



February 2026

295 N. Lena Street, Ridgway, Colorado

Volume 23, Issue 2

Worship Sundays at 10 AM

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 295
Ridgway, CO 81432

Email: ucsjoffice@gmail.com

Website: www.ucsjridgway.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/ucsjridgway

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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 (Council 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

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)

A Lenten Mindset: From Ashes to Light

I have been pondering the bizarre, random things that happen in our lives and in our world. As we go about day-to-day, we walk with an idea of how the world is and how our lives will go. Then something tears into that vision: an unexpected health diagnosis, the end of a job we thought was secure, a sudden death of a family member or friend, a world event that shatters norms. Or maybe a hoped-for outcome has not materialized and the life we envisioned is as far away for us as it has always been.



These are not experiences any of us wants. Yet, in each one can be a gift that gives us a clearer view of the best in ourselves and in others. We recognize in a new way what really matters. Old resentments and dissatisfactions dissolve, and our compassion grows for ourselves and for the suffering and loss of others in the world around us. Connecting to and walking with each other becomes a top priority. We develop a different perspective, and we focus on what life is about with clearer eyes.

Developing that different perspective is what Lent is all about, and that is how we will be focusing as we walk through the season when it begins on **February 18th with Ash Wednesday**. We will observe the day with a simple worship service at 4:30 PM that will include the imposition of ashes.

Then each **Wednesday from February 25th until March 25th we will gather from 4 to 5:30 PM** (see page 5 for more details) at UCSJ to explore those places and times when our lives get ashy and dry, and how we can journey into light. Each week we will have time to reflect on our own lives through the lens of moving from those ashy places to renewal, clarity, and joy. We'll look at where in our lives things may have become stale, where we need room to take a breath, rest, renew, and restore a connection with the One who gives us life.

Our gatherings will begin with appetizers and a time for catch-up and conversation. We'll then move to a time of focused spiritual practice and reflection, with opportunities for silence, creative expression, and communal prayer. I invite you to take time and share the journey as we walk through this Lenten season together.

Blessings, Melinda

Calendar for February

(For more information, see page #s)

Sunday, February 1

10 AM — Communion

Following Worship — Coffee Tasting and Voting Event (pg. 6)

Wednesday, February 11 — 2 PM

Administrative Committee Meeting

Wednesday, February 18 — 4:30 PM

Ash Wednesday Worship Service

Saturday, February 21 — 8:30 AM

Breakfast Forum (pg. 7)

Sunday, February 22 — Following Worship

Celebrating February Birthdays (pg. 6)

Wednesday, February 25 — 12 PM

Gals' Lunch at Shelter Distilling (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

WEDNESDAYS — 4 PM

A Lenten Mindset: From Ashes to Light Class
February 25—March 25 (pg. 5)

THURSDAYS

10 AM — The Chosen

January 8—February 19 (pg. 5)

4:30 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!

Your full Council met in January and along with regular business we approved upgrading the video camera, hiring sidewalk snow plowing, and getting gravel for the handicapped parking area.

Other discussions included setting the Annual Meeting for June 14 after which we will have a Ministry Celebration (good food!). Other meetings will include budgeting sessions May 13th and 20th. As required by the by-laws the membership records will be reviewed this spring and the Nominating Committee will begin their work (be prayerfully open to considering any requests).

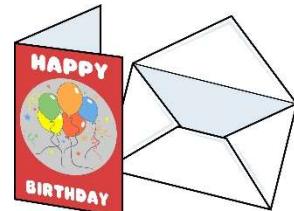
Note that due to security issues the UCSJ Directory will no longer be sent out digitally. If you would like an updated copy, please request one from the Administrative Assistant Shirley.

The next meeting will be for the Administrative Committee, on February 11, at 2 PM at the church.

Pam Larson, Council Chair

It Takes a Village

If you have received a greeting for your birthday or another commemorative occasion, you can thank one of the four people (**Sue Conrad, Kristi Henson, Marsha McCall, and Alicia Sheppard**) who have each agreed to take three



months of the year to help you celebrate by sending either an ecard or card by mail. If the church office has your birthdate and/or anniversary you can look forward to being recognized in this way.

There are many people who are part of our church family performing a variety of acts of service. Each one is a thread in the weave of the fabric known as UCSJ. You know who you are, and we thank you.

Alice Goertz, Care Team Coordinator

February 18 4:30 PM

Simple worship service that will include the imposition of ashes.



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 December 31, 2025

	YTD Actual	Year-to-Date	Income ABOVE	Annual
		Goal	Goal	Budget
Income	\$124,036	\$105,501	\$18,535	\$211,000
Expenses	\$105,207			
Net GAIN	\$ 18,829			

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)

February 1



PLUM Corner



I hope your 2026 is off to a great start. I am thankful for some much-needed snow, sunny skies, and all of us supporting UCSJ and our PLUM denominations. If you're planning travel this year or, in the future, you might look at dates and locations of gatherings across the US.

