

**Worship**  
**Sundays at 10 AM**

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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

Mike Kristoffersen — Videographer

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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))

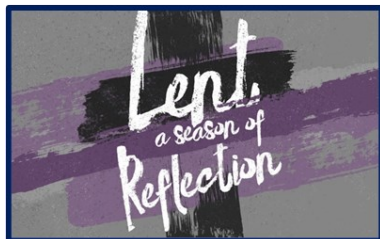
External Publicity — Kate Kellogg

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**UCSJ Office Hours**

Tuesday and Wednesday — 9 AM to 2:30 PM

Thursday — 9 AM to 1 PM



*Make me to know your ways, O Lord;  
teach me your paths.  
Lead me in your truth, and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation;  
for you I wait all day long.*

— Psalm 25:4-5

The year has launched with gray days, cold wind, and loads of snow, but also with sparkling clear days and that blue, blue sky that pops over the white landscape. Skijoring is past, ice climbing is fast approaching, and so is the trek from Ash Wednesday to Easter.

Lent begins on February 14th, with a soup supper at 6 PM at the church, followed by the Ash Wednesday service at 7 PM, which leads us into the 40 days of Lent. Lent comes early this year—and Easter, too. It seems as if we just walked through Advent and Christmas. Haven't we done enough reflecting for a while? Good question!

Often people focus on giving up something for Lent, like a bad habit or a particular food. They concentrate on how wrong these things are and the problems they can create for them. They use Lent as a time to get back on track in their lives. But the heart of Lent is really not about us, our productivity, or our success. The heart of Lent, its focus, is the self-sacrificial love of God.

So perhaps rather than taking something away from our lives, we would benefit by adding something to them. I'm not talking about an exercise routine or a diet. I'm talking about a practice that we can do sitting at our desks, out on a walk or hike, looking out the kitchen window, having coffee with a friend, or sitting quietly for 5 minutes. It's the practice of being on the lookout for where God is present. You may be looking out the window when a storm begins to blanket the mountaintops with snow. You may be having coffee with a friend, when your conversation goes from the surface to sharing from the heart. You may be out on a walk or a hike, and out of the corner of your eye, you catch a fox or a deer, a hawk or an elk.

Each day we are surrounded by gifts of God's Spirit. As we walk through Lent, we have an opportunity to practice growing mindful of the ways the Spirit is ever present, ever at work, ever giving life and breath. Letting that truth settle into the core of our lives changes everything in a way an exercise routine, a diet, or trying to master a bad habit can never do. That mindfulness opens us to the presence of the Spirit. And as we open ourselves more and more to God's Spirit of self-sacrificing love, that love works on us and shapes us in ways we could never have asked for or imagined. This Lent, I invite us all to practice attending to the Spirit and to experience the beauty and the wholeness that is always present with us when we do.

*Blessings, Melinda*

## Calendar for February

(For more information, see page #5)

**Sunday, February 4 — 10 AM**

Communion

**Sunday, February 11 — 4 PM**

Super Bowl Party (pg. 4)

**Tuesday, February 13 — 4:30 PM**

Full Council Meeting

**Wednesday, February 14 — 7 PM**

Ash Wednesday Service



**Saturday, February 17 — 8:30 AM**

Men's Breakfast (pg. 4)

**Saturday, February 24 — 1 PM**

Cross Country Skiing/Snowshoeing (pg. 4)

**Thursday, February 29 — Noon**

Gals' Lunch at Pahgre's, Montrose (pg. 4)

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## Weekly Activities



### SUNDAYS

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

**4:30 PM** — Mindfulness Courses, **except for February 11 which meets at 2:30 PM** (pg. 3)

**MONDAYS — 9 AM (via Zoom)**

Centering Prayer

### WEDNESDAYS

**10 AM** — Prayer Shawl Ministry

**4:30 PM** — Community Learning (Book studies followed by soup supper) (pg. 4)

### 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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Please email [ucsjoffice@gmail.com](mailto:ucsjoffice@gmail.com) or leave a detailed message on the church phone 970.626.5803.

