to support these dreams and goals.

Kayan asked for a motion to accept the budget; Jackie Moore made the motion to accept, was seconded and was approved by 32 Covenantal Partners with none opposed.

Dave Bristow presented a Power Point (addendum 1, page 28) of a pie chart on how funds are distributed, with \$18,850 with our 5 for 5 missions being the largest 'slice'. Other slices were for In Kind Giving which are mission goods such as socks, food, etc. for different missions; Volunteer hours converted into a dollar amount; items given to the church not in cash; Volunteer hours such as working on the building, the garden: all of this amounts to over \$81,000. Our Mission giving equals our entire budget!

Kayan presented Executive Council positions now vacant: Clerk and Assistant Moderator. Pastor Clare remarked on the incredible amount accomplished by Kayan this year, and how much more can be done with some assistance. There was extended applause for Kayan, who then remarked that "You, too, could get applause like this; step up!"

Dave Bristow asked for a person to help fill out the Pastoral Relations Committee.

Kayan asked for any further business to be considered. Judy Druelinger requested a new directory be made available. This will be done when the next group of new Covenantal Partners is acknowledged, this to take place in February. Deborah asked for a moment of prayer for all present to consider where they might be able to help with any of the openings on Executive Council or on Pastoral Relations. Two minutes of silent prayer observed.

Dave Bristow moved that the Annual Report be accepted; seconded and approved.

Kayan thanked the congregation for their attendance and adjourned the meeting at 12:28 p.m.

Submitted
Deborah Tinsley, Clerk

PASTOR'S REPORT

Respectfully submitted by Rev. Clare Twomey

At the risk of making the obvious more apparent, this past year has been quite the challenge. January and February began much the same as in previous years. We welcomed students from Colorado College to speak and call for action on creating more affordable housing in Colorado Springs. We hosted the Sanctuary Coalitions Accompaniment trainings and offered space for their continued meetings. We had yet another amazing Jazz/Mardi Gras Sunday to usher our Lenten season. And of course, our in-person gatherings—Coffee and Conversations, Percolate, Executive Council, misc. meetings, and Worship—happened as usual. This was our world until March 12, 2020. And then our world turned upside-down.

Before proceeding I want you all to know how dedicated your Executive Council and Staff have been this past year in order to assure that we remain connected, viable, and relevant. I could not do what I do and neither would we be who we are without them!

March 15th was our first **online Worship** and the notion of Lent took on new meaning as we acclimated to what it means to be introspective and isolated. Perhaps the first indication that we remained a dedicated and committed Beloved community was and is our continued participation in worship services throughout this absurd year. Yes, our numbers were higher during the first few months but we have remained consistent with how many typically would show up under usual circumstances. Additionally, we have had a significant number of folx join for services since we've been online who couldn't be with us if we were still meeting in a building! This speaks for our need to be intentional going forward, on how to remain inclusive to all who wish to continue being a vital part of this community.

Thanks to the recording talents of David Hudson and Amanda Udis-Kessler, we have had music to accompany our hymns even as we sing in the virtual sanctuary of our homes. The choir provide a beautiful digital rendition of Amazing Grace and the Nath's, Spencer's, and Carol Burbank have all offered live music for specific worship services.

As your Pastor, I admit I was initially flummoxed by the challenges presented because of COVID-19. Learning to navigate Zoom so as to offer a relevant worship experiences was and continues to be a challenge. But I must admit I cannot imagine doing it any other way. While the option of pre-recorded services exists, and is used by many other churches, I have selfishly preferred and looked forward to our live gatherings. I must also admit however, I miss being with you in person—I much prefer 3-d smile, appropriate hugging, feeling the combined energy of beautiful souls, and prayerful silence where the spirit moves from one to another. This said, I am grateful for the sacred space we have created.

Donna Bristow and Sara Weatherman have gone above and beyond to assure **Faith Formation** continues for our families. They sent out lessons and activities for the summer months and prepared Advent candles for all so that we might be tangibly connected during this past Advent.

Vista Grande remains as relationally connected as possible with our **Mission** partners given the circumstances. Various representatives have been able to connect in person or virtually. Participating in online events sponsored by Inside Out and Family Promise has allowed this to be the case. Missions has also been able to meet all financial commitments with our mission partners as well as projected surplus for other identified needs. (See Mission Ministry team report) They raised additional funds with the congregation for the Chinook Center and have committed their efforts to a new mission partner---- by collecting items necessary for those neighbors who remained unhoused in our city. This is due largely to the ongoing generous support of this congregation!

One might assume that we have not been able to maintain our presence as a **Just Peace Church** in the community given the safety protocols that have been in place given COVID-19. However, in the midst of our limitations a number of Covenantal Partners still participated in racial justice rallies and protests given the tragic and infuriating rash of murders perpetrated on black and brown bodies this past year. At least half a dozen of our CP's—armed with masks and signs-- showed up for DeVon Bailey, Ahmaud Avery, Brianna Taylor, George Floyd, and Elijah McClain and many others, as we challenged this nation's history of racial injustice. We continue to fly our flags even as we receive emails and phone calls denouncing our justice efforts.

But this isn't all we've done this year. As a church we have also:

- Had 2 socials (distance) events: An Ice-cream and then a pre-Advent hot chocolate social, allowing us to share outdoor safe space even as it challenged us not to hug!
- Participated in Mallory Everhart's Ecclesiastical Council—which was simply brilliant!
- Hosted a Baby Shower for Elisia Garcia-Salazar and Timotheus Cross
- Crafted and was awarded a Sabbatical grant through The Lilley Foundation for this pastor and the congregation (Thank you Carol Burbank, Donna Bristow, and Dana Zimmerman)
- Crafted and was awarded 2 additional technology grants (thank you Rev. Deborah Tinsley) so as to offer the opportunity for all CP's to have access to worship and community.
- Crafted and was awarded a Payroll Protection Plan loan that assured we could pay salaries should we need more money. (Thank you Dana Zimmerman)
- Revived the vision team in order to imagine our future in light of COVID and our mission and vision for this world. (Again thank you Rev Deborah Tinsley and Pastor Mallory Everhart)

Executive Council approved funding for Mallory for the work she will be doing in 2021. Facilities has repaired broken windows, refinished the chancel steps, refinished garden doors and completed the beautiful garden. Executive Council also provided postcards to each family during the initial months of the pandemic in order that all would know they remain connected as community. Many of you created masks and offered them to the VG community and other agencies. And many of you were intentional about connecting with one another either by phone, email, snail mail, or porch visits! You truly define Beloved Community!!

As for me, in addition to 'church stuff', I remain committed to my Racial Justice journey, studies and activities. Having obtained my SC2ER certification, I have now been additionally certified by UCC to train those who wish to become facilitators through the UCC. I continue to meet every other week with my cohort and the National Office to continue our work. This year has prompted many groups around the country to seek some kind of racial justice training. My SC2ER colleague Rev. Kris Watson from NY and I have collaborated to facilitate at least a dozen groups around the country since last February--including 2 groups from CO and one from the Southwest Conference of the UCC. I have also been involved in the Rocky Mountain Conference's Racial Justice team this past year which was formulated to respond to the perceived uptick in racial injustice we have seen this year. In this group I planned and facilitated 6 discussion group sessions for the conference. I was also asked by Rev. Stephany Rose Spaulding to be a co-founder and board member of her organization "Truth and Conciliation"-(A grass roots organization whose mission it is "to **uncover, examine and redress** the historic and sustained acts and pillars of structural and systemic racism by **engaging in processes of truth and conciliation** to achieve equality and equity in American society").

