

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 — Missional Outreach

Deacon Kathy Graff — Spiritual Formation

Shirley Didier — Administrative Assistant

Katy Kristoffersen — Director of Music

Sue Stern — Treasurer

Laura Hagert — Custodian

Mike Kristoffersen — Audio-visual Operator

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UCSJ Council

(Ministry in Parentheses)

Rev. Melinda Veatch

Charlotte Duckett (Membership)

Alice Goertz (Care)

Pam Larson (Chair)

Joan Moyer (Operations)

Elise Shirey (Education)

Carolyn Snowbarger (Congregational Life)

Vince Snowbarger (Finance)

Timothy Spangler (Worship & Music)

Donna Whiskeman (Ministry)

Lisa Young (Mission & Outreach)

[\(Learn more about their roles here\)](#)

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Website & 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, Wednesday, and Thursday

9 AM to 1 PM



(Drawing courtesy of Dick Engdahl)



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

“It’s the most wonderful time of the year!” goes the old Christmas song that is now playing in all the stores. By the time you read this, you will most likely have enjoyed a Thanksgiving gathering with family and friends. You may be in the flurry of addressing Christmas cards, completing—or getting started on—putting up decorations, buying gifts and getting together all you will need to host or take things to holiday parties and Christmas dinners. Excitement is in the air!

But it is also a time of the year when dysfunctional family dynamics can raise their ragged heads. Some of us will feel a more profound grief as we remember and miss those no longer here. Others may experience a deeper loneliness as they are 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 anticipation of the surprising ways God is preparing to enter into both the joy and the mess of our lives as we continue to live them.

The thing about the infant Messiah who comes to save the world 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 and messy an entry as anyone could have, yet it is infused with the greatest tenderness and the most clarified light. And that is how and where God chooses to begin engaging anew in the world and in our lives.

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 messy wilderness places of our lives. Advent gives us a moment to reflect on and receive the hope, the peace, the joy, and the love God is bringing.

Blessings, Melinda

Calendar for December

(For more information, see page #s)

Friday, December 5 — 4:30 PM

Noel Night Concert: Ridgway Youth Choir
and Friends (pg. 4)

Sunday, December 7 — 10 AM

Communion

Wednesday, December 10 — 2 PM

Administrative Committee Meeting

Thursday, December 18 — Noon

Gals' Lunch at Fiesta Guadalajara, Montrose
(pg. 6)

Saturday, December 20 — 3 PM

Harps, Hammers, and Voices Concert
(pg. 4)

Sunday, December 21 — After Worship
Celebrating December Birthdays (pg. 6)

Wednesday, December 24

Christmas Eve at UCSJ

4 PM — Musical Prelude (pg. 4)

4:30 PM — Community Service (pg. 4)

Thursday, December 25



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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

THURSDAYS

9:30 AM ([via Zoom](#)) — Women's Bible Study

4 PM — Choir Practice

SATURDAYS — 8:30 AM ([via Zoom](#))

Men's Bible Study

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

Council Highlights!

Your UCSJ Council met in November and here are the highlights:

1. Lights—take notice of the new light bulbs throughout the church building. Tell Joan Moyer and her crew of workers "Thanks."
2. A celebration committee has been formed to prepare for Pastor Melinda's 3-year anniversary and Music Director, Katy's 5-year anniversary—look for fun in 2026.
3. A cyber security assessment following Church Mutual guidelines will be done in the near future.
4. Ask the Ministry teams what "Food for Friends" is all about and support the effort.
5. Watch for and participate in the Advent event calendar (pg. 5).

The next council meeting will be for the Administrative Committee on Wednesday, December 10, at 2 PM at church, please join us.

Season Blessings, Pam Larson, Council Chair

The Chosen

The Education committee invites you to watch season one of *The Chosen*. This series aims to challenge old ideas about faith and focus on making new connections.

**Begins Thursday, January 8
at 10 AM**

Elise Shirey, Education Chair

WHO DO YOU SAY THAT I AM?