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).

## January Administrative Committee Highlights

Your Administrative Council sub-committee met on January 9, 2024.

- December financials indicated giving to date is right on budget, however, as has previously been noted, necessary building repairs have put the expenses over budget.
- Our internet and phone service will be changed from CenturyLink to Clearnet Worx with a slight savings per month.
- Our Church Mutual Insurance coverage for the church will be increased to reflect current replacement costs. Members of the Safety group are installing smoke and water alarms with Church Mutual providing free monitoring as part of our insurance coverage.
- The final bill for our audio-visual project has been paid with approximately \$3k remaining in the AV account. Research is being done on the cost of modifying the closet doors for easier access to the new mobile TV and cart.
- It was noted that advertising costs are increasing and will be over budget by the end of this fiscal year.
- Rev. Melinda's travel schedule for this spring was presented including vacation, study, and bereavement leave. *See below for more details.*
- Our next meeting will be with the FULL Council on February 13 at 4:30 PM** here at the church. Please join us.

## Pastor's Plans for 2024 Travel

Pastor Melinda presented her travel plans via email to the Council and discussed them at the most recent Administrative Council meeting on January 9th. Her contract specifies four weeks of vacation and two weeks of study leave. The Council generously offered that she not use vacation or study leave for the time she would be gone in January to celebrate her mother's life and help her father as he works to close up her estate.

She and the members of Council present at the meeting agreed that it would be good for the congregation to be "in the know" about her travel schedule, as well, so below is a list of dates that she will be out for bereavement, study leave, and vacation.

**Bereavement Leave** January 18-26, 2024 Out Sunday, January 21

### Study Leave

PC(USA) CREDO April 30—May 6, 2024 Out Sunday, May 5

A comprehensive ministry reflection and resourcing retreat that allows parish pastors to reflect on their leadership style and approach, evaluate, and connect with resources that support them in continued professional and personal growth in ministry.

**Preaching Seminar** July 29—August 2, 2024

This seminar for pastors who preach regularly will be held at Ghost Ranch in Abiquiu, NM. Led by three professors at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, MN, this seminar will focus on providing resources for preaching: approaches to study, resources for study, approaches to developing sermons and to preaching them. Pastor Melinda uses their online resources weekly, and this promises to be a rich time for continuing to grow in study and practice.

### Vacation

**Family Wedding** April 14-23, 2024 Out Sundays, April 14 & 21

**Long-planned Mediterranean Trip** September 23—October 6, 2024

Out Sundays, September 29 and October 6

## 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 December 31, 2023

	YTD Actual	Year-to-Date Goal	Income ABOVE Goal	Annual Budget
Income	\$ 105,247	\$ 95,000	\$ 10,247	\$190,000
Expenses	\$ 107,359			
Net <b>LOSS</b>	<b>&lt;\$ 2,112&gt;</b>			

*Sue Stern, Treasurer*

## Mindfulness Courses...

Mindfulness is the ability to focus our attention fully on the present moment with acceptance and without judgment. Katy Kristoffersen, will lead the courses and you do not have to attend every session! **Both courses meet Sundays at 4:30 PM (PLEASE NOTE that on February 11, the course meets at 2:30 PM).**

**"Foundational Mindfulness," (January 7—February 11).**

**"Christian Mindfulness," meets during Lent (February 18—March 17).**

These classes are open to all people in our community (not just church members), including teens. For more information visit [ucsridgway.org/mindfulness](http://ucsridgway.org/mindfulness). 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, February 4**



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**Thank you** for your generous support. To contribute online, [click here](#) or mail your offerings to the church office at PO Box 295, Ridgway, CO 81432.