In addition, I have been involved in other wider church activities. As Southeastern Association moderator, I served on SEA Committee on Ministry. I participated in 2 Ecclesiastical Councils including that of our own Mallory. I was responsible for facilitating and crafting the worship service for RMC annual celebration which was also an online event. In October, after serving 3 year as moderator and 4 on COM, I resigned my position as Moderator due to being over extended. Additionally, as the UCC Synod has been moved to online event in July 2021 rather than June, I have had to resign my position as delegate given a family commitment to officiate a wedding in July in North Carolina!

Sadly, like so many others, this Beloved community has experienced so many losses this year. Each and every one of us has lost a friend or loved one this year. While it is only a fraction of our grief, I officiated 3 memorial services virtually this year, including my own grandmother's. I admit pastoral care has been most difficult as there have been quite a few persons I've not been able to visit in the hospital or at home. This has been probably the most profoundly difficult part for me.

Finally, I remain committed to spiritual direction, collegial supervision, and when necessary, therapy--this year probably more than ever! This is a personal necessity to help me remain accountable to you as your pastor by caring for myself. I continue to be amazed how I seem to be busier this year at home than I've ever been!

Friends, I seem to sign off every year with the same phrase—how amazed I am at what you've/we've accomplished. You'd think I would be used to it by now! While the overall future remains more of a mystery than perhaps we are accustomed, there are also some very exciting possibilities ahead. My three months of sabbatical in the summer will parallel your activities here as we move towards becoming a designated Racial Justice Church. Before that, Mallory has planned a spectacular journey for us to envision our future no matter what the world throws at us! And through it all, we clearly remain committed to being God's presence in this world. It is truly a pleasure to be with you on this journey. Thank you for untrusting me as your pastor

MODERATOR'S REPORT

Kayan Cross

This year has been like no other due to the COVID-19 virus. Its impact on all people and all things has been overwhelming. The uncertainty and continuous advent of the “new norm” has played a major role in determining so much of this year. The decision to worship via Zoom is by far the greatest impact on our Church. Although it may not be what some prefer, the response to it compared to other safe options is going well. People are glad to see each other.

The early part of the year we worked diligently with the developer of the property south of us in an attempt to ensure that the changes created to the land have as little impact as possible to our land and our neighbors to the west.

The Vision Ministry team created a new vision statement, and it was accepted by the congregation in February.

A couple of weeks before we discontinued gathering for worship in the building, Rev. Clare and I reconfigured the Sanctuary to be more ability and Service Dog friendly. It was an attempt to make it easier to access more comfortable seating for those with any type of physical challenges in various parts of the sanctuary, front or rear; as well as maintaining a safe space for all when dogs were in church.

Major maintenance and updates for the building consisted of the replacing sensors and duct work on the roof to bring our 30 plus year old fire system up to code and to make it function properly. Having the broken windows repaired in the foyer.

With the additional financial support of donations, small loans and grants we were able to assist covenantal partners experiencing technology difficulty that impeded their ability to join us for online worship. New laptops and other improvements were made available as necessary. We were also able to keep everyone employed until the end of October, at which time we discontinued our Nursery Attendant and Choir Director positions until we have the need for these positions when we return to the building.

We celebrated and honored Pastor Clare this October on her 10 yr. Ordination Anniversary. It was a wonderful Zoom gathering.

The annual gatherings of the Southeastern Association and Rocky Mountain Conference, held via Zoom, focused heavily on supporting churches with methods to connect with congregations, other churches, resources within the UCC and how to obtain other resources including but not limited to Federal and State Funds where applicable. There is also continuous development in the creation of Racial Justice work at the conference level that includes the creation of a new full-time position.

Thanks to the continued financial support of the congregation and others we have been able to maintain our churches viability this year in ways that exceed so many others. We have been able to take care of our expenses and continue to support our missions as promised.

In keeping with our commitment to safety, all Executive Council meetings were also held via Zoom. The position of Clerk on the Executive Council was gratefully filled this year. Assistant Moderator was not. The Council committed itself diligently to a couple extra things this year due to COVID-19: Maintaining connections within the congregation and taking care of and keeping the building safe during our absence. Lots of thought and energy was put into reminding and attempting to assure everyone that we are still a great and connected spiritual family. We also set up a schedule to have someone at the church 6 days a week to check the building and its various operations for functionality.

MEMBER AT LARGE

Carol Burbank

Although this has certainly not been a normal year for VGUCC, work has continued. As your representative on the Executive Council, I have done my best to support and work on Council initiatives. A Spaghetti Dinner was in the planning stage prior to the Covid 19 shutdown. Needless to say, that has been put on hold. However, the support shown by members of the Congregation indicate that this may be restarted once it is safe to gather in our building again. The work each of you have done and support provided for this church family is greatly appreciated. Here's to 2021 and continued love and support for each other.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS

Executive Council 2020

- Moderator: Kayan Cross
- Asst. Moderator: Vacant
- Treasurer: Dana Zimmerman
- Financial Secretary: John Tinsley
- Clerk: Erika Forshee
- Member at large: Carol Burbank
- Member-at-large: Jeanne Harrington

PASTORAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Submitted by Dave Bristow

The team of Dave Bristow, Carol Burbank, and Nancy Morlock-Hollins remained the Pastoral Relations Committee during 2020.

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 world¹.

“The Pastoral Relations Committee is a standing committee in a local church that seeks to support and maintain an open and healthy relationship between the pastor and members of the congregation. The committee serves in two primary ways: as an advisory group to the pastor and as support for the pastor's leadership. As an advisory group the committee shares ideas, dreams, hopes, expectations, and concerns of the congregation with the pastor. As support for the pastor, the committee interprets roles, functions, and needs of the pastor to the congregation.”

Early in the year we asked members and friends to participate in the "Vitality and Clergy Excellence Survey", using the same questionnaire we had used in 2017. Due to extenuating circumstances, mostly the coronavirus pandemic, a final report was not published or shared with the congregation.

However, there were 35 respondents to the survey who we felt were representative of the whole congregation. While there were some differences between the 2017 and 2020 response, they were in the most part similar. Thus, after reviewing the results we came to the same conclusions we reached in 2017:

1. our congregation has vitality.
2. our congregation is being engaged.
3. our pastor is highly skilled and exhibits positive characteristics.
4. our congregation whose make up ranges from newcomers to congregants with more than 20 years at VGCC.
5. our congregation ranges in congregants who attend or participate once a month to those who are active more than once a week.
6. our congregation is facing little to no conflicts.

In summary, the both the 2017 and 2020 surveys demonstrated there is a good match between the congregation and our pastor, there is an exciting sense of purpose for VGCC and we are graced with a faithful passionate pastor who has strong skills.

As the surveys were in a non-pandemic era, it might be interesting and informative if we were to re-conduct the survey this spring.

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

We met with Pastor Clare several times during the year and we shared the details of the survey.

