

ARTICLE 45
Nov Dec 2021



Vista Grande United Church of Christ
The Vista Views

“If the only prayer you ever say in your entire life is *thank you*, it will be enough.” Meister Eckhart

I was walking amidst the Ponderosa pines at La Foret a few weeks ago during my post sabbatical retreat. I must admit I was still trying to acclimate to being back at church, diving right into all the church stuff, trying to stay present to all the goings on. I would be lying if I didn't tell you I was agitated and frustrated while trying to switch gears. But then I heard this voice in the midst of my bitching session with God. Simply, I heard, *'this is a gift'*. My first thought was 'well, Divine one, I hope you saved the receipt 'cause this is one of the worst gifts ever!' But as I returned to the cabin, with no more certainty than before, I was coming to terms with this idea of *gift*.

These past, almost 2 years now, could be called almost anything other than a gift. There has been so much uncertainty, and grief and loss, and fear and isolation, that calling it a gift would be tantamount to minimizing so much suffering. Yet, for me, there exists in these so called ashes of loss and chaos, a mystifying sensation of gratitude. Don't get me wrong, I would trade it in if it meant alleviating so much suffering. It's just that the gratitude comes from being able to *feel* it all: to empathize and have compassion; to experience discomfort in the chaos while also experiencing comfort in a digital community; to be able to recognize further, all that needs to be done to seek justice; to have awareness of the need for companionship and community; the frustration of not being able to fix things; the overwhelming sense of confusion and hopelessness. It may seem weird to identify any of this as *gift* until we recognize that for every feeling we experience, we are gifted with an understanding of what other humans might be going through. This can become a gift which calls us into relationship with those perhaps we never would have considered. This is a gift that when it is accepted with gratitude and humility, can propel us into a more profound experience of empathy and compassion than we ever thought we could have.

Of course, there is also so much gratitude for this Beloved community and how we have all continued to show up, not only for one another, but for our larger community. We have extended our church community by being available beyond our four walls. We have maintained our building even as we met online. And we have met our fiscal responsibilities to our missions even in the midst of all that has been challenging. Even now we still remain steadfast in our commitments, even as the future remains challenging and somewhat unknown. *All of this is gift.*

(continued on page 3.)

Inside this issue

General Information	2
Advent	3
Moderator's Message	4-5
Mallory's Message	5-6
Mission Fest	7
Mission	7-9
Covenantal Partners	10
Faith Formation	11

Special points of interest:
ZOOM

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



United in Christ's love, we seek justice for all.

We are a distinct and diverse community of Christians that come together as one church united in Spirit to love all, welcome all and seek justice for all.

The United Church of Christ (UCC) is a distinct and diverse community of Christians that come together as one church to join faith and action. With over 5,000 churches and nearly one million members across the U.S., the UCC serves God in the co-creation of a just and sustainable world. The UCC is a church of firsts, a church of extravagant welcome, and a church where "...they may all be one" (John 17:21).

<https://www.ucc.org>

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

Co-Pastor—Rev. Clare Twomey

Co-Pastor — Rev. Mallory Everhart

Office Administrator—Donna Bristow

2021 Executive Committee:

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

The next newsletter will be the Jan.Feb.Mar 2022 edition.
Deadline for articles is December 15. E-mail your articles to admin@vgcc.org

I realize that this is a bit of an unorthodox stewardship article. I think a letter of gratitude might be more appropriate. And yet, we all know that it takes money to maintain all we have going on. It would be nice if we could hit the lottery and be done with it for sure. But we also know that if we can embrace who we are able to be, and all we've been able to do as a gift, then giving becomes a natural response, especially if it is from place of immense gratitude.

We will no doubt have some challenges to consider as we go forward. We must still be intentional about maintaining safe protocols for in person gatherings. We must also be as intentional in maintaining our technology so all who attend online know they are just as present as those in the sanctuary. We are still committed to the needs and relationships we have formed with our missions. We will have to adjust our budget given we no longer have a renter in South Hall to subsidize our income. We will carefully and prayerfully discern who we will be in terms of being a racial justice church. And we will listen to the Spirit as we further discern how to use the gift of our property to further the work of the kingdom. And if we can approach all of this with deep gratitude for the gift of our being, we will have nothing to fear and so much to gain.

I remain so very grateful for this Beloved community and the gift you are to all those who know you. Peace, Clare

ADVENT, 2021

Advent marks the four weeks before Christmas where we take time to anticipate, contemplate, pray, and wait for the birth of the Christ Child.

Traditionally, each week we light a candle to represent Hope, Peace, Love, and Joy respectively, and on Christmas we light the Christ candle.