## Tasty Morsels from "PLUM" Corner

*February 2024... There continue to be decisions and events which need our prayer.  
Here are the latest updates from our PLUM denominations.*

*Kim Lundgren*

**PRESBYTERIANS** — Months in advance, the Presbyterian Peacemaking Program has begun gearing up to welcome this year's contingent of International Peacemakers and is now accepting applications from entities that would like to host them. The program has announced nearly a dozen 2024 peacemakers, who will spend four weeks in September and October visiting churches, presbyteries and educational institutions in person—something that wasn't possible during the height of the pandemic when a virtual symposium served as a creative alternative. Anyone who is interested in hosting a peacemaker should apply by May 1, 2024. For full article [click here](#).

**LUTHERANS** — Efforts for the election of the Rocky Mountain Synod Bishop continue. The Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly will be in Loveland, Colorado, April 25-27, 2024, and will include election of the Bishop. Beginning January 22, 2024 any Word and Sacrament Minister who is open to being nominated for bishop may complete and submit biographical information. For full details and the website for future updates about the election [click here](#).

**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST** — Since October 7 in the Middle East, the United Church of Christ and Disciples of Christ have been active in a variety of ways, including through public witness statements issued together, advocacy action alerts, and appeals to support partners in the region. To read the statements and more information [click here](#).

**METHODISTS** — Hope in the United Methodist Church, after months of heartache. The vast majority of U.S. United Methodist churches remain in the denomination. For full story [click here](#).

## Connections at UCSJ

### Puzzled?

When the weather outside is frightful, grab a warm drink and solve life's puzzles. One way to do this? Puzzles! **We're offering a jigsaw puzzle exchange during February**, so donate your gently used puzzles and/or grab some new ones. We'll take any leftovers to Second Chance.



### Super Bowl Party — Sunday, February 11, at 4 PM

Join us for UCSJ's first-ever Super Bowl Party. Kickoff is at 4:30 PM; doors open at 4 PM. We'll watch the two "best" NFL teams battle for the Lombardi Trophy, see Usher's halftime show, and choose our favorite commercials of the night. We'll have chili, fixins', and soft drinks available. Wear your favorite team colors (NFL or college) and bring a football snack to share. Please sign up in the gathering area.

### Community Learning — Wednesdays at 4:30 PM

Small group book discussions are followed by our soup supper.

*Natural Grace* by Matthew Fox and Rupert Sheldrake

*The Gifts of the Jews: How a Tribe of Desert Nomads Changed the Way Everyone Thinks and Feels* by Thomas Cahill

This session ends on February 28. Our spring book studies will begin in April.

### Men's Breakfast — Saturday, February 17, at 8:30 AM

Tim Spangler will be the speaker. *See below for details.*

### Cross Country Skiing and Snowshoeing — Saturday, February 24, from 1-4 PM

Meet at the church for an afternoon of outdoor fun. Bring your cross country skis and/or snowshoes. See Kathy Graff or Jen Parker if you have questions. Please sign up in the gathering area.



### Gals' Lunch — Thursday, February 29, at Noon, at Pahgre's in Montrose

Please sign up in the gathering area.

### On the Same Page Book Club — Monday, March 4, at 10 AM

*Book of Lost Names* by Kristen Harmel

"Life turns on the decisions we make, the single moments that transform everything."

World War II, France! Meet Eva, a graduate student, with a talent for forgery. Meet Eva again, a retired librarian in Florida, who remembers after seeing an old newspaper article.

Carolyn Snowbarger will be facilitating. Books are available in the gathering area.

### Dinner Together

If you'd like to host a meal in your home or at a restaurant, please contact Carolyn Snowbarger. You can pick the date, time, and number of guests. We'll help with announcements and sign-up sheets.

### Coming Soon!

Easter Brunch, Sunday, March 31, from 8-9:30 AM

**Congregational Life Ministry Team:** Jenny Cheek, Sue Conrad, Charlotte Duckett, Anne Linenberger, Marge Quist, Lish Sheppard, Elise Shirey, Kay Sibold, Carolyn Snowbarger, and Gen Spangler.