Pastor Clare with the assistance of several congregants developed a grant application that would allow Pastor Clare to pursue studies during her sabbatical and aid VGUCC during the sabbatical time. The grant was awarded to VGUCC and it will enable Pastor Clare to participate in the 2020 National Clergy Renewal Program. VGUCC is one of only 140 congregations from many different denominations, not just UCC churches, across the United States selected to participate in this competitive grant program, which is funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. and administered by Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. The program's grant allows our congregation to support Pastor Clare with the gift of extended time away from her ministerial duties and responsibilities while she continues to pursue her passion for racial justice. The grant will enable:

- Pastor Clare to seek to strike a balance between the work and the culture, books, and the sacred land. Visiting those places in this country which are directly connected to the history and struggle of slavery and racism involves seeking to spiritually enhance her racial justice journey by experiencing the sacred geography of this history. She anticipates a new understanding of the sacred history of Maryland, while at the same time finding respite and renewal in a place she holds dear. Her pilgrimage is deeply connected to her personal isolation from her own family's history. Intensive studies on racial justice begin with an invitation into her own ancestry with the intention of recognizing her roots, her heritage, and her common thread with all peoples. She is hoping this time of renewal helps her connect with her own roots and heritage in ways that have been unavailable. She trusts that connecting with her ancestors will only further her understanding of those whose history has been stolen and the generational grief that comes from that loss.
- Our congregation to be provided multiple opportunities to enhance our racial justice commitments and relationships, through guest preachers from historically black churches in Colorado Springs, planned programming, and a contemplative retreat. In this way, we will encounter our own transformative relationships as we are challenged to move from the learning about racism to the relational and restorative dimension of racial justice work. This plan encourages and supports our vision of action and contemplation. We will all further our racial literacy and more importantly become more authentically and relationally connected with communities of color in our city.

The Rev. Dr. Robert Saler, research fellow and director of the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Programs, noted that the National Clergy Renewal Program integrates key attributes of healthy congregations, including a mutual respect for the renewal needs of both ministers and the congregations they serve. "The program provides an opportunity for congregations to express appreciation for their ministers' service and leadership," Saler said. "At a time when leaders are often praised for their pace of innovation and productivity, the National Clergy Renewal Program pays homage to the timeless wisdom embedded in the practice of reflection and renewal."

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

Executive Council met thirteen times in 2020 and held one Congregational Meeting.

In addition to the routine monthly reporting of finances, pastor's report, ministry team reports, etc; here is a brief synopsis of other business for each month:

January – a proposal for the use of land south of our property came to VGs attention as a possible easement requirement. Action – settled.

February – security ideas along with training were looked at to keep VG a safe place. Several folks assisted Pastor Clare with her sabbatical grant application.

March – State Executive Orders regarding COVID –19 were reviewed and followed. This required many changes to our operational needs.

April – A Payroll Protection Plan application was submitted and received.

May – Discussion on when and how to re-enter when safe.

June – More land development follow-up and security concerns.

July – COVID-19 gifts and how to ease some challenges for our partners.

August – Some facility concerns over and above general maintenance needed to be handled.

September – Revamping of Facebook and Website.

Best Practices and Bylaws were also being assessed.

October – Visioning for the future. Some energy was put into what this could look like in the next few months. We had to suspend employment to our music director and nursery attendant.

November – Mallory introduced a proposal for a visioning program she would facilitate.

December – Finding Home – Mallory's alternative community gathering with worship may not have survived the pandemic. Finding Home began in January 2019.

Erika Forshee volunteered to be Council Clerk in April 2020. Thank you for keeping our Executive Council accountable.

VISION MINISTRY TEAM

Submitted by Rev. Deborah Tinsley

The task originally presented by the Executive Council to the Vision Ministry Team in 2019 was to come up with a Vision Statement that reflects the vision of what it is that VG strives to achieve. Suggestions from the Executive Council were to include: How we see ourselves in the world; that the statement points to the day toward which we are marching, the day when we see the teachings of Jesus come to life; the statement should act as a bridge of how we 'go there' with statements that evoke 'this is where I want to get to.'

What seemed simple, rather 'cut and dried' turned out to be neither. It felt like trying to write an opus without basic understanding of cords: What goes in? What can be left out? How to make it say enough while being succinct? How to pull together an encompassing vision for such a diverse group, called Vista Grande UCC?

A group of individuals joined together to wrestle with the words, to fulfill the mandate: Judy Druelinger, Katherine Fatica, Robert Kinsey, Kathryn Romberg, Amanda Udis-Kessler, Dana Zimmerman.. (and I and sorry because I know I am forgetting some!) made up the Vision Ministry Team in 2020. It was a very productive group, with each person bringing their insight and suggestions that enriched and encouraged the work as well as making the gatherings enjoyable. They persisted, and a Vision Statement that speaks to the direction of Vista Grande UCC and hope for the world was fashioned, presented to Executive Council, and approved.

You have seen it on the bulletins; you can see it on our Facebook and website. Keeping in mind that any Vision Statement must remain fluid, reflecting the journey and all its adventures and challenges, this is the Vision Statement for Vista Grande at this time:

“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; our vision as a community of faith is to play our role, individually and collectively, in bringing that world into being.”

In November of 2020, an invitation went out to the congregation to join with the Vision Team in hearing a presentation on a Discernment Proposal by Mallory Everhart. Within the extensive and far-reaching proposal are the questions every church which endeavors to stay current and relevant must address: “Who are we? What is our relationship with our building, our outreach, mission? Where do we see ourselves going in the future?” The goal of the proposal as outlined is to have community wide engagement in these questions and more, and to ask ourselves how each of us fits into the vision statement in tangible ways. It will be a process of respectful listening to the future.

Mallory made a statement during the presentation that struck a cord with all who were on the Zoom meeting: “While the present times still feel like Good Friday, it is a time of new life, hope, resurrection, waiting... and then being a part of creating something new.” We are on the ground floor of whatever it is we are building. Holding on to the vision of the past that became Vista Grande UCC and looking to the future each of us has a stake in and a role to play in building that future, one that reflects our values, our theology, our commitment to walk in the way of Jesus. A new year, a new vision, a new beginning: Exciting times, challenging times, and we are the people called to times such as these.

In gratitude, giving thanks to all of you who are Vista Grande, all who were but are no longer in our sight, and with eager anticipation for those that will walk with us in the future, it has been simply remarkable to be a part of this great adventure with you. It is your efforts and passion and work that encourages – and I do mean gives me courage – to face the future with hope and great dreams. As we end one year and face the new, I lift a figurative glass to salute you all. I am so glad to be on this journey with you. Peace, love, and grace be with you.

ADMIN REPORT

Submitted by Donna Bristow

New Personnel:

Timotheus Cross has served as our security agent for the past 15 months. He was brought on staff in January. When we departed our building for worship, it was discovered we still needed someone to do security checks on the building and grounds.

Unfortunately with COVID-19 and the shutdown of our in person worship, we had to let go of Valerie Karr as Nursery Attendant and David Hudson as Music Director. We were hopeful that this would be a quick turnaround but as you all know that wasn't the case. We managed to keep them employed until October 2020.

Contracts and W-4s for our pastor, music director, administrative assistant, security agent 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.

LOVE GROUNDED IN FAITH AND HOPE

WORSHIP TEAM MINISTRY

January and February began much the same as in previous years. We welcomed students from Colorado College to speak and call for action on creating more affordable housing in Colorado Springs. We had yet another amazing Jazz/Mardi Gras Sunday to usher our Lenten season.