This year, as we have a hybrid service, the Advent wreath will be lit at the church. We will follow this order:

- Sunday November 28 – Peace; the First Sunday of Advent
- Sunday December 5 – Hope; the Second Sunday of Advent
- Sunday December 12 – Joy; the Third Sunday of Advent
- Sunday December 19 – Love; the Fourth Sunday of Advent
- Friday December 24 – Christmas Eve
- Sunday December 26 – The First Sunday after Christmas



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

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9115878719>

Meeting ID: 911 587 8719

Empowering Voices with Connected Spirits by Kayan Cross



Throughout the month of October, I have been granted the enhanced awareness of noticing what is not being said or said enough partially because society is not giving way for voices to speak and partially because there aren't enough ears tuned in. Some may think that there is so much being said because the conversation of racial injustice continues since George Floyd was murdered.

Well I would like to put on the table we, as a Just Peace congregation, seem to be having less conversation about Justice.

I wonder if there are effects of Covid-19 on the Spirit of Justice. I wonder if the Spirit of Justice needs to be nurtured back to health because it has been a casualty of Covid 19. Today, I want to remind you. Today, I want you to listen to your Spirit. Today, I want you to remember who you are in spite of; I invite us all to settle in with the child of God inside of us. The child that believes everything is possible. The Disciple that is now, and has been, committed to a Just Kingdom.

I would like us to actively resume our work as a Just Peace church. I would like us to start by consciously choosing to listen to the voices of the marginalized. To notice not only, the words but the sentiments, and what needs to be heard. To move away from the rhetoric of debate and power struggles. To notice, your spirit's response to where you are in relation to Justice and Peace work. It is time to convene a Just Peace Ministry team again. We will look deeper at the effectiveness of our activities. We can do justice, love mercy and walk humbly, together.

For now, I invite us to share our discomforts, challenges, fears angst and delights regarding this work with each other, a clearing of sorts to prepare ourselves and our spirits. In this invitation I want to also remind you of our little use resources within the church to share your views, thoughts or experiences there are the "Covenantal Info" and "Covenantal Conversation" pages on our website. These pages were introduced to us via an email from David Bristow on Sept. 15, 2020. The Covenantal Conversation can be a useful platform to share and or participate in dialogue with others. If you need the password to these pages, check that email or contact David. Also, we have our members at large, Carol Burbank and Jeanne Harrington. They are available to assist in addressing any questions or concerns you may have regarding our church, by responding directly or ensuring your issue gets to the right person(s).

Lastly, I submit the attached article and my response letter to the editor as an example of how justice nor equity can be achieved, when the platform does not allow space for those voices negatively impacted to speak. This letter is not about my story as much as an example of allowing space for the possibility that things are not necessarily as presented, and how that culminates into incomplete truths. One of the places where injustice lives.
(Continued on page 7)

<https://www.csindy.com/search/?q=evictions+remain+flat>

Evictions Remain Flat' 10/21/21

I am writing this letter to inform you that the number of “evictions” and stated percentages in the article may not be fully accurate means for gauging whether people are losing their housing due to challenges during the Covid-19 moratorium. I offer as preponderance, an Oct. 2021 experience:

I was informed that I owed back rent, due immediately. This was due to an oversight in a 33 pg. lease. My rent had increased \$150/mo. effective 06/01/21; without notification. It was deemed that I was legally responsible for this amount. Denied a payment plan, I gave 30 days notice. The response was 10 days to Remit or Surrender and accrue additional charges.

This apartment is part of Colorado Apartment Association. The same association whose general counsel, Drew Hamrick, was quoted in the article. They are not part of any government or social service agency. They have 433,000 apartments in Colorado. Does Hamrick’s numbers include Colorado’s other 424,500 rentals? My own experience makes me think the measuring tools are inaccurate. The Courts, Community Development Division, and Colorado Springs Housing Authority have stats also. I wonder if the process of “remit or surrender” serves as a smokescreen that clouds our ability to see what is actually happening in the area of housing retention in Colorado Springs.

This letter is not my story. It is an invitation to us all, to also look through the lens of the marginalized, when we look at injustice. Complete truth should be our guidance.

Greetings from Mallory

Greetings, beloved VGCC family-

We are turning the corner on the closing of another church year and, my goodness, what an eventful year it has been. Between navigating our online Christmas service to Clare’s sabbatical and all of the phenomenal guest speakers to re-opening the church and saying goodbye to our beloved Jim Sailor, it has been a year full of unexpected graces in and among some pretty devastating losses. It has been, though, an incredible year of faith and I have been privileged to travel alongside each of you through it.

One important theme of this church year, for me, has been placing our faith into tangible action. This has long been VGCC’s legacy and it has been just as true if not even more so this year. The decision to live into the hybrid space of re-opening the church and maintaining our Zoom worship component is an incredible example of drawing the circle of God’s love as wide as possible so that all can join in and be part of this community of faith. This commitment is part of our covenantal promises to each other – that we will adjust according to the needs of the people we are in relationship with, even when it calls us out of our comfort zone and into the wild unknown!

