

## Worship Sundays at 10 AM

### Mailing Address:

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## UCSJ Staff

Rev. Melinda Veatch — Pastor

Rev. Dick Engdahl — Pastor Emeritus

Deacon Bob Larson — Minister of Missional Outreach

Deacon Kathy Graff — Minister of Spiritual Formation

Anita Posey — Administrative Assistant

Katy Kristoffersen — Director of Music

Sue Stern — Treasurer

Laura Hagert — Custodian

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## UCSJ Council

Rev. Melinda Veatch

Dennis Eliason

Kathy Graff

Pam Larson (Chair)

Dee Moore

Joan Moyer

Charlie Scholpp

Carolyn Snowbarger

Timothy Spangler

Angela Todd

Donna Whiskeman

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Newsletter Editor — Barb Eliason

Newslink Editor — Administrative Assistant  
([ucsjoffice@gmail.com](mailto:ucsjoffice@gmail.com))

External Publicity — Kate Kellogg

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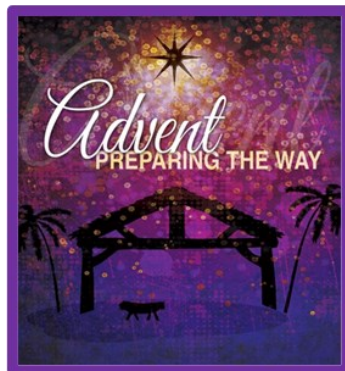
## UCSJ Office Hours

Tuesday and Wednesday

9 AM — 2:30 PM

Thursday

9 AM — 1 PM



*Behold, I am doing a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness,  
and rivers in the desert.  
The wild beasts will honor me,  
the jackals and the ostriches,  
for I give water in the wilderness,  
rivers in the desert,  
to give drink to my chosen people. —  
Isaiah 43:19-20*

As I write this, it is the middle of November. We are heading toward Thanksgiving, the official beginning of the winter holiday season that includes Christmas and the start of the New Year.

For many of us, between now and January 1st, there will be travel, gatherings with family and friends, great meals, parties, gifts, and for some, time to reflect on this past year with gratitude.

But some will also revisit dysfunctional family dynamics. Others will touch on challenging memories or feel grief as they miss those no longer here. Others may experience loneliness, unable to connect with loved ones far away. Though joyful, this can also be a very trying time.

Advent is the holy season that gets the complexities of our lives. Like the deep soil that holds a seed, Advent holds the disappointment of dreams denied and the grief of loss, as well as the remembrance of God's faithfulness and the surprising ways God is preparing to enter into our lives as we continue to live them.

The thing about the infant Messiah who comes to save the world—God incarnate who comes to be with us—is the incredible vulnerability in which he enters the human sphere. No pageantry. No royal protection. Just a feeding trough made into a makeshift cradle in a cave that housed livestock at an inn along a highway. That's about as rough an entry as anyone could have, but that is how and where God chooses to begin engaging anew in the world and in our lives.

As we walk into and through this Advent season, we focus on where in our lives and our world we hold the most hope—and where things seem hopeless; where we are most at peace—and where peace is nowhere in sight; where we experience the most joy—and where joy eludes us; where we most easily receive and give love—and where we don't.

The birth of Jesus is the moment we see God enter our world in a way we would never expect to bring new life into the wilderness places of our lives. Advent gives us a moment to get still, to anticipate, to receive the hope, the peace, the joy, and the love in the new life God is bringing.

*Blessings, Melinda*

## Calendar for December

(For more information, see page #s)

**Saturday, December 2 — 3 PM**

Community Youth Choir Christmas Concert (pg. 5)

**Sunday, December 3**

**10 AM — Communion**

**3 PM — UCSJ and Friends Lessons and Carols (pg. 5)**

**Sunday, December 10**

Voting Deadline for Community Learning Books (pg. 5)

**Tuesday, December 12 — 4:30 PM**

Administrative Committee Meeting

**Friday, December 15 — 10 AM**

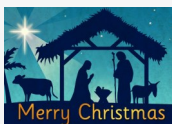
On the Same Page Book Club (pg. 5)