March 15th was our first **online Worship** and the notion of Lent took on new meaning as we acclimated to what it means to be introspective and isolated. Perhaps the first indication that we remained a dedicated and committed Beloved community was and is our continued participation in worship services throughout this absurd year. Read the pastor's article on page 3 and 4 for more details about worship activities.

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

Submitted by Nancy Morlock-Hollins

We began the year still engrossed in Stand Your Ground – Black Bodies and the Justice of God by Kelly Brown Douglas. Douglas argues that the climate in our society that makes killing unarmed black people inevitable and even permissible has roots in the myth of Anglo–Saxon superiority and American exceptionalism. This book has us saying, “Why didn’t I know this.” It is an extension of our study of White Privilege and is serving us well in living out our calling and commitment to being Just Peace individuals and a Just Peace church.

In February we started Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others by Barbara Brown Taylor. This book is a small window on a large subject. Set at a private liberal arts college in the foothills of the Appalachians, it is the story of a Christian minister who lost her way in the church and found a new home in the class- room, where the course she taught most often was Religions of the World. Instead of being an academic study of world religions, she takes us through the spiritual practices and rituals of other religions and shows us how much we can learn from others. She also cautions us not to compare the best parts of our own religion with the worst parts of others.

This past fall we started Dreaming of Eden-American Religion and Politics in a Wired World by Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite. Susan talks a lot about the seduction of “innocence”, especially the desire to return to the Garden of Eden. She also talks about the danger of innocence – even its lethal power.

During Advent, Percolate took a break from reading Dreaming of Eden- American Religion and Politics in a Wired World by Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite. We read 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. 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.)

Faith Formation for Kids
Submitted by Sara Weatherman

It's hard to plan for our children during COVID-19! They are tired of zoom. We can't gather around a table (that table is really important, isn't it?) We miss them! They bring an energy, curiosity, and creativity that the rest of us need. We sent prayer beads to each child and teacher before school started, reminding them of God's love.

Since COVID-19 hit we have filled bags with things to do at home. Prayer trees grew in several homes. We created Advent candles with stars. The words Hope, Peace, Joy and Love lit up our season. Several joined us for the ice cream social and hot chocolate gatherings.

More importantly, our children have been loved and prayed for from a distance. Donna and Sara went round and round Donna's dining room table, masks on, putting the bags together and talking about the children. By the time we see them again, some will be 3" taller!

We will continue, trying new ideas for winter and Lent, Easter and Pentecost. Maybe by then, we can all be together!

ACCEPTANCE WHICH INCLUDES RESPECT AND WELCOMING

COVENANTAL PARTNERS/MEMBERS

Vista Grande UCC began the year with 73 recorded covenantal partners/members and affiliates. Eight new persons were received as covenantal partners; these families included 5 children. At the end of 2020, eight persons were moved to inactive status, and we had two covenantal partner deaths and several deaths of affiliates. Vista Grande ended the year with 71 covenantal partners. Average Zoom worship attendance for 2020 was 49. Let's see if we can boost that number up this year.

In Memoriam

John Phillip Allen
January 10, 1944 – July 2, 2020

John Allen became a Covenantal Partner with Vista Grande along with his wife, Linda Allen on Sept. 15, 2019. Just as we were getting to know the gifts that John had to offer, he became ill with cancer. He wanted to attend Men's Breakfast. He wanted to have more theological discussions with Clare. He wanted to read the books Percolate studied. We hoped that one day he could come back; however, he succumbed to his illness. We wished we could have learned more from John who lived life to the fullest. Pastor Clare officiated his memorial service on October 3, 2020 via Zoom – "until we meet again."

**Lewis Selkirk “Kirk” Coonley
November 27, 2020; age 74**

Kirk Coonley was the loving spouse of Linda Coonley, a Covenantal Partner with Vista Grande. They had just made Colorado Springs their year-round home in 2019, after spending 15 summers near Ft Garland. Kirk (and Linda) loved access to mountain hiking, wildlife, and wildflowers. Kirk had climbed one 14'er at age 71 and was planning more before a recurrence of his cancer.

Over the years, he was a church goer; however, he agreed wholeheartedly with John Muir: “I'd rather be in the mountains thinking of God, than in church thinking about the mountains.” He attended a few of our “socials” and enjoyed exchanging stories of careers and travels with Linda's friends. Memories of Kirk shall live on.

**Ronald Jerome Forth
September 13, 1943 - December 8, 2020**

During the summer of 2015, Ron and Maggie Forth dropped into Vista Grande for worship. They immediately connected and had found a new church home. Ron and Maggie immediately started singing in the choir and participated in many areas of church activities and mission. They became covenantal partners in Dec. 2015. After a short time, they needed to move on to somewhere warmer as they were part of a RV community and COS was too cold! It was going to be temporary until they could return. They moved to NM and then AZ but always called Vista Grande their UCC home and kept in touch. Early 2020, they ventured to FL for the winter with the intention of returning to CO for the summer months. Unfortunately, COVID kept them in FL. In late fall, Ron became ill. He died of West Nile virus before he could come home.

We will miss his friendly smile and willingness to serve.

Rodney Pitman

Rodney Pitman, a friend of Vista Grande since April 2015, died of COVID in December 2020. He was a quiet man and would slip in and out for worship when his work schedule allowed. He called Vista Grande his church and Pastor Clare, his pastor.

FINDING HOME

Submitted by Mallory Everhart

We made it to the end of 2020! At this point last year, when thinking ahead for what was to come, none of us could have predicted what these twelve months would bring. Though much has felt stuck in stasis, it's surprising and gratifying to reflect on how much we did as a community from our own homes! I have loved getting to write postcards and Christmas cards, make and receive porch visits and dinner drop-offs, attend socially distanced car concerts, as well as video chat or trade texts or messages. Through it all, I remain grateful for all of you and the ways we have committed to staying connected, though we have not been in each other's presence.

In the early months of 2020, Finding Home co-hosted two events with Poetry719, including a winter potluck and poetry reading which collected donations for Spreading Smiles and Sandwiches, and a tattoo story-telling event. Later in the year, we collaborated again during Poetry719's virtual poetry festival, co-hosting an interfaith writing workshop and open mic with Mojdeh Stoakley, founder of Interfaith Poets. On December 20th, I was honored to facilitate a Blue Christmas service with Reverent Pat Dolin, featuring the music of our very own Amanda Udis-Kessler.

Outside of collaboration events, attendance at Finding Home has been sporadic and, given the nature of its original conception, has had a difficult time translating into a virtual space. On January 17th, we will be celebrating two years of holding space and it will be our last meeting. Finding Home started as a grand experiment and I am so grateful for the opportunity it gave me to learn about community, intimacy, spirituality, poetry, and the magic that happens when strangers sit down over a bowl of soup.