Explore the life and times of Jesus
as it is portrayed in
Season One of



This series aims to challenge old ideas about faith
and focus on making new connections.

Join us for coffee and conversation
as we watch Season One.

Starting Thursday, January 8th, 10:00 am
The United Church of the San Juans
295 N. Lena (970) 626-5803
Ridgway



Directory Changes

Email ucsjoffice@gmail.com or leave a detailed message on the church phone at (970) 626-5803. Address, phone, email changes, or if you wish to be removed from the church directory. Thank you.

Treasurer's Report

If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact me by phone (970) 596-3755 or email suestern1@gmail.com. Thank you all for your continued support of our church and missions.

Month End Report — As of October 31, 2025

	YTD Actual	Year-to-Date Goal	Income ABOVE Goal	Annual Budget
Income	\$91,335	\$70,333	\$21,002	\$211,000
Expenses	\$72,547			
Net GAIN	\$18,788			

Sue Stern, Treasurer

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!

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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Join us at our Lord's Table
(1st Sunday)

December 7



PLUM Corner

As I write this PLUM Corner, I realize that I have been asking for donations for the mission of our denominations to support God's people thru out the world. The needs are great, and together we can and do make a difference. This time of year, our denominations are giving us the opportunity to give gifts through their gifting catalogs. We can give these gifts in honor of someone to make a big difference in people's lives. Again, I want to provide you with opportunities to make a choice with your giving this year.

Presbyterian — Here is a statement that I found in the [Presbyterian catalog](#) that I think is worth reflecting on.

"Grace and Gratitude: As Presbyterians, we are people rooted in the grace of Jesus Christ. It is on gratitude for God's Mission that moves us to join in God's mission in the world, with ministries of love and justice, reconciliation, and peace."

Lutheran ELCA — The catalog for the ELCA can be found in the library in the Lutheran file located on the shelf on the south wall. The catalog is called *Good Gifts*.

United Church of Christ — [One Great Hour of Sharing](#). This is a great way to give if you want to support the outreach of the UCC.

Methodist — [The United Methodist Committee on Relief](#) is the outreach organization of the UMC. The common name is UMCOR. Learn how you can help through prayer, service, and giving.

This gives you the opportunity to provide for God's people by checking out the links or the catalogs in my article. Wishing all a very Merry Christmas.

Tom Chase



Advent Worship at UCSJ: The Way to Get Ready

"All things are ready, if our mind be so."

— William Shakespeare, Henry V

The four Sundays of Advent open a new year in the church. Advent is a time to reflect on God's past work in our lives and to look forward to what God will do as we receive each new day. So, each Sunday of Advent, we will focus on a different aspect of our spiritual life as we look toward a new horizon.

HOPE. I love this anonymous quote: "Hope is seeing light in spite of being surrounded by darkness." In this world that seems filled with tragedy and trauma, where do we look for and see the light?

PEACE. Rumi wrote: "Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing there is a field. I'll meet you there." In this world that is full of disagreement, where do we look for and find that field?

JOY. This quote by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin reminds us of the importance of joy: "Joy is the infallible sign of the presence of God." Where do we look for joy? Where can joy be found?

COMPASSION. Jack Kerouac wrote: "One man practicing kindness in the wilderness is worth all the temples this world pulls." Where do we find compassion? How do we practice it?

Advent is the path that leads to Christ's birth, the one who shows us how God's love, power, and healing are at work on the ground in a hurting world. I am glad we will be exploring and engaging these essential faith concepts as we walk through the Advent season together.

Blessings, Melinda



Advent at UCSJ: Words of Love, Music for Joy!