**Sunday, December 24 — Christmas Eve**

**NO Morning Worship**

**5:30 PM — Christmas Eve Worship Service**

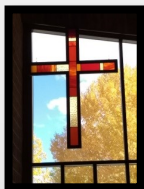
**Monday, December 25**



**Sunday, December 31 — New Year's Eve**

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## Weekly Activities



**SUNDAYS**

**10 AM —** Worship Service (Communion is served the first Sunday of each month)

**MONDAYS — 9 AM (via Zoom)**

Centering Prayer

**WEDNESDAYS — 10 AM**

Prayer Shawl Ministry

**THURSDAYS**

**9:30 AM (via Zoom) —** Women's Bible Study

**4:30 PM —** Choir Practice

**SATURDAYS — 8:30 AM (via Zoom)**

Men's Bible Study

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Address, phone, email changes, or if you wish to be removed from the church directory.

Prayer Requests/Announcements

for the Sunday bulletin

(deadline is Wednesday at noon).

Please email [ucsjoffice@gmail.com](mailto:ucsjoffice@gmail.com) or leave a detailed message on the church phone

970.626.5803

## November Council Highlights

Council met November 14 with representatives from the Western Colorado Presbytery. This meeting is known in the Presbytery as a Triennial meeting and is a process the Presbyterian church initiates every three years and when a Presbyterian pastor begins in a new church. The purpose is to promote communication, smooth transition and assistance. The meeting provided the Council with a positive response regarding the ministries you, our congregation, are doing here in this place and for the excellent work Rev. Melinda is doing here with us; as well as insights in how to continually adjust our ministry with a part-time pastor. Congratulations all, job well done!

After the Triennial meeting council met and, in addition to the regular business of approval of minutes and October financials, we approved EMS use of the church on November 18 for training and Ridgway-Ouray Community Council (ROCC) on December 8 for their annual membership meeting.

We supported a "Mindfulness" course taught by Katy Kristoffersen beginning in January with a second course during Lent. These courses will be offered to the congregation and the community.

The Worship & Music Ministry's proposal to have only a late afternoon service on Christmas Eve at 5:30 PM with no morning service that Sunday was unanimously received. This will give everyone time to enjoy family and friends.

Other items discussed included the donation of the old AV equipment to an interested outside party, the preparation of safety guidelines on December 9 by the Safety Committee and a proposal for summer camps and Sunday Sundae concerts.

**The next meeting will be for the Administrative Committee on Tuesday, December 12 at 4:30 PM here at the church.** Please feel free to join your council, everyone is welcome.

## Church Doors and Keys

**DOUBLE CHECK THE DOORS!** Please make sure the doors are secure and lights off when you are the last to leave the building. There have been incidents lately when someone has found the building open and lights on.

**Again, give the doors an extra tug.**



**KEYS!** We are trying to keep track of who has keys to the church. If you give yours to someone else or have received a key from someone, please let Anita, in the church office, know. For security reasons. Thanks.

## Treasurer's Report

If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact me by phone 970.596.3755 or email [suestern1@gmail.com](mailto:suestern1@gmail.com). Thank you all for your continued support of our church and missions.

### Month End Report — As of October 31, 2023

	YTD Actual	Year-to-Date Goal	Income <b>Above</b> Goal	Annual Budget
Income	\$ 65,256	\$ 63,334	\$ 1,922	\$190,000
Expenses	\$ 73,393			
Net <b>LOSS</b>	<\$ 8,137>			

**Remember:** If you plan to make a stock or cash donation from a brokerage account, PLEASE notify me or have your broker send a contribution letter to UCSJ. These transactions rarely include the name of the account holder making it difficult to determine who sent the donation. Thank you!

*Sue Stern, Treasurer*

## Coming in 2024!

For 2024, UCSJ will be offering two new classes on mindfulness. Mindfulness is the ability to focus our attention fully on the present moment with acceptance and without judgment. Katy Kristoffersen, our multi-talented Music Director, will lead the two courses. You do not have to attend every session in a course—drop-ins are most welcome!