Outside of Finding Home, my ministry at Vista Grande has matured in exciting ways. Phyllis Tickle, a church historian, has a hypothesis that the Church undergoes A Great Rummage Sale every 500 years or so, where we as Christians discern what's working, what's not, and how to chart a course for the future. Two days before all of our lives would change in March, I told the Southeastern Association Committee on Ministry that I wanted to and was prepared to be part of that sorting out. Though I meant it and still do, I wasn't banking on the unique challenges, heartbreaks, and joys COVID would present. In August, I served as Clare's pulpit supply and completed the Easter in August sermon series, a structured way for us to attend to the grief, liminal space, and joy of possibility inherent in the global pandemic we are collectively facing. In September, I successfully passed my Ecclesiastical Council and reaffirmed my desire to be, as Bishop Karen Oliveto put it, an "ancestor of the future church."

To that end, in collaboration with Clare, Deborah, and the Vision Team, I am launching a season of discernment conversations with the aim of remembering and honoring all Vista Grande UCC has been, is now, and will be. As a church, we will spend the time between Epiphany (January) and Pentecost (May) diving deep into our history, naming our current values and community needs, and charting a course for the future. It's an exciting time full of possibility and wonder and I pray for the Spirit's presence and guidance as we embark on this journey together. We are meeting on Sunday afternoons at 1pm and Wednesday evenings at 7pm to discuss a weekly theme. If you are reading this, you are a necessary part of these conversations and they would be poorer without you. We wouldn't be us without you.

In the midst of the group conversations, please know that I am also available for individual discussions and pastoral care. Feel free to reach out to me at any time and I will be happy to celebrate with you, weep with you, bounce ideas around with you, or otherwise provide whatever support or companionship is within my ability. In the light of the Christmas star, Mallory.

**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

There were 2 major factors affecting the efforts, actions, and results of our Just Peace (JP) Ministry this year. The COVID-19 virus and the Racial Justice movement of 2020. COVID preempted all in person gatherings while Racial Justice became one of 2 top issues in the United States (the second being the 2020 Elections, which has been riddled with concerns of justice as well). With that said, we were definitely involved in justice work, but it was not organized by the JP Ministry team. It was put forth by individual and collective passions for doing God's work and being Christ like.

In the latter part of 2019 the chair of the JP Ministry team took on a leadership role with the executive council. Due to this our JP work waned. 2020 was intended to be a year of organizing and hosting justice events at Vista Grande. Items of specific interest were having a mini conference on Mental Health in the Church, hosting an event to educate on the process of legislative changes of laws. Doing more action work with/for the homeless and expanding our Racial Justice work. The virus did not allow for gathering people together to do these things. It also did not set a tone that they could be carried out into the world even if our congregation proceeded online.

The single most thing that we did collectively was to continuously provide monetary support and goods to organizations that were doing active justice work. Some were advocating for changes in our law enforcement system, such as the Chinook Center; and others were doing direct support of homeless folk while advocating for them; like Smiles and Sandwiches. A financial contribution honoring Pastor Clare's ordination anniversary was donated to Chinook in October. Bob and Nancy Morlock-Hollins set up a collection point at their house for goods to be provided for Smiles and Sandwiches as well.

In the area of Racial Justice, Pastor Clare expanded her Sacred Conversations to End Racism training to include people outside of VGCC via online classes. Her doing this has also created a deeper sense of VGCC's commitment to Racial Justice as well. Financial support was provided to our Moderator, Kayan Cross as he attended the Get Your Knee Off Our Necks March on Washington. A brief presentation of the experience of Black trauma as it relates to racism was given upon his return. Also, during the peak times of

local and global protests against police brutality against Black people, Rev. Deb Tinsley organized a silent vigil at Acacia Park. Fifteen plus lawn/window signs supporting Racial and Human Justice were donated to VGCC and displayed at the homes of covenantal partners. Many of our congregants participated independently in various ways in the Black Lives Matter protests and other protests condemning racism and other forms of oppression, a continuous testament to the spiritual work that drives our overall sense of doing what is required of us.

We have continued to fly our Flags of Justice at church in spite of our Black Lives Matter flag being stolen. This act was actually a catalyst for securing a donors commitment to provide us with flags on an ongoing basis. The wonderful thing about the flags is that we get to continue expressing our justice views at our building even during our absence and challenges to gather.

**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 and the Mission Coordinators

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 2020 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, Our Churches' Wider Mission, Strengthen the Church and The Christmas Fund. We have met all our quarterly goals for 2020 and still managed to send a support check to La Foret, UCC Coalition, Westside CARES Food Bank, Casa de Paz, National Mill Dog Rescue, Care and Share Food Bank.

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 the 2019 Advent season covenantal partners bought "special" books to add to the collection. They were delivered in January of 2020. We also collected items for Smiles and Sandwiches, which are delivered to unhoused people once a month.

All our meetings are open. And we generally meet after church on Zoom 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

Inside-Out Youth Services has been virtual for most of the year. Services for young people ages 13-24 are online. They meet digitally in a Discord server from 5-7:30:

- Monday – Qmmunity Resilience
- Tuesday – Pop Culture Club
- Wednesday – Transformation
- Thursday- Smart Hearts
- Friday- Rec Night

In coordination with The Place, Inside-Out has opened its doors this winter to provide a temporary drop-in Warming Shelter for homeless youth aged 15-24. It's open from 10-4 Monday – Friday. Food, hygiene products and counseling are available as well as housing information.

One Nation Walking Together

Submitted by Judy Druelinger

Vista Grande Community Church – UCC continues to support One Nation Walking Together as one of our four local missions. One Nation serves our Native American people both locally and on reservations in several states. Like many non-profits they were impacted by the Covid-19 virus. One Nation had to limit their activities and find creative ways to continue to serve their client's. ONWT did use smaller vehicles to take supplies directly to people rather than large trucks to a central location for distribution. They were able to deliver many PPE and water to various locations.

Like other organizations the number of volunteers has dwindled because of the impact of the virus on older adults. Local face to face programs have been impacted as well as the types of donations they are able to accept at this time. Like all of us they are hoping that 2021 will bring good things.

Los Pobres

Submitted by Faye Gallegos

The year 2020 for Los Pobres has been challenging. We have served our clients and patrons as best as we could with the times of forced closure and brief times of openness for the food, clothing, clinic, and health assistance. We've lost a number of people. "It leaves us with sadness and brokenness. Two of our very long-standing volunteers who worked daily with us, a mother and son, died two days apart just before New Year's. It's left a big hole in our hearts".

Right now, we are open Tuesday mornings and Thursday afternoons to do our very best. "We've continued to pay utilities, some rents, and medical bills as the donations permit. We are grateful for the love and help given to us by the Vista Grande Community. God bless all of you for your support."

I hope to begin again going to Los Pobres soon. At that time we can collect donated items for our mission. Thank you to all who helped during the year and with the Christmas Fund for Families.

Family Promise

Submitted by 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.

Vista Grande participated in the annual fundraiser, the 23rd Annual Hope, Hearts, and Home Luncheon held at The Antlers Hotel at the end of February. Ten folks from Vista Grande attended to share in the excitement of the upcoming possibilities. And then ... The pandemic necessitated the importance of revamping and expanding some of the programs. Family Promise opened up a New Promise Family Shelter in a vacant motel on Nevada Ave. just in time to offer space for 16-20 new families. This is a low barrier housing program to give families some stability while they make the next step. The Interfaith Hospitality Network (church facility rotation) program had to have some quick changes as the churches all closed due to COVID-19. Offices quickly moved to space in the New Promise location which made room for four smaller families to stay at the Day House on Tejon with many safety measures put in place. The Community Cares Transitional Housing was also used.