Presbyterian — The 227th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) will meet June 22–July 2, 2026, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. [Click here for details](#).

Lutheran ELCA — The Rocky Mountain Synod of the ELCA will meet April 23–April 25, 2026, at Bethany Lutheran Church in Cherry Hills Village, Colorado. [Click here for details](#).

United Church of Christ — General Synod 36 will be held July 21–25, 2028, in Cleveland, Ohio. [Click here for details](#).

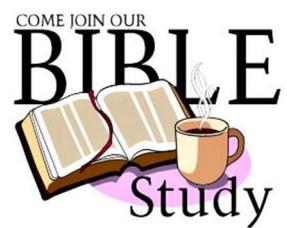
Methodist — Commission on the General Conference chose to hold the next United Methodist Church's General Assembly on May 8–18, 2028. [Click here for details](#).

Kim Lundgren

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.



An “Epiphanous” Congregational Conversation

After church on Sunday, January 4th, thirty-five folks enjoyed a delicious potluck brunch coordinated by the Congregational Life team. We have great cooks at UCSJ, and the dishes, as always, were exceptional. **Thanks to Carolyn Snowbarger and all those who made sure there was plenty of great food.**

Along with the food, those at each of the five tables discussed four questions related to our Long-Range Visioning process. Those questions with their combined responses of the groups are below:



- 1) What drew you to this church when you first visited? What has kept you here?
 - We were looking for a more inclusive church, and we found it with the church's ecumenical approach: all welcome
 - The pastor(s) and congregation were and continue to be very welcoming
 - We felt and still feel a lot of warmth, caring, and community from the congregation
 - We felt drawn to the worship service, music, and message—and we continue to be
 - We are grateful for the great music program and choir. Wanted to sing and we can!
 - There were people here who love the outdoors—and the spirit of the outdoors that is here
- 2) What kind of light do you think this church brings to the community? Where do you think its light needs to burn more brightly?
 - Light: children's camp and choir programs; events open to the community like Wednesday book studies, Breakfast Forum, music programs, growing connection with support to area teachers, students, and schools, summer trips
 - Burn more brightly: more involvement with the Food Bank, poor, homeless; how we open up to the community; grow intergenerational involvement and outreach to younger people; also, how we connect with more mature folks; keep up more actively with visitors
- 3) We all want to leave a legacy of some kind. What about this church, would you like to see live on after you are gone?
 - Our openness to and acceptance of others; our welcome to all; our respect for differences; our ability to be a community resource; continue our vibrant care ministry; continue our beautiful music
- 4) Think of this church in 10 years. Who do you see here? Who is not here? What are we doing as a church? What will we need to be doing differently?
 - Younger people and a more intergenerational congregation
 - A strong focus on programs that address both spiritual and physical needs—in and beyond
 - Short mid-week service that draws people beyond Sunday morning
 - Addition to building that creates more space for congregational and community gatherings and creates a clearer entrance
 - An even more vibrant care ministry, along with a strong prayer ministry
 - A more intensive connection to and involvement in the larger community
 - A columbarium

These are the highlights of each table's discussion, but there was more specific conversation within each group. If you would like more information, please contact Pastor Melinda. We will continue these discussions. Hope you will be part of them!

Education

The series, *The Chosen*, continues to be shown on Thursdays through February 19, at 10 AM. New ideas are being cultivated and old ideas about faith and focus are part of the discussion afterwards surrounding this show. Pastries and coffee will be available.



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.

THURSDAY'S
January 8 through February 19
10 AM

A Lenten Mindset: From Ashes to Light class with Pastor Melinda

Five WEDNESDAY'S (February 25—March 25) from 4-5:30 PM

A thought filled 5-week Lent Wednesday afternoon study. Refreshments to be provided.

- Week 1 (February 25)—Setting a Path Week
- Week 2 (March 4)—Moving from Expectation to Living Expectantly
- Week 3 (March 11)—Moving from Anxiety to Acceptance
- Week 4 (March 18)—Moving from Resentment to Reconciliation
- Week 5 (March 25)—Journeying to Joy

On the Same Page Book Review



Carolyn Snowbarger will be facilitating *Theo of Golden* by Allen Levi for the On the Same Page book review to be held on **Monday, March 2, at 10 AM**. This is a great opportunity to hear about this originally self-published book that has brought so much joy and light. Books (\$15) will be available in the narthex.

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 eliseshirey@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

Thank you for the fresh supply of books being donated regularly. You can find the books on the inside 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.