The first course, **"Introduction to Mindfulness,"** will have six sessions, **which will meet at 4:30 PM starting on Sunday, January 7 and ending on Sunday, February 11.** Each session will open with a short (5-minute) meditation, followed by journaling, information presented by Katy on a facet of mindfulness, a group discussion, and closing with a second meditation grounded in the session's content. We will aim to be together for about one hour per session, focusing on bringing mindfulness into a specific category of life, such as attention, the body, and emotion.

The second course, **"Christian Mindfulness,"** will have five sessions, **which meet during Lent starting on Sunday, February 18 and ending on Sunday, March 17, at 4:30 PM.** This course will follow the same structure as the first course but will focus on specifically Christian topics relating to mindfulness.

These classes are open to all people in our community (not just church members), including teens. Please feel free to invite anyone you think might be interested.



## Sunday Worship

Sunday worship service is also videotaped and posted, following the service, on [Facebook](#) and our [website](#), for those wishing to worship at home.



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## Communion

Join us at our Lord's Table  
(1st Sunday)  
**Sunday, December 3**



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**Thank you** for your generous support. To contribute online just click the link below or you can send your offerings to the church office at P.O. Box 295, Ridgway, CO 81432.

[Click here to donate](#)



## Operation Christmas Child

On November 16 we delivered 11 boxes to Jill VonDelden at Ridgway Community Church. Eleven children will be the happy recipients of what could be the only gift they will ever receive. Eleven children will know that Jesus loves them because of what you have done. God bless you all!



## Surveying the Land, Looking Ahead: Long-Range Visioning for UCSJ

Way back in the 1990s, bungee jumping was all the rage. Jumpers launched from bridges, cliffs, tall office buildings. You name it, they jumped from it. The thing about bungee jumping is that you can jump far out, but you always come back to the place you started.

Sometimes the church does “bungee ministry.” We see a need here, we launch a program. We see a need there, we start a drive. After a while, we’re jumping from here to there and everywhere, but we don’t have much impact with anything. More importantly, we create a scenario for burnout. Some of us get tired and disconnect rather than getting more involved.

For the past several months, the UCSJ Council has discussed the need to look more strategically toward the future. The church is healthy and doing well. How can we best keep it thriving and moving on this path?

At several of those meetings, Pastor Melinda presented a long-range visioning process that the Council felt could help us discern as we look ahead. **Its goal is a roadmap that helps us walk with God into the future of this church’s life.**

Phase 1 provides a time to frame the task and help team members learn more about each other and their perspectives on faith and the life of the church.

Phase 2 focuses on the church’s mission, values, and culture. We’ll revisit work done during our recent interim time. The whole congregation will be involved in this phase, so the long-range visioning team hears clearly from all of us.

Phase 3 focuses on developing an accurate picture of the broader community through demographic information and interviews with a variety of community members. We hope all in the church can participate in this phase, so we all have input.

Phase 4 focuses on brainstorming for all areas of the church’s life and then sifting through those ideas with this congregation’s mission, values and culture in mind. The congregation will also be a very important part of this phase, so we can hear from everyone.

Phase 5 focuses on developing a draft road map that aligns with this church’s mission, values, and culture over the next three to five years. The congregation will be an important part of this phase. The draft road map will be presented for the congregation’s approval.

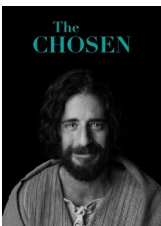
From start to roadmap, the process will take about eight months, with team members meeting weekly or bi-weekly. While not everyone is interested in participating that intensively, here are the folks who are volunteering their time, effort, and creative energy to the heavy-lifting:

Clayton Beaudry	Jere Beaudry	Alice Goertz	Mick Graff	Bob Larson	Pam Larson
Dee Moore	Todd Schroedel	Carolyn Snowbarger	Vince Snowbarger	Donna Whiskeman	

We hope you will journey along with us as we explore together the future of UCSJ!



## The Chosen



A year or so ago my sister called and said I simply HAD to watch a series on the TV called The Chosen. She explained what it was and I immediately thought it was another cheesy “Jesus” movie. I put off watching it for a very long time and finally, for whatever reason, turned it on.