I also want to express how incredibly proud of this community and the ways that we show up for the hard stuff. On the short notice of just a couple of hours, more than 20 people gathered to support Jim through his transition into God's presence. We looked death in the face and proclaimed a love that is stronger than death. That was an incredible act of faith and spiritual fortitude and was, by far and away, the most holy experience I have had as a pastor. It took courage and tenderness and abundant grace and I could not be more honored to be part of this community.

At Jim's funeral, Jim's brother Roy read the Parable of the Good Samaritan and challenged the people in attendance to see Jim and other people with learning disabilities as the Good Samaritan and not the person who was victimized. I was struck by his reading of this famous story because his interpretation of it was, in its own way, reading the Bible from the margins – specifically those who are disabled. Those of us with temporarily able bodies may read ourselves as the Good Samaritan and those with disabilities as needing our assistance, but Roy “flipped the script” so to speak and highlighted Jim's generosity and willingness to jump in and help.

Learning to read the Bible from the margins is a skill we are developing and will continue to develop through Advent and on into the new calendar year. Percolate has been studying Reading the Bible from the Margins by Dr. Miguel de la Torre, an enlightening and challenging read! We have also embarked on a bible study of the Gospel of Mark, which I like to think of as the gospel from the margins. If you want to jump in on either of these studies, please feel free! As of this writing, we have only made it through about 10 verses of Mark so you won't be too far behind, I promise!

Mark is often known as a story of discipleship – it starts with Jesus's baptism, where he hears a call from God that will change his life forever. It then continues with Jesus calling the disciples to become “fishers of men” and teaching them about his vision for the world. As we, two millennia later, discern what it means to be disciples in our day and age, there is much spiritual nourishment to be found in these pages. Though our situations may be different, the call to walk step by faithful step, leaving behind those things which hold us back, remains the same.

This new church year will present us with some challenges and opportunities for courageous discipleship. I pray that God will equip each of us for the work that is to come so we are able to meet the challenges and dilemmas ahead with clarity, compassion and, above all, the radical love of neighbor which calls us beyond our fear. I am so glad to be your companion on this journey and I am looking forward to all the surprises, challenges, grace, and community this year holds.

Blessings, my friends.

Pastor Mallory

2021 Holiday Mission Fest



Our 2021 Holiday Mission Fest

What was traditionally our “Warmth Tree” has been re-named this year to be our Holiday Mission Fest Tree.

Gifts can go on the tree or under the tree.

We are collecting:

For Chinook, The People’s Grocery: non-perishable Holiday and everyday food items.

For Family Promise: Gift cards \$20 - \$25 for Dominoes Pizza, Burger King, McDonald’s, Taco Bell, or 5 Guys. (These Fast-Food places are walking distance from Family Promise.)

For Inside Out Youth Services: TBA

For Los Pobres: Children’s socks for girls and boys; small toys for girls and boys (stocking size toys)

For One Nation Walking Together: Shoe Box Gifts (items that fit in one shoe box) as suggested on page 9.

The tree will be up by Nov 28 and we would like the items by December 12. However, we will still receive items for Chinook and Family Promise until Dec 19. Thank you!!

Mission

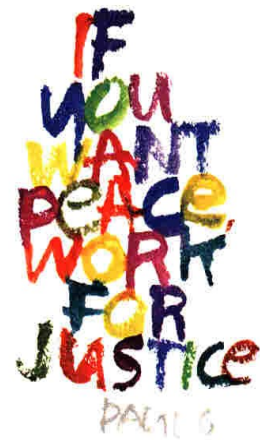
Vision for Mission

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.

Chinook Center's Sunday free food distribution is making a huge difference for nearly 20 households of seniors at a Section 8 apartment building downtown.

Inside Out Youth Services.

Ally Up is the major fundraiser for Inside Out. The theme for this year's Ally Up was, **Access, Equity, Power**. It was a marvelous evening of learning about the need for safe/brave space for LGBTQIA2+ youth like Marshall(he/him) and celebrating 31 years of Inside Out's impact with great performances and testimony from youth, community leaders and partners, staff, and allies. Together, we raised over \$75,000 toward our goal of \$100,000! This year was our second virtual Ally Up. There were over 200 viewers online and in person, over 300 unique site visits the night of the event, and 30 Ally Up watch parties hosted across the state by Inside Out's allies and partners! Because of Ally Up, the LGBTQIA2+ youth of El Paso and Teller counties are able to **access** a necessary safe space through Inside Out's evidence-backed programs. Every 100% tax-deductible contribution helps us in the fight for **equity** among all people, no matter their identity. We joined in building **power** with the LGBTQIA2+ young people of the Pikes Peak region.



