

Worship Sundays at 10 AM

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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

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[\(ucsjoffice@gmail.com\)](mailto:ucsjoffice@gmail.com)

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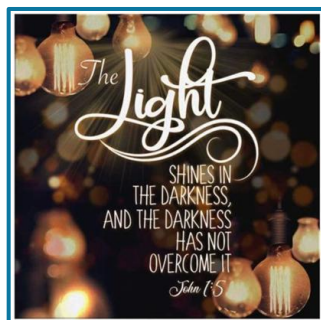
UCSJ Office Hours

Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday

9 AM to 1 PM



(Drawing courtesy of Dick Engdahl)



In the midst of all the darkness in the world, the thought that light is powerful enough to take it on and stand right in the middle of it is comforting and hopeful.

Yet darkness has a pretty strong track record. Wars, poverty, racism, famine, violence, addictions, betrayal, deception, injustice, corruption, and so on. The list of its accomplishments is long.

So, calling out darkness and elevating light seems a little naïve, actually, given the ways darkness brings deep shadows to our lives and to our world. Yet that is exactly what the season of Epiphany does. It focuses us on the light and its ability to infiltrate and keep shining in the midst of the worst that can confront us.

The magi who travel hundreds of miles to pay homage to Jesus were part of a long line, many generations, of sky watchers, who night by night looked into the darkness, seeking for the light. After centuries of waiting and watching, they launch out to find its origin when they see its vibrant glow. It is no short journey, no easy endeavor. It takes determined effort to follow and get to the light. When they finally arrive at its source, they are surprised, yet they recognize God's hand in it and open themselves to it as they bow and present their gifts at the manger.

The *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* defines "epiphany" as:

- 1) A Christian feast celebrating the manifestation of the divine nature of Jesus to the Gentiles as represented by the Magi.
- 2) A revelatory manifestation of a divine being.
- 3) A sudden insight or intuitive understanding.

The trip of the magi encompasses all three of those. We celebrate that the magi not only experienced a revelatory manifestation of a divine being, but they also received a "sudden insight and intuitive understanding" of the new way God was at work in the world, crossing barriers and building bridges across them.

The season of Epiphany not only contrasts the light and shadow in the world, but it focuses us on the way the Spirit of Christ is present in the midst of the darkest of places. Epiphany calls us to open the darker places in our own lives to the light, to receive it, be healed by it, and then to carry it with us as we walk out in the world.

The first Sunday in January is Epiphany Sunday. In worship we'll be celebrating the magi and their trip to the light in worship—and God's invitation to us to live in light. We'll carry that over from worship as we gather for brunch afterward, to celebrate the light in this church and to dream together for how we continue to journey with it. I hope you will join us. There will be plenty of food—and lots of light!

Blessings, Melinda

Calendar for January

(For more information, see page #s)

Thursday, January 1



Sunday, January 4

10 AM — Communion

Following Worship — Epiphany Brunch (pg. 6)

1 PM — Unhanging of the Greens (pg. 5)

Wednesday, January 14 — 2 PM

Full Council Meeting

Saturday, January 17 — 8:30 AM

Breakfast Forum (pg. 7)

Monday, January 19 — 10 AM

On the Same Page Book Review (pg. 4)

Wednesday, January 21 — 12 PM

Gals' Lunch, Location to be Determined (pg. 6)

Sunday, January 25 — Following Worship

Celebrating January Birthdays (pg. 6)

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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

10 AM — *The Chosen*, Begins January 8 (pg. 4)

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.

THANK YOU!

Council Highlights!

The Administrative Committee of the UCSJ Council met in December and, along with regular business, discussed several matters. These include the fact that the drainage plan for the west side of the church will be delayed until spring of 2026. Safety for folks parking there will continue to be the use of mats in inclement conditions. Someone to plow that area will be secured to remove snow as needed.

Reviewing, reorganizing, and clearing out storage areas (sanctuary closets, cabin space, metal and wooden sheds) needs to be done in the future.

Council members, whose terms are expiring in June 2026 or who wish to take a different Council position, will be asked at the January 14 meeting to express their intention.

Cyber Security Assessment and policies are continuing.

Randy and Christell Kee have been approved as new members (Yeah and Congrats to them and UCSJ Congregation).

Choir lighting was installed in December, which our music director, Katy Kristoffersen and UCSJ choir are very appreciative of.

UCSJ Facebook has been reviewed and streamlined.

Pastor Melinda has been working an average of 14 hours per week over her maximum of 30 hours. To help correct this, Melinda will conduct the January 11 service with Rev. Lou Ward of UMC preaching. Pastor Melinda has planned a spring vacation for April 4-22, 2026.

The next UCSJ meeting will be for the **full Council on Wednesday, January 14, at 2 PM** at the church. Please join us and let us know your concerns and compliments.

New Years Blessings, UCSJ Council, Pam Larson, Chair



Bible Studies

Centering Prayer — Mondays at 9 AM, via Zoom.

Contact is Kathy Graff.

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

Contact is Bob Larson.