I quickly realized that my assumption about the series could not have been more wrong. This is a superbly done historical drama about the life of Jesus, His disciples, and the culture at the time. It is incredibly Biblically accurate and faithful to the characters and intentions of Jesus and the Gospels.

This is not a Hollywood production. It is what is called “Crowd Funded” meaning that production each season does not start until free will contributions from people world-wide is sufficient to pay for the filming. There are three seasons you can watch on various streaming platforms: YouTube, Netflix, Peacock, Hulu, and Amazon Prime. There is also a website ([www.angel.com](http://www.angel.com)), that has all the episodes plus other content.

If reading the Bible is “not your thing,” and it isn’t for many people, or you are a Bible enthusiast, I encourage you to watch The Chosen. It is a message of hope and gives such an amazing understanding of who Jesus was, the culture of the time and the message He has for all of us.

*Donna Whiskeman*



## Connections at UCSJ



### Cookies, Cookies, Cookies!

We'll be hosting receptions following our two Christmas programs on December 2 (Community Youth Choir) and December 3 (UCSJ and Friends Lessons and Carols). We need dozens and dozens of cookies. If you can help us out, please sign up in the gathering area or contact Carolyn Snowbarger.

### On the Same Page Book Club — Friday, December 15, at 10 AM

#### *Winter Garden* by Kristen Hannah

This is a parallel novel that spans time and space—Leningrad in World War II and the Pacific Northwest in the 1990s. It's a tale of relationships—husbands, wives, sisters, mothers, and daughters—and the events that shape their lives. We'll meet at UCSJ on **Friday, December 15, at 10 AM**, to share our impressions and takeaways. Books are available in the gathering area (\$10).

### Dinner Together

Thanks to **Lisa and David Young** for hosting our November dinner. If you'd like to host a meal, please contact Carolyn Snowbarger. You can pick the date, time, and how many guests you'd like to have. We'll help with announcements, communications, and sign-up sheets.

### Christmas by Candlelight — Valley Symphony Orchestra and Chorus

Many of our UCSJ musicians will be performing in the annual Christmas concert at the Montrose Pavilion on December 15 & 16. Tickets are available [here](#).

### Community Learning — Please Vote

We need YOUR help selecting our books for our community learning sessions. Our education committee has identified six possibilities, and we hope you'll vote for your preferred book (or split your vote between two options) by **December 10**. Please let Mick Graff know your choices.

1. *Desire of the Everlasting Hills: The World Before and After Jesus* by Thomas Cahill
2. *Natural Grace* by Matthew Fox and Rupert Sheldrake
3. *Unruly Saint: Dorothy Day's Radical Vision and Its Challenge for Our Times* by D. L. Mayfield
4. *Is God a Vindictive Bully? Reconciling Portrayals of God in the Old and New Testaments* by Paul Copan
5. *The God of Intimacy and Action: Reconnecting Ancient Spiritual Practices, Evangelism, and Justices* by Tony Campolo and Mary Albert Darling
6. *The Gifts of the Jews: How a Tribe of Desert Nomads Change the Way Everyone Thinks and Feels* by Thomas Cahill

Books are on display in the gathering area along with overviews and ballots. Our winter session begins on Wednesday, January 10 with groups meeting at 4:30 and 7 PM and a soup supper at 6 PM.

### Men's Breakfast

The men's breakfast group is taking a break during the holidays. Their next breakfast will be Saturday, January 20.

### Thank you!

Thanks to our fellowship treat-bringers this past month: **Lavonne Glanville, Joan Moyer, Carol Kling, Sandy Storey, Jere and Clayton Beaudry, Linda Ingo, Cindi Myers, Anita Posey, Lisa Young, Alice Goertz, and Carolyn Snowbarger.**

### Congregational Life Ministry Team

If you have questions, please check with anyone from our committee: *Jenny Cheek, Sue Conrad, Charlotte Duckett, Anne Linenberger, Marge Quist, Lish Sheppard, Elise Shirey, Kay Sibold, Carolyn Snowbarger, and Gen Spangler.*



## Christmas Programs

TWO Christmas programs will kick off UCSJ's Advent Season:  
 Community Youth Choir Christmas Concert—**Saturday, December 2, at 3 PM**  
 UCSJ and Friends Lessons and Carols—**Sunday, December 3, at 3 PM**



## Tasty Morsels from “PLUM” Corner

**PRESBYTERIANS** — Accusable worship is what God’s future feels like.

The pandemic “gave urgency to the use of technologies in worship and transformed practices of worship in some Christian communities, providing access for many and creating barriers to access for others,” according to promotional material describing Spurrier’s lecture. “How can Christian communities navigate these technological possibilities faithfully? This lecture makes the case that an answer must begin, not end, with access.” For more on this story [click here](#).