Words of Hope & Sounds of the Season – Sunday, November 30, at 10 AM

Noel Night Concert: Ridgway Youth Choir and Friends – Friday, December 5, at 4:30 PM

Words of Peace & Sounds of the Season – Sunday, December 7, at 10 AM

Words of Joy & Sounds of the Season – Sunday, December 14, at 10 AM

Concert: Harps, Hammers & Voices – Saturday, December 20, at 3 PM

Words of Compassion & Sounds of the Season – Sunday, December 21, at 10 AM

Christmas Eve at UCSJ

Musical Prelude, at 4 PM

Community Service, at 4:30 PM

Epiphany Brunch – Sunday, January 4, at 11 AM (after worship)

Mission & Outreach



The UCSJ Mission & Outreach (M&O) Committee wants to thank everyone that either filled or purchased boxes for **Operation Christmas Child**. Donna took twelve completed boxes to be included in our Ridgway community shipment. These gift-filled shoeboxes are sent, together with the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to the ends of the earth to children in some of the hardest-to-reach places, whether deep jungles, city slums, steep mountainsides, or one of 1,000 remote Pacific islands. If you are interested, you can still have a shoebox built online through this website, [Build Your Shoebox Online!—Operation Christmas Child](#).

We also had **sixteen more blankets** completed for the Ouray County law enforcement to keep in their vehicles to use in cases of emergency or rescue. Many thanks to those that made these blankets!

Our **November Ouray Food Pantry** emphasis has gone marvelously! Cindi took a load of items to the Food Pantry along with 26 pounds of meat donations. We will continue to collect holiday items and take them over as the donation area gets full. Know that your generous donations serve the nutritionally underserved residents of Ouray County in an efficient and respectful manner by providing ongoing food support to individuals and families who are struggling with difficult life circumstances.



Food for Friends

The chairs of the Care, Congregational Life, and Mission & Outreach teams met this month to explore a project where all three ministries could work together and fill a need at UCSJ. Out of that meeting came **"Food for Friends"** where meals could be prepared in advance, frozen, and be ready to give to those needing



meals. Thank you to the five volunteer members of the various teams who met on November 14th to assemble the meals we had identified as the first pilot for this project. Let's see how this new project goes—stay tuned in the new year for an update from Alice Goertz, Care team chair!



The December activity for you to be involved with is donations for **Angel Tree Christmas gifts**. Keep an eye out for the tree in the foyer with ornaments listing what gifts may be purchased for our family.

If you are enthusiastic about fostering community connections and organizing opportunities to share God's love with our community and the world, please talk to one of the M&O Committee members about joining our group. **The current M&O Committee members are Lisa Young, Charlotte Duckett, Claudia Wolff, Kate Kellogg, Donna Whiskeman, Cindi Myers, Lucy Scholpp, Betsy Lattanner, and Bruce Shirey.**

Lisa Young, Mission & Outreach Chair

Upper Room Daily Devotional Guide

The November-December issues of *The Upper Room Daily Devotional Guide* are on the table in front of the sanctuary. **Thank you to Bob McDaniel** for subscribing to these for the church. Please feel free to take one.



December Joy: Fellowship, Music, and Celebration!

The Advent and Christmas seasons are here! Join us for a month packed with wonderful opportunities for fellowship, celebration, and supporting our talented church family.

“Sing We Now of Christmas!” Supporting Our Community Singers

We are proud to celebrate the singers from our church who will be performing with other musical groups in the community. Please show your support!

Christmas by Candlelight

Singers **Judy Lokey, Vince Snowbarger, and Anna Strong** will perform with the Valley Symphony Orchestra and Chorus.

- **Dates:** Saturday, December 6 (3 & 7 PM) and Sunday, December 7 (3 PM)
- **Location:** Montrose Pavilion
- **Tickets:** Available at valleysymphony.net

Appalachian Winter: A Festival of Lessons and Carols

Singers **Cindi Myers, Judy Lokey, Todd Schroedel, and Vince Snowbarger** will perform at the Montrose United Methodist Church (MUMC).