The meal service to the families in the Day House also changed format. Instead of sharing the meal prep with the congregation and having a connection while serving, there could be no outside contact with the families, so our normal April commitment was cancelled. The families were given gift cards to order dinner from a local take out. Then in November, we were able to provide the meals; however, they had to be prepared and delivered by one family and packaged separately for each family. Still no contact with the families.

The September Fundraising Walk also had a new format. Instead of a large community walk downtown, folks were asked to plan individual walks or small group social distancing walks with their own community. Vista Grande planned two walks; a mid-week morning walk on a small trail and a Saturday walk at a local park. Some individuals chose to walk alone in the neighborhood. Family Promise appreciated the creative ways that churches kept the event alive.

The Christmas Wish program also changed format. Vista Grande offered money instead of the personal touch this year.

Vista Grande has several covenantal partners and friends that serves Family Promise. Jeanne Harrington serves as one of our local meal planners (during normal times), Donna Bristow serves on the Congregational Care Committee, Chad Siebert serves on the Board, Timotheus Cross is employed as Facilities Technician, and Crystal Karr is employed as Director of Operations. Learn more by visiting <https://www.ihn-cos.org> Thank you to everyone who supported Family Promise by opening your hearts to the mission of ending Family Homelessness. We hope 2021 will allow us to get back to have a relational ministry with Family Promise.

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 2020 and others gave to special appeals. Our group mission results:

Financial Giving Directly to Mission Programs - \$29,706.91*

In Kind Giving to Mission Programs - \$3,641.34

Mileage traveled (432 miles) to support Missions calculated - \$115.56

Volunteer Hours (258 hours) spent to support Mission Activity (@ \$24/hr) - \$6,192.00

Total for Mission Giving: \$ 39,655.81

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 \$3,167.23 in items and 326 hours which translates to \$7,824.00. We could accomplish a lot more because of these gifts.

Total for In Kind Giving: \$20,971.05

The pie charts for Missions 2020 is Addendum 2, page 29.

* The mission totals are higher than the treasurer’s report because these numbers include cash donations that were submitted directly to the mission recipient.

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 Spencer for keeping these updated.

Our in-building advertising has taken a back slide as we are not in the building.

Our bi-monthly and now quarterly newsletter, *Vista Views*, was available through our website and paper copy. Communication to the congregation was also made through our weekly e-blasts on Mondays and Thursdays. 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 is admin@vgcc.org

FELLOWSHIP REPORT

Submitted by Carolyn Gunning

The year started out as usual with our annual Friendship Dinner held in February and then everything changed drastically after that with the arrival of the pandemic in March!

On February 21st at 6 p.m. a very lively group met at the private party room at the Mi Mexico restaurant on North Academy for our Friendship Dinner. We always enjoy celebrating the amazing friendships we have developed here at Vista Grande!

On March 15th, the church was closed to in-person gatherings until further notice but thought to be for 2 weeks at most. Little did we know the extent of what was happening and how long we would be called upon to wait at that time. But one of the many things that this pandemic has shown to us all is that this community is made up of very creative people who have been able to adapt and even flourish during this prolonged wait! Another thing is that we are blessed with many “tech-savvy” people that have rescued us in so very many ways!

Due to the magic of Zoom our friendships have been able to remain intact as we go about the business of the spirit and the church. During the unusually long summer weather we had this fall, our church leaders came up with the clever idea of holding a “Socially-distanced” Ice Cream Social in the parking lot at the church on September 19th at 1 p.m. Spots were marked off and guidelines put in place so that we could safely enjoy our “in-person” reunion while we listened to fabulous music on a special channel on our car radios. Thank you Amanda and Phoebe!

When the cooler weather appeared, this same “in-person” reunion was repeated on November 21st at 1 p.m. only this time with hot chocolate and cookies and Christmas music, again provided by Amanda. You’re amazing!

Thanks once again to Judy Druelinger we did not have to miss our Women’s Retreat which was held via Zoom on Saturday morning, October 11th. Sara Weatherman did an outstanding job of leading the discussion on “Seeing” as presented in the Bible in the Gospel of Mark-healing of the blind man. Through various activities, including the wearing of masks, she helped us to know that our past experiences cloud the way we look at things and how we can use our “tools” like study and worship to see things with our hearts instead of our heads as Jesus modeled in our scripture readings. Well done Sara!

Fellowship was different for all of us during 2020 but as you can see, it is still alive and well and flourishing well into the new year!

Grant Writing

Submitted by Rev. Deborah Tinsley

When churches were ordered to shut down on 19 March of 2020, Vista Grande was ready with Zoom worship that next Sunday the 22nd. For a while, it seemed it was working to have this way of worshipping for the few months it would probably be necessary.

However....

We were not back in the sanctuary in a few months. And we discovered not all were able to connect with Zoom to worship, to attend a book study or a Team Meeting, or to engage in any of the other church events taking place on Zoom. Then there was a question raised by Clare in worship one day, a simple question of 'how are you doing?' I remember it felt as if the flood gates opened, and there was an outpouring of sharing of feelings; of being isolated, alone, missing human connection. Many shared that Zoom worship was the only bright spot in their week because it meant being able to be with others outside of the home. This helped bring home the reality that for many having a working, up to date computer with good connectivity was a necessary lifeline.

Very quickly a survey was taken to see who needed assistance to be online, to be connected with the church. Remarkably at this same time the Rocky Mountain Conference offered an "In The Mud" grant to congregations who demonstrated a need for technology assistance. We applied, citing our specific needs of our congregants for up-to-date computers that could carry Zoom, for internet access, for all the technology that would offer this way of being connected to any congregant who desired it.

We received the "In the Mud" grant that helped provide part of the expense of computers and all that was needed to keep people in touch in this new way of being the church. I would like to share the letter of thanks that went to the Conference for making this possible.

"It seems sometimes things are preordained, or a need is met when those with resources to share perceive that others have a need. Whatever the reason, the RMC In The Mud grant dovetailed a need Vista Grande UCC was facing.

Like so many congregations, the effect of Covid-19 was a quick shutdown of all in person events at church, including worship. Zoom church became the norm, but we discovered there are digital barriers for some just as there are physical ones in 'regular' church. Some congregants were not technically able to meet up in Zoom church worship, book studies, Ministry Team meetings, and all the other events that were now being held digitally. Maybe it was a lack of internet service, or an older computer that couldn't support Zoom. A phone survey was done to identify the particular needs, and a plan began to take shape to make it possible for all those who wished to be connected to be connected.

The grant, along with other funds, provided for:

- 4 Lenovo Idea Pads (\$1,011.96)
- FM transmitter (\$115.63)
- NETGEAR 4LTE Broadband Modem (\$129.99)
- TP-Link N450 WiFi Router (\$124.99)
- ATT hot spot access (\$23.49/mo)

- *Time and talent of Tech Wizard Dave Bristow to make it all come together (generously provided free of charge!)*

Being forced by circumstances to find new ways in which to build spirit-based communities on-line revealed the creativity, innovation, and true caring nature of Vista Grande UCC. No one was going to be left behind.

We give thanks to the RMC for assisting us in this effort by providing the grant right when it was needed. You made it possible for us to expand our digital community, making us all able to be together on Zoom, to continue to be the Vista Grande community in these times."