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Research shows that when these youth have a safe space and caring, supportive allies, they are half as likely to engage in risky behaviors. As human beings, we long for community and connectedness, and by building strong interpersonal relationships, youth are empowered, develop life skills, and grow in confidence and competence. Inside Out has been here for LGBTQIA2+ and allied youth for 31 years, and we keep expanding our capacity and community impact through adult education, outreach, and activism, all building **access, equity** and **power** for youth.

<https://www.insideoutys.org/youth/>

In kind items for Sandwiches and Smiles are being collected by Nancy Morlock-Hollins.

There is a collection box on her porch at 7649 Safari Cir. Colorado Springs, CO 80920. These items include: individually wrapped snacks, toiletries. Check out the website for other items.

<http://vgcc.org/mission-and-social-justice/>

One Nation Walking Together

Once again Vista Grande will be supporting One Nation Walking Together's Elder Box Program. This is a shoebox wrapped in Christmas paper, filled with a variety of useful items. Please label on the top of the box if it is for an elder man or an elder woman. Please keep the contents to \$20.00 total, so that each gift is equal in value. This ensures that each recipient receives the same value of gift. Below is a list of suggested items. The dollar store is a wonderful place to get a big variety at a reasonable price.

Shampoo, Notepad, pens, pencils, paper, envelopes, Mittens, Lotions, Soap, Wet wipes, sanitizing wipes,

Comb/brush, Toothpaste & toothbrush, Nail clipper/file, Thread, scissors, sewing needles, Coffee, tea, mug, Pocket knife (man or woman), Greeting cards, Protective masks, Postage stamps, Chapstick, deodorant, Hat, gloves, Tissues, handkerchief, Playing cards, Washcloth, towel, Band-aids, Warm socks, slippers, Antiseptic ointment, Small bottles of sanitizer

Something you feel might make it more personal & special, such as a gift card or a handmade item.

Thank you very much for supporting this mission. Please have all items to the church by Dec. 5th. You can also drop wrapped boxes off at the Druelinger's by Dec. 5th. Our address is 5150 Windgate Court that is in the Old Farm area off of Austin Bluff. We will put a bin outside on the porch so you can leave boxes in a safe place out of the weather. We will see that these all get delivered to One Nation.

<https://www.onenationwt.org/>

Family Promise

Thank you for supporting The Family Promise Walk. They surpassed their goal of \$10,000 by raising over \$14,000. Your donations go directly to supporting families with children under the age of 18 experiencing homelessness.

The folks at **Family Promise** appreciated your generous gifts toward their fundraising walk in October. Vista Grande raised \$385. Thank you!

An update on the **Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN)** program of Family Promise.

This is the program that houses and feeds families in churches on a rotational schedule. Due to Covid, there were many changes made and a lot of juggling to support the families with housing. The meals were still provided by the host churches.

Vista Grande prepared the meal on November 1 for the folks in the IHN programs. We are still following COVID protocol.

We are optimistic that the churches will be able to host in their buildings by Spring 2022. In the meantime, Family Promise continues to provide the assistance needed to provide housing for these families.

November Birthdays

- 1 Elly Siebert
- 15 Melissa Bongirno
- 22 Lucille Derr (will be 95)
- 22 Erika Forshee
- 28 Lincoln Spencer
- 29 Maggie Forth



December Birthday

- 5 Maurine Hale
- 5 Nicolas Siebert
- 5 Maggie Tanner
- 6 Ruth Eastwood
- 7 Mel Druelinger
- 10 Jan Morgan
- 10 Charlie Morgan
- 13 Amanda Udis-Kessler
- 19 Brenda Collins
- 23 Erin Elkaim
- 26 Corinne Matzen Anderson

December Anniversaries

- December 18 – Jon and Erika Forshee
- December 21 – Jerima King and Bill Kind

We are still offering Zoom Gatherings:
Tuesday Conversations at 9 a.m.
Thursday Bible Study with Mallory at 7 p.m.
Adult Faith Formation on Sundays at 8:30 a.m.
Sunday Worship at 10 a.m.

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9115878719>
Meeting ID: 911 587 8719

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

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



Percolate – has started a new book; Reading the Bible from the Margins by Miguel A. De La Torre.

"Reading the Bible from the Margins" explores **how the Bible can be used to liberate those who suffer race, class and gender oppression within the United States.** Specifically, the perspectives of African Americans, Latina/os, Asian Americans, gays, and the poor are examined.



NEW – Bible Study with Mallory

The study began Thursday Oct 21; however you can pop in at anytime.

That’s Thursdays at 7 p.m. by Zoom.

We’ll be exploring the Gospel of Mark.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9115878719>

Meeting ID: 911 587 8719

Financial Report for January - October 2021

Thank you for your continued support.

Funds	Pledged	Received	Difference
General Operating	65,891.67	66,700.44	808.77
Mission Outreach	18,645.83	17,500.09	1145.74



**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.”