**LUTHERANS** — This is the time of year to begin to think about Church camps.

Most are now taking reservations for next summer. Scholarships available for anyone needing a little assistance with registration cost. Our Lutheran denomination has two very good camps in Colorado. Sky Ranch located out side of Fort Collins and Rainbow Trail located west of Pueblo are excellent for families and youth. Information can be found at...[info@rainbowtrail.org](mailto:info@rainbowtrail.org).

**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST** — Your [Giving Tuesday](#) gift will help us to continue this groundbreaking advocacy to address the climate crisis.

With your [Giving Tuesday](#) gift, in 2024, we will select youth and young adults to participate in the third cycle of our successful **Climate Hope Summer!** In this dynamic fellowship program, participants are mentored by a UCC community to grow their understanding of climate justice and nurture their leadership skills.

Your donation will also support our 2nd Annual Earth Day Summit next year, featuring climate author Bill McKibben.

In the UCC, we have witnessed youth and young adult leaders give 100% of themselves to the work of climate justice. As a sign that they have 100% of our support, we are appealing for gifts of \$100 or more. Donors who give at this level will receive a free Climate Hope mug.



**METHODISTS** — A fresh year is a great time to try out a [Fresh Expression](#).

Have you heard about Fresh Expressions yet? Have you felt a sacred nudge to do something new to connect the faith of your church with the life of your community? Do you have a dream or a vision of trying something out, but maybe don’t know the next steps?

Fresh Expressions is a movement in the Methodist flavor of the church that is empowering the people of the church, mostly laity, to try new things. Fresh Expressions are innovative gatherings and experiences that combine everyday life with the perspective of faith. Here are some examples: a group that gathers to run and talk about the journey of life with God; meeting at the trailhead to go for a hike and meet other people on the trail; discussing the teachings and stories of Jesus at your local tattoo shop; and so...much...more!

The main thing these different Fresh Expressions have in common is that they don’t happen in a traditional church building using traditional church methods. They don’t require a large budget, and you don’t have to have everything figured out already.

Your Mountain Sky Conference has made Fresh Expressions a priority for staff attention and resources. So, if you have felt The Holy Spirit calling you with a dream to do something new and creative, we’re here to help. I’d love to hear about what you’re dreaming and tell you more about the resources the Conference has to help. And we can talk about the next steps that may bring that dream to life as a Fresh Expression.

*Tom Chase*



### WEEKLY EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

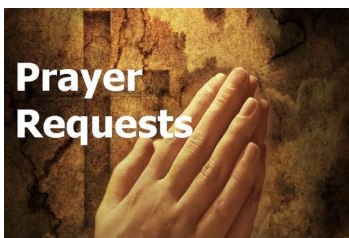
Centering Prayer ([via Zoom](#)) — Mondays at 9 AM

Women’s Bible Studies ([via Zoom](#)) — Thursdays at 9:30 AM

Men’s Bible Studies ([via Zoom](#)) — Saturdays at 8:30 AM

## Caring for One Another . . .

The love and sympathy of the UCSJ family is with the **Vern Lankenau family**. Vern passed away on October 24 in Lewisville, TX.



*If you have a prayer request or concern that you would like your UCSJ faith community to hear or a confidential prayer request for our prayer team (but not for public communication)? Please call the church office at 970.626.5803 or email [ucsjoffice@gmail.com](mailto:ucsjoffice@gmail.com). You can also contact Pastor Melinda or a member of the Care Team. The Care Team list is posted in the gathering area.*

Concerns shown here are printed only with the permission of the person involved.