Rev. Deborah Tinsley; Associate Minister for Vision and Support Vista Grande UC

We were challenged to be the church in a new way to meet the needs of a new time, and with assistance from the Conference as well as others, we were able to meet this need. Vista Grande UCC continues to be a nimble, committed church. I feel like we all should have a tee shirt, imprinted with "You can't scare me, you can't stop me: I'm Vista Grande UCC!"

FACILITIES MINISTRY

Submitted by Jan Morgan

2018 was the Year of the "Slop-a-thon" parking lot project
 2019 was the Year of the "Bob Howard Memorial Garden"
 2020 was the Year of "COVID-19 clean up and Windows"

So 2020 we have seen changes in how we are working inside the building so most of the focus was outdoors where we could stay distant. Five outdoor workdays were scheduled over the spring, summer and fall. These focused upon weed control, tree trimming, balcony drainage and exterior door work. Approval was obtained to replace the broken and cracked windows along the south of the building to prevent further breaking and possible injury to others. Our meetings were conducted on Zoom when this coordinator could get things working. Lol

Memorial bricks finally arrived and were installed in the garden under the pergola. Interior work included painting the kitchen wall and bathroom ceilings in fellowship hall. The Fire alarm system was repaired. Hand railings were tightened and loose carpet ends were glued down. Altar steps were refinished as were outside balcony doors. Cameras and signs were installed to deter vandals. Total actual peep hours totaled 177!!!

Big items are coming due this next year as we continue to care and repair our building and grounds! Please consider joining this team as we organize for the year ahead.

A HUGE Thank You goes out to this group of hard-working People.

John Tinsley, Richard and Carol Burbank, David Bristow and Phil Puterbaugh.

Jerry Moore is our cleaning scheduler and *Carolyn Gunning* mows for us.

Addendum by Donna – Jan Morgan kept track of all the projects and included Charlie Morgan on the work team. We appreciate you too!

THE WIDER CHURCH

Submitted by Donna Bristow

Vista Grande continued to be well represented at Wider Church activities during 2020. Some activities were in person, but most were via Zoom.

The Rocky Mountain Conference Annual Celebration was held via Zoom over a 12-day period with a varied schedule; July 20 – August 1. There were many opportunities to join in for morning reflections, workshops, interest gatherings, social time, and worship. The conference-wide worship hosted by the Southeastern Association was held on July 26. The meeting ended on August 1 with the business meeting, celebrations of accomplishments, and nominations for the next slate of officers. Our voting delegates were Kayan Cross and Nancy Morlock-Hollins. Over the course of the Annual Celebration, we were represented by at least eight other covenantal partners.

On Sunday October 18, seven folks from Vista Grande attended the Southeastern Association Annual Meeting which was held via Zoom. Our voting delegates were Kayan Cross, Nancy Morlock-Hollins. and Dana Zimmerman.

There were two Ecclesiastical Councils; Anya Powers on March 14 and Mallory Everhart on September 13. Anya's ordination to ordained ministry was held on August 22. Both Anya and Mallory were members at First Congregational Church, COS. These events were hybrid events; making use of Zoom as well as a small group of social distanced invited guests. Several people from Vista Grande attended. As Mallory was well known to Vista Grande having spent a 10-month internship (Fall 2018 – Spring 2019) at VG, many gathered to show their support.

2020 Participants on Association and Conference Teams:

Pastor Clare served on the Committee on Ministry and was the Southeastern Association (SEA) Moderator. Clare resigned in October after serving three years in that setting. Clare now serves as a Sacred Conversations to End Racism (SC2ER) facilitator.

Nancy Morlock-Hollins serves on the SEA Committee on Ministry. Donna Bristow serves as the registrar for the Southeastern Association to keep the clergy files in order and to keep the national database up-to-date.

In August, David Bristow was elected to serve as the Southeastern Association Rep to the Rocky Mountain Conference Board of Directors. That is scheduled to be a three-year term. The folks at Vista Grande fulfill our covenant with the wider church.

FINANCIAL SECRETARY

Submitted by John Tinsley

The pledged amounts for Operating and Mission in 2020 were both very well supported by the congregation. The non-pledged Operating and Plate were both under in 2020 by approximately \$2,000 each compared to 2019 which is due to the pandemic causing us to cancel "in person worship". The non-pledged Mission for 2020 is approximately the same as 2019. The 2021 pledging is under for Operating and ahead for Mission at this time.

Year	# Pledges	Pledged		Pledged Collected		Non Pledged Collected		
		Operating	Mission	Operating	Mission	Operating	Mission	Plate
2020	36 ¹	82,360	18,695	83,556	18,446	11,326	525	731
2021	27 ²	75,390	20,635	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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

TREASURER'S REPORT

Submitted by Dana Zimmerman

This year was definitely unusual and had our expenses on a roller coaster of sorts, some expenses higher than usual and others lower. We did receive a PPP loan of \$17,000 which we expect to be fully forgiven as soon as the bank is able to process the paperwork. This allowed us to keep all staff through October when we had to let our music director and nursery worker go. We were able to accomplish some of the needed repairs and upgrades to the building in 2020. We did receive two new grants, as well as charitable gifts from kind donors wishing to help those impacted by the Covid-19 virus. Because of your faithful support, we actually ended 2020 in a better position financially than expected, well under budget.

Due to the generosity of our Covenantal Partners and VGUCC friends, without a formal stewardship campaign this year, but by simply asking those that were able to renew last year's pledge, we received pledges for the General Fund equaling 95% of last year's amount. We are still expecting a few more pledges to come in. The pledges for Missions exceeds last year's pledges by 20%! Combining all pledging we are at 99% of last year's total pledges. We are so grateful for your generosity in these tough times.

Our mission giving shows VGUCC's commitment to serving others. VGUCC continues to be a "5 for 5" church, which means we support the 5 areas of mission within the UCC denomination. 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. Our local missions also receive nonmonetary gifts as well as our financial and volunteer support.

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

INCOME	2020 Budget	2020 Actual	2021 Proposed
Pledges	83,360.00	83,780.55	79,070.00
Plate Offerings	3,000.00	730.76	500.00
Non-Pledged Checks	6,000.00	11,325.70	6,000.00
South Hall Rental	34,800.00	34,800.00	34,800.00
King Soopers Bonus	1,600.00	1,247.13	1,200.00
Fund Raisers	2,500.00	350.00	350.00
Misc.	3,500.00	17,295.00	7,500.00
TOTAL	134,760.00	149,529.14	129,420.00

EXPENSES	2020 Budget	2020 Actual	2021 Proposed
Faith Formation	425.00	180.29	350.00
Finance	910.00	743.94	925.00
Membership	1,250.00	1,630.08	1,250.00
Office & General	2,819.00	2,044.84	2,788.00
Programs	3,150.00	314.95	700.00
Property	27,445.00	24,305.15	29,714.00
Worship	750.00	412.70	700.00
Payroll	99,487.80	96,320.80	95,067.55
TOTAL	136,236.80	125,952.75	131,494.55
INCOME - EXPENSES	(1,476.80)	23,576.39	(2,074.55)

Part 3 - Bank Account and United Church Funds

ACCOUNT	Balance 12/31/19	Balance 12/31/20
Checking	26,966.61	52,063.31
United Church Funds	40,575.60	45,719.75