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 November 30, 2025

	YTD Actual	Year-to-Date Goal	Income ABOVE Goal	Annual Budget
Income	\$ 100,398	\$87,917	\$12,481	\$211,000
Expenses	\$ 87,847			
Net GAIN	\$ 12,551			

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)

January 4



PLUM Corner



Happy Advent, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!!!

*I hope you're keeping warm and enjoying this amazing holiday, time with family and friends.
Below are two Christmas messages and some fun activities to learn about our PLUM denominations.*

Presbyterian — God is in everything—and that includes the music. Hip-hop is often misunderstood, but for decades it has inspired, comforted, and confronted injustice, naming the realities of survival, dignity and hope. That conviction shapes the “Theology of Hip-Hop,” a podcast from *Presbyterian Outlook* hosted by Chris Burton (aka Di Baddest Chaplain). The series approaches hip-hop as a place where faith, lament, protest and justice meet without pretense, with Burton’s theological reflections. Five episodes are available now, five more starting in January. [Click here to listen.](#)

Lutheran ELCA — [Click here](#) to read the Christmas message from the Bishop of our Rocky Mountain Synod.

United Church of Christ — UCC General Minister and President/CEO, the Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, shared a special video message ahead of the holiday season. [Click here to watch.](#)

Methodist — UMC posts a variety of quizzes, including “Are you smarter than the average United Methodist?” I just took the Advent quiz, and sadly only got five correct. It’s a fun interactive way to learn about UMC. [Click here to find and take a quiz.](#)

Kim Lundgren



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
10 AM**

Education

On the Same Page Book Review

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

Carolyn Snowbarger has agreed to facilitate *Theo of Golden* by Allen Levi for the On the Same Page book review to be held on **Monday, March 2, 2026, at 10 AM**. This is a great opportunity to hear about this originally self-published book that has now gained worldwide acclaim. Books (\$15) will be available starting January 19th in the narthex.

Happy Hour Bible Study

A thought filled five-week Lent Wednesday afternoon Happy Hour Bible Study will begin with a traditional Ash Wednesday church service on **February 18th**. Each Wednesday afternoon following—there will be a thought-provoking Bible study led by Pastor Melinda Veatch on different aspects and points of view on Easter. Each week is set to study and better prepare our minds and heart for the beautiful celebration to be held on **Easter Sunday, April 5, 2026**.

Community Book Study and Soup Supper

A Spring 2026 Wednesday Community Book Study and Soup Supper—a vegetarian and meat choice of soup signup will be offered by one of our church founders and leaders **Mick Graff**. He has graciously, once again, agreed to take book selections starting now. The study will start mid-April and continue through May. A request for book ideas and their authors is appreciated—Please email or text your book/author suggestions to elisheshirey@gmail.com or (830) 953-0208. We'll want the book choices voted on, selected and made available a month before the first day of class in April so you can decide, review, read, and look over which book is a good match for your 5-6 weeks of study.

The UCSJ Book Swap

It 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. There is a very good selection of books to choose from (thank you to whomever dropped off the latest John Grisham book, it's now back on the book swap shelf for the next reader).

Elise Shirey, Education Chair

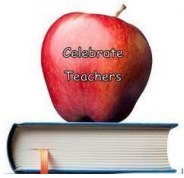
Mission & Outreach

The UCSJ Mission & Outreach (M&O) Committee wants to thank everyone that participated in the Angel Tree Christmas gifts, especially **Donna Whiskeman** for making sure all the gifts were purchased before the due date.

The M&O Committee is excited to announce our upcoming projects for the months of January, February, and March. The quarterly theme is “Impacting Local Needs” as most of our efforts over the next several months are focused on local organizations.

January — HopeWest Veterans Blankets

The starry blankets will be returned to HopeWest at the end of January for distribution to veterans in hospice care. Each blanket takes about 1-2 hours to complete, and no sewing is required. Pick up a blanket and instructions from the pew in the lobby! Email **Lisa Young** at youngridgway@gmail.com, if you have questions about this project.



February — Valentine's Day Teacher Appreciation

Valentine's cards will be handed out to church members on the first few Sundays in February for attendees to write a note to a teacher. These will be given to the Ouray and Ridgway schools along with a Valentine treat to go in the teacher and staff boxes. What a sweet way to show our appreciation to our county educators!



March — Food Pantry

Church attendees can bring in shelf-stable food items throughout the month. **Cindi Myers** can answer specific questions you may have about this project.

The M&O Committee chose to allocate our quarterly donations to the following organizations. Shepherd's Hand was given \$1,200 in support of the Lighthouse, an overnight shelter in Montrose. The building used for the Lighthouse is leased from the town of Montrose and requires \$70,000 for the six months that they are open. They are in dire need of funding to remain open. **Lucy Scholpp** can provide more details regarding their needs. We look forward to having Miriam, executive director for Shepherd's Hand, come to UCSJ in January to tell us about the services Sheperd's Hand offers. In addition, Global Ministries (UMCOR) will be sent \$1,300 for disaster relief efforts.