## Mission & Outreach

Our Mission & Outreach Committee thanks our generous congregation for continuing to include mission giving within our annual budget. We take seriously the responsibility on how these funds are disbursed in the winter and spring. In November we focused on finding new local opportunities and each committee member actively engaged in vetting the organizations brought to us. I also want to recognize each committee member for their commitment to finding the groups that meet our support criteria. While there are many good organizations, we had to select where we felt our funds could be best used.

Two new organizations we selected are **DELTA PRISON CHRISTMAS PROJECTS**, and **PEACE JAM**. **Delta County Ministerial Fellowship (DCMF)** coordinates two programs we are participating in: Christmas gifts, a toy and one piece of clothing, for children of inmates and Christmas goodie bags given to all staff and inmates on Christmas Eve. We donated \$1,000 to DCMF. **Peace Jam** is a Ridgway local group that encourages high school students in volunteerism and community involvement through projects such as food drives for several Indian reservations. Later this month we will be wrapping toys for children in three nearby Indian reservations and Haven House. We gave \$600 to Peace Jam.

We also gave \$1,000 to **SHEPHERD'S HAND** in Montrose who provides food and shelter for needy and homeless individuals/families. There has recently been an earthquake in Nepal, so we chose to give \$1,000 to **WESTERN SLOPE FRIENDS OF THE HIMALAYAS** through Kelvin Kent. He informs us that our donation is already being used in Nepal.

**PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH USA** has an online catalog for giving and after careful consideration of many worthy projects, we gave \$1,400 for the following: **Educate a Child (12 children)** \$300; **Health for Mothers and Newborns** \$500; **Community Irrigation Water Pump** \$250; **Emergency Life Packs** \$250 and **Most Immediate Needs** \$100. If anyone wishes to give individually, their online catalog is available [here](#).

In addition to the above, we continue our monthly support of Ouray County Food Pantry through the donation basket (located in the church lobby), and annual participation in the Operation Christmas Child gift shoeboxes.

*Our wonderful committee members are: Cindi Myers, Barb Eliason, Kate Kellogg, Lucy Scholpp, Claudia Wolff, and Charlotte Duckett.*

*With gratitude, Dee Moore, Chair*



## December Birthdays

2 – Michelle Gordon  
5 – Kristi Snapp  
8 – Stella Scoville  
13 – Tamora Thomas  
15 – Sue Conrad  
23 – Carol Kling  
24 – Martha Elliott  
29 – Charles Scoville

## December Anniversaries

26 – Larry Harley & Jenny Cheek

Please let the church office ([ucsjoffice@gmail.com](mailto:ucsjoffice@gmail.com) or 970.626.5803) know if we're missing your birthday and/or anniversary. Thank you.

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## Administrative Committee Meeting

Tuesday, December 12

4:30 PM

Administrative Committee meets monthly. **FULL COUNCIL** (Pastor, Administrative Committee, and Ministry Committee Representatives) meets quarterly.

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Now that winter is here, please remember that the parking spaces on the west side of the building are primarily for those who have difficulty walking. Thank you!

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## Men's Breakfast

(3rd Saturday)

Resumes on

Saturday, January 20, 2024



## Ouray County Food Pantry

At Christmas we always try to bless the Ouray County Food Pantry patrons with holiday-related treats. **For December, please contribute any special holiday foods you enjoy in your celebration—candy, cookies, baking items, hot cocoa or special coffee or tea, or any item to add to a holiday meal.** Please have your donations to the church by the second week of December so that the food pantry can distribute them before Christmas.

*Cindi Myers, Mission & Outreach Ministry Member*



*Please remember that pictures of members and their children may be posted around the church and on the internet (website and Facebook). If you do not want your picture used, please contact the church office. Thank you!*



[www.ucsjridgway.org](http://www.ucsjridgway.org)

For up-to-date information, including council highlights, newsletters (in color), calendar, etc.

**Connect with UCSJ!**



And like us!

[www.facebook.com/ucsjridgway](https://www.facebook.com/ucsjridgway)

*We are affiliated with:*

- ~ Presbyterian Church (USA)*
- ~ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*
- ~ United Church of Christ*
- ~ United Methodist Church*



PO Box 295 — Ridgway, CO 81432