Elise Shirey, Education Chair

Community, Caffeine, and Celebration: February at UCSJ

The short days of winter are the perfect time to gather, and your Congregational Life Ministry Team has a busy February planned to keep us warm and connected. From selecting our new signature coffee to celebrating our February birthdays, there is something for everyone to look forward to!

Help Us Pick Our Official UCSJ Coffee!

Fellowship time is an important part of our Sunday mornings together, and we believe the coffee in your mug should be as warm and inviting as the conversation. We are looking for a new “house blend,” and we need your taste buds to help us decide!

Join us on **Sunday, February 1**, immediately following the service for a **Coffee Tasting & Voting Event** in the gathering area.



How It Will Work:

- Sample: We'll have three different “roasts” prepared, ranging from light and bright to dark and bold.
- Sip: Take your time to enjoy the different flavors. Don't worry, there will be plenty of cream and sugar on hand if that's how you like it!
- Vote: Cast your ballot for your favorite bean.

The winning roast will become UCSJ's official coffee served during fellowship time. Whether you're a coffee connoisseur or just enjoy a hot mug while you chat with friends, your opinion matters. Let's find a blend that makes everyone feel right at home—because life is too short for mediocre coffee!



February Birthday Celebration

Sunday, February 22 — Following Worship

It's time to party! Following our worship service, we will gather to celebrate all those in our church family born in the month of February. And of course, no celebration is complete without chocolate cake. Come for the fellowship, stay for the dessert!

Gals' Lunch: A “Revealing” Gathering

Wednesday, February 25, at 12 PM, at Shelter Distilling

Ladies, please join us for a special lunch at Shelter Distilling (947 Mayfly Drive, Montrose). This month features a fun twist: we are asking everyone to share a story about their “first love” with the group. It's sure to be a wonderful time of storytelling and sisterhood.

A Heartfelt Thank You

Our fellowship time wouldn't be possible without the generosity of our volunteers. We want to extend a huge “Thank You” to **Clayton and Jere Beaudry, Alice Goertz, Donna Whiskman, and David Stytz** for providing the coffee and delicious treats this past month. Your service sweetens our Sundays!

Blessings from 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

A REMINDER: Scams Abound!

If you receive a text or email from anyone on our staff or Council, asking you to purchase gift cards, Bitcoin or any other form of currency, do not respond and report it to either Pastor Melinda or our Council chair, Pam Larson.



It's easy to be fooled! But we can be smart and stay safe from scammers.

Remember don't respond but do report.

Mission & Outreach

The UCSJ Mission & Outreach (M&O) Committee wants to thank everyone that has been participating in the M&O projects over the last several months. Our desire is for it to be an encouragement and blessing as you give of your time, energy, and financial support to others.

We are continuing with the theme of “Impacting Local Needs” in the next several months. If you picked up a HopeWest Veterans Starry Blanket, please remember to return it to the church so it can be given back to HopeWest for distribution to a veteran in hospice care. We hope you were able to hear Caroline, one of the founders of Shepherd’s Hand and Terri, Board Member, tell us about the services they offer and their programs to help the homeless and those in economic hardship. If you are interested in volunteering or donating, go to their [website](#).

In **February**, we will be asking you to help with a Valentine’s Day Teacher Appreciation activity. On February 1st and 8th, we will be giving out Valentine cards for you to write a note to a teacher. These will be put in the teacher and staff boxes at the Ouray and Ridgway schools. A sweet way to show our appreciation to our county educators!



During **March**, be prepared to bring in shelf-stable food items for the Ouray Food Pantry. Cindi Myers will give us ideas of what they need once the dates are closer.

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 (chair)**, **Charlotte Duckett**, **Claudia Wolff**, **Kate Kellogg**, **Donna Whiskeman**, **Cindi Myers**, **Lucy Scholpp**, **Betsy Lattanner**, **Gini Barker**, and **Bruce Shirey**.

Breakfast Forum — Saturday, February 21, at 8:30 AM

We are fortunate to have as our speaker, author **Kathryn Wilder** who will give a presentation on her new book *The Last Cows*. This is the story of a woman, mother, environmentalist, cowboy, and rancher of 19,000 acres of combined public and private land in Disappointment Valley in Southwestern Colorado. Her literary nonfiction conveys the joys, challenges, heartbreaks, and qualms of contemporary ranching. She and her son Ken, run the ranch raising Criollo cattle that are uniquely adapted to the desert.

Kathryn is the winner of the 2025 Western Heritage Award and the author of *Desert Chrome: Water, a Woman, and Wild Horses in West*.

Submitted by Ken Sloan

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

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Administrative Committee Meeting

(2nd Wednesday)
Wednesday, February 11
2 PM

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

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UCSJ QR Code