If you are interested in the work that the M&O Committee is doing, please talk to one of the 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, Gini Barker, and Bruce Shirey.**

Lisa Young, Mission & Outreach Chair



Unhanging of the Greens

Epiphany Sunday, January 4

1 PM

Following worship service please join us for an Epiphany Brunch, and then plan to assist us with “undecorating” the church. Thanks for planning to help.

New Year: New Chances

As we turn the calendar to January, we carry with us the warmth of the Christmas season and the anticipation of what lies ahead. The New Year isn't just a change of dates; it's an invitation to see where God is leading us next. Our January calendar is full of opportunities to gather, reflect, and celebrate the spirit of our community.

Epiphany Brunch: What's Ahead?

Sunday, January 4, Following Worship

We will officially close out the Christmas season with our annual Epiphany Brunch. This is more than just a meal; it is a sacred time for us to pause, reflect, and dream together about the year to come. Join us as we look toward the "Star of Bethlehem" in our own lives and consider how we will move forward as a congregation.



Gals' Lunch: Something New

Wednesday, January 21, at 12 PM

Our Gals' Lunch is embracing the theme of "New" this month! Not only are we heading to a newly opened restaurant (stay tuned for the big reveal in upcoming announcements!), but we will also be revealing two special celebrations this year.

Note the Schedule Change: To accommodate those attending the Thursday morning viewing of *The Chosen* at the church, we are moving our lunches to Wednesdays for the next few months. We hope this shift allows even more of you to join us for fellowship!

January Birthday Celebration!

Sunday, January 25, Following Worship

We will gather to celebrate every member of our church family born in the month of January. Please join us for a time of fellowship and cake as we honor our friends and neighbors. There's no better way to kick off the New Year than by celebrating the gift of life and community.



A Big Thank You: For Your Generosity and Warmth

The Congregational Life Ministry Team wants to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who made this past year so special. Whether you brought treats, baked cookies, served meals, brewed coffee, or stayed late to clean up—you have been the hands and feet of Christ. Your dedication to Christian hospitality makes our church a true home. We are so grateful for the warmth you bring to this congregation.



Your Congregational Life Ministry Team:

Jenny Cheek, Sue Conrad, Charlotte Duckett, Junella Hildreth, Marge Quist, Lish Sheppard, Elise Shirey, Carolyn Snowbarger (chair), Gen Spangler, and Angela Todd



Don't Miss an Event!

Check the insert in the Sunday bulletin, the weekly Newslink, or online at <http://ucsjridgway.org/calendar.html> for upcoming events and activities.

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.)



Breakfast Forum — Saturday, January 17, at 8:30 AM

The speaker will be **Alan Todd**, and the title of his presentation is “Sylvia Smith the Central Figure in Marble and Its Mine Demise.”

SUBJECT: At the turn of the last century in Colorado mining towns, it was rare indeed to see a woman newspaper owner/publisher. Sylvia Smith, whether she was writing in her Crested Butte newspaper, “The Weekly Citizen,” or later in her Marble newspaper, the “Marble City Times,” was opinionated and often critical of both towns and their mining operations.

She was recruited to Marble during its heyday. In a few short years, she was a central figure in the mine and town’s demise.

This is the story of labor, stock selling, conspiracy, retribution and a woman in a man’s world during the rise and fall of the Colorado Yule Marble Company.



BIO: Alan Todd has been working for and contributing to newspapers for over 40 years. In his corporate days, he worked for Cox Communications for 26 years, in markets big and small including Austin, Grand Junction, Longview, TX and Marshal, TX. He is the previous owner of the Ouray County Plaindealer and The Ridgway Sun, from 2010 to 2019. He currently serves on the board of the Ouray County Historical Society for which he fills the role of Archivist. He has served on other boards including both the Ridgway and Ouray chambers, East Texas Symphony, East Texas Crime Stoppers, United Way, public radio, Gregg County 2000 Census, Northwest Austin Little League and more.

Alan is married to Angela Todd. He has two grown children and two grandchildren.

Alan also owns and operates The Sock Mine, a novelty store on Main Street in Ouray, and has written a weekly Colorado history column in the Montrose Daily Press for the past five years.

He likes to fly fish, do Mr. Builder projects around the house and play the cello, occasionally in tune.

January Birthdays

- 3 – Ina Dow
- 5 – Wendy Kidd
- 7 – Leslie Wood
- 10 – Mike Kristoffersen
- 12 – Harvey Scoville
- 15 – Kathy Graff
- 16 – George Weekly
- 18 – Peg Kristoffersen
- 19 – Gary Elliott
- 20 – Josephine Scoville
- 22 – Ken Sloan
- 23 – Gay Kempner
- 24 – Kia Chandler
- 27 – Jim Wing

January Anniversaries

22 – Charlie Carson & Marsha McCall

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

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Full Council Meeting

(2nd Wednesday)

Wednesday, January 14

2 PM

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



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UCSJ QR Code

Scan to get up-to-date event information



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

Connect with UCSJ!

We are affiliated with:

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



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