- **Dates:** Friday, December 12 (7 PM) and Sunday, December 14 (3 PM)
- **Location:** 19 S. Park, Montrose
- **Admission:** No tickets are needed



Gals' Lunch: Remembering Christmas Past

Ladies, mark your calendars for our festive end-of-year Gals' Lunch! We invite you to come prepared to share one of your most treasured Christmas memories. Let's celebrate the season by sharing the beautiful ways God has moved in our lives during Christmas.

- **When:** Thursday, December 18, at Noon
- **Where:** Fiesta Guadalajara (1571 Ogden, Montrose)

Call for Christmas Cookies for Harps, Hammers, and Voices Concert

Help us make our Christmas Concert on Saturday, December 20, at 3 PM extra sweet! We are looking for bakers to contribute homemade Christmas cookies for the reception following the concert. Sharing your favorite holiday treats is a wonderful way to celebrate together!

December Birthday Celebration!

Join us as we celebrate all the members of our church family who have a birthday in December! Come wish them a happy birthday and enjoy some fellowship. And yes—we will be celebrating with Dee James' famous red velvet cake!

- **When:** Sunday, December 21 (following the worship service)

A Big Thank You! For Your Generosity and Warmth

We extend our most sincere and heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has so generously helped with the fellowship coffee and treats over the past month. Your commitment to ensuring we have a warm, welcoming time after worship truly makes a huge difference in the life of our church community!

Thank you for demonstrating Christian hospitality with such dedication: David Stytz, Cindi Myers, Gen Spangler, Marge Quist, Lisa Young, Lish Sheppard, Max Sheppard, Jere Beaudry, Sandy Storey, Junella Hildreth, Scott and Lucy Ledgerwood, and Angela Todd.

Congregational Life Ministry Team (Carolyn Snowbarger, chair)

Caring for One Another . . .

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. You can also contact Pastor Melinda.

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



Bible Studies

Centering Prayer — Mondays at 9 AM, via Zoom. Contact is Kathy Graff.

Women's Bible Study — Thursdays at 9:30 AM, via Zoom, through December. Contact is Donna Whiskeman.

Men's Bible Study — Saturdays at 8:30 AM, via Zoom. Contact is Bob Larson.

Education

The **On the Same Page** book review will be held on **Monday, January 19, 2026, at 10 AM** and will be facilitated by **Kate Kellogg**. The book *Reason for Hope* by Jane Goodall will be thoughtfully reviewed and discussed. Books are available in the Narthex (\$15) while supplies last.

The **UCSJ Book Swap**—is back by popular demand. All books have been moved inside to a shelf in the library—please look for the sign located by the west door. Please leave the books you want to swap and find one that speaks to you.

A thought filled **6-week Lent Wednesday afternoon Bible Study** hour is in the works for 2026. Dates and times to be announced in January.

Elise Shirey, Education Chair

December Birthdays

- 2 – Michelle Gordon
- 5 – Kristi Henson
- 8 – Alice Goertz
- 8 – Stella Scoville
- 15 – Sue Conrad
- 23 – Carol Kling
- 24 – Martha Elliott
- 29 – Charles Scoville

December Anniversaries

- 26 – Larry Harley & Jenny Cheek
- 30 – Max & Alicia Sheppard

Please let the church office (ucsjoffice@gmail.com) or (970) 626-5803 know if we are missing your birthday and/or anniversary.

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Administrative Committee Meeting

(2nd Wednesday)

**Wednesday, December 10
2 PM**

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



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BREAKFAST FORUM

(formally the Men's Breakfast)

NO Meeting in December!

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UCSJ QR Code

Scan to get up-to-date event information

**Merry
Christmas**

So Many Ways to Help Out! We Need YOU!



Ushers, Greeters,
Readers, Worship Assistants,
Communion Assistants, Treats,
Coffee Prep and Clean Up, Flowers, etc.

Sign-up sheets are on the table in the gathering area
...please add your name!

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!



For up-to-date
information, including
newsletters, calendar, etc.
www.ucsjridgway.org



And like us!

www.facebook.com/ucsjridgway

Connect with UCSJ!

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