## Men's Breakfast — Saturday, February 17 at 8:30 AM

Tim Spangler PhD, retired Meteorologist, will give a presentation on "The Meteorology of Ouray County: The personal journey of a mountain meteorologist to understand what is going on with the weather." With the weather that we have been experiencing this should be an education. There should be plenty of questions.





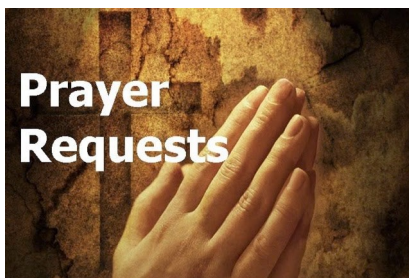
## Caring for One Another . . .

The love and sympathy of the UCSJ family is with **Terry Thomas and family**, on the death of his wife, **Tamora**, on January 14. A Celebration of Life will be held on January 27.

*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 here are printed only with the permission of the person involved.

## Prayer Requests



## Ouray County Food Pantry



**Feeding the Community**

This month we're focusing on **canned soup, whole grain crackers, and chocolate** for the Ouray County Food Pantry. Share some warming meals and Valentine treats with our neighbors. All donations of non-perishable food, toiletries, and household supplies are always welcome. The pantry can't accept opened or expired products. Please bring your donations to the church on Sundays or during office hours. Thank you!

*Cindi Myers, Mission & Outreach Ministry Member*

## A Heartfelt Thanks

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I cannot tell you how much your cards, calls, texts, and expressions of care have helped me through this time of great grief. My mother's death took my family by surprise, and although it will be a while before I can—we can—get used to her being gone from us, your tender support has given me tremendous strength.

You have been such an example of how our care for one another in Christ's Spirit, can heal, strengthen, comfort, and sustain.

In the midst of all of that, your generous gift at Christmas truly touched my heart, as did your notes in the card. Words are not enough, but they will have to do: Thank you from the bottom of my heart for being God's presence for me. You have made all the difference.

*Blessings, Melinda*



## February Birthdays

4 – Margaret Knipfer  
5 – Carolyn Stiltner  
7 – Dudley Case  
8 – Liz Kuehling  
8 – Julie Larusson  
9 – Kelvin Kent  
12 – Shelly Spalding  
12 – Don Stiltner  
14 – Sandy Krafft  
15 – Carl Krieg  
16 – Deborah Fischer  
17 – Betsy Lattanner  
17 – Joan O'Rourke  
19 – Sandra Knutson  
19 – Harry Strong  
20 – David Guenther  
20 – Kate Kellogg  
20 – Don Swartz  
25 – Carol Brower

## February Anniversaries

2 – Michael & Dee Moore  
25 – Brian & Leslie Wood

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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## Full Council Meeting

(Second Tuesday)

**Tuesday, February 13**

**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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## Ash Wednesday Service

**Wednesday, February 14**

**7 PM**





## WEEKLY EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

Mindfulness with Katy Kristoffersen — Sundays at 4:30 PM  
“Foundational” (January 7 to February 11); “Christian” (February 18 to March 17)

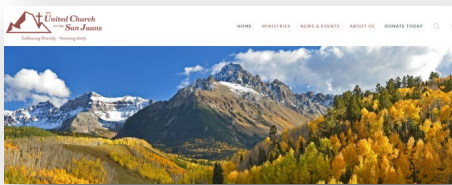
Centering Prayer ([via Zoom](#)) — Mondays at 9 AM

Community Learning — Wednesdays at 4:30 PM with book discussions and  
6 PM soup supper (January 10 to February 28)

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

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

*Please remember that pictures of members and their children may be posted around the church and on the internet*



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

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

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*We are affiliated with:*

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



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