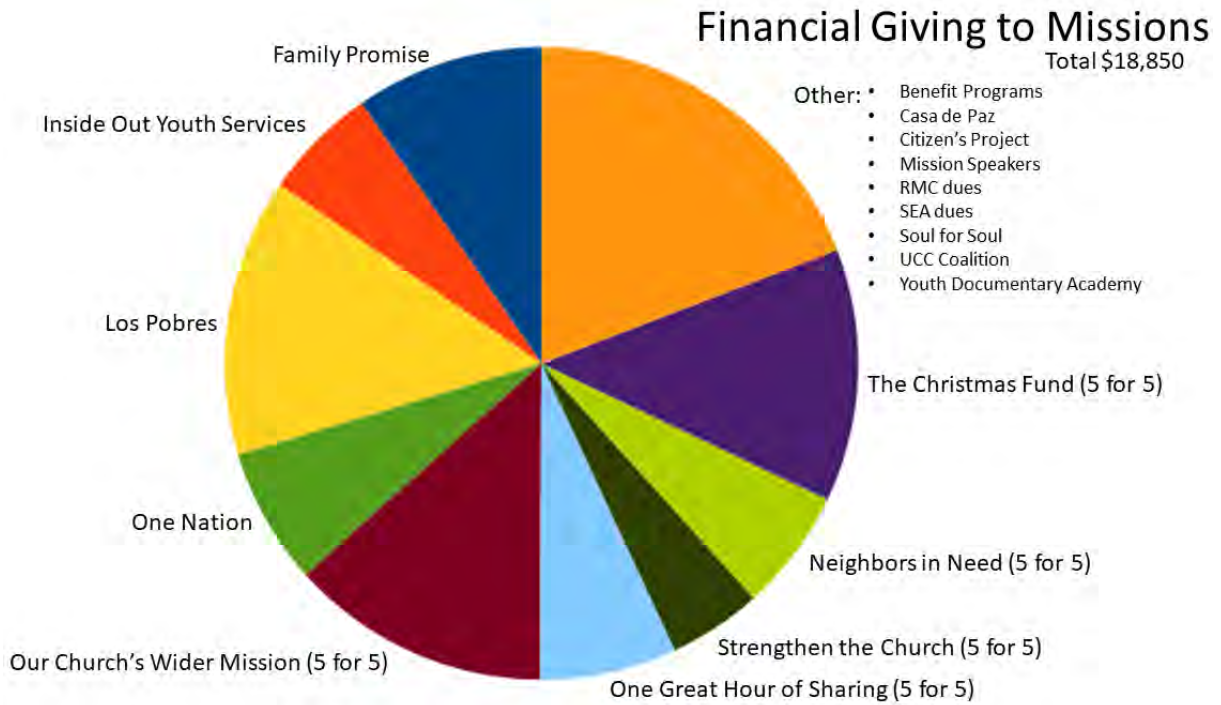
Part 2 - Restricted Funds

ACCOUNT	Balance 12/31/19	Income	Expenses	Balance 12/31/20
Missions	5,219.91	22,885.61	26,109.91	1,995.61
Pastor's Discretionary	1,214.86	1,311.08	550.00	1,975.94
Covid 19 Help	-	3,170.00	800.00	2,370.00
Youth	918.74			918.74
Choir	892.94			892.94
Women's Retreat	39.00	425.00	325.29	138.71
Covenantal Partner Care	446.54			446.54
Zoom Equipment	-	775.00		775.00
NCS-U Grant	1,335.64			1,335.64
In the Mud Grant	583.76		150.00	433.76
In the Mud Grant (Covid)	-	1,000.00	46.98	953.02
Covid UCC MicroTechnology	-	1,500.00	1,500.00	-
Memorial Gifts	8,222.39			8,222.39
TOTAL	18,873.78	31,066.69	29,482.18	20,458.29

MISSIONS DETAIL	Paid In 2020
Family Promise	2,815.00
Inside Out Youth Services	2,075.00
Los Pobres	2,575.00
One Nation Walking Together	3,725.00
5/5 Our Church's Wider Mission	4,000.00
5/5 One Great Hour of Sharing	2,300.00
5/5 Strengthen the Church	900.00
5/5 Neighbors in Need	1,000.00
5/5 The Christmas Fund	1,500.00
Mission Speakers	
Benefit Programs	400.00
Misc.	4,819.91
TOTAL	26,109.91
2021 MISSION PLEDGES	22,375.00

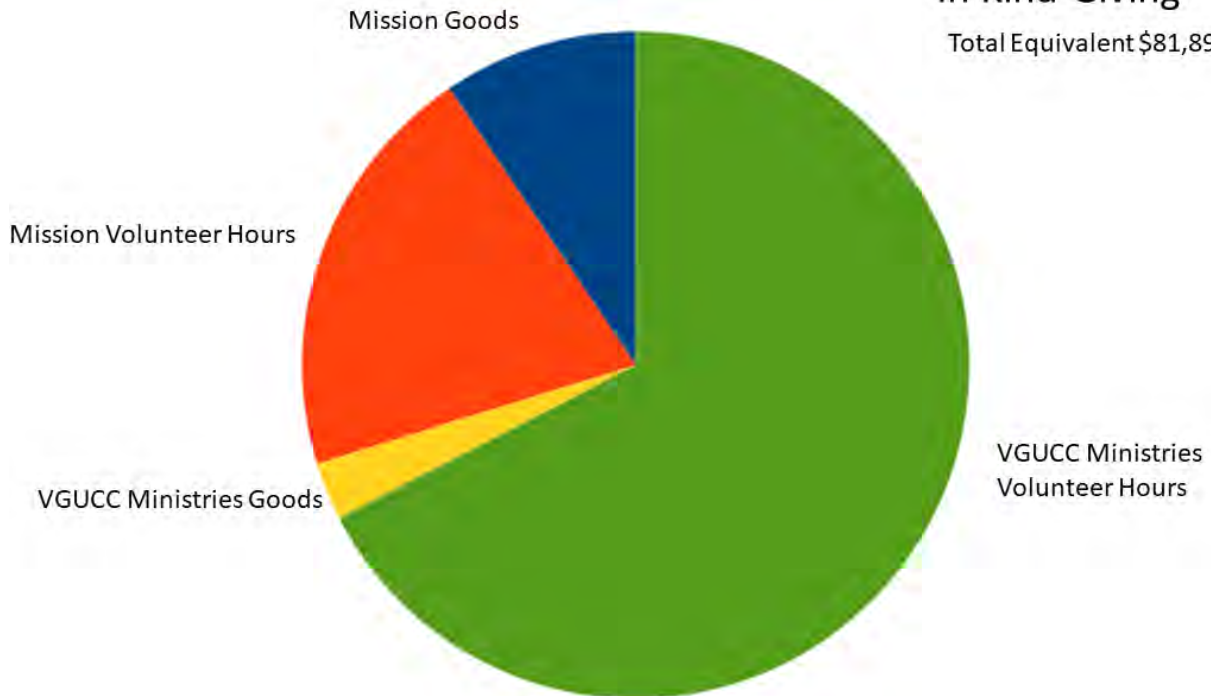
Addendum 1.

2019 Missions



In Kind Giving

Total Equivalent \$81,894



Addendum 2.

2020 Missions

