

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 (Council Chair)

Betsy Lattanner (Worship & Music)

Elise Shirey (Education)

Carolyn Snowbarger (Ministry)

Vince Snowbarger (Finance)

Tim Spangler (Operations)

Terry Thomas (Congregational Life)

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)



Recently, I saw two quotes. The first was

Let your eyes look forward; fix your gaze
straight ahead. (*Christian Standard Bible*)

— Proverbs 4:25

The second was online: “You will never see the great things ahead of you if you keep looking at the things behind you.”

Following our annual meeting, we spent time looking over our Long Range Vision Strategy and discussing the following questions:

1) What are your first impressions of this Strategic Visioning Plan?

“Well done, well thought out...We have room to grow...It’s a good direction...Mission-focused...A good reminder of what is needed to grow...more connection to the larger community...Thinking of the future...Building a big picture.”

2) What excites you about it?

“It envisions us stepping out of traditional aspects of church...Going to the community to learn about needs, instead of assuming we know what they are...It is grounded in mission...Noticed an increased emphasis on community involvement...We are starting to look beyond ourselves...It doesn’t dictate details and allows for creativity and flexibility, lets those involved in leadership develop their own structure and take ownership...focuses on building relationships within and beyond UCSJ.”

3) Where do you feel caution or resistance?

Aging demographic...Bricks and mortar expansion...The comfort of how we’ve always done it—hoping that we follow through on flexibility and creativity instead of staying in “old lanes”...It’s sometimes challenging to get people involved/participating...potential financial costs of change.

4) As you think about each ministry area, what are specific things you think we need to focus on as a church?

Intergenerational relationships, mentorships, volunteer opportunities for kids, school-church relationships, supporting teachers...Reaching out to students/families experiencing food insecurity...Carnival before school starts, with games, etc., to provide school supplies. Facilities are holding us back, we need more space for programs/activities...More cross-functional

(Continued on page 2)

Calendar for August

(For more information, see page #s)

Sunday, August 2 — 10 AM

Communion

Sunday, August 9 — 4 PM

Sunday Sundae Concert (pg. 4 & 5)

Wednesday, August 12 — 2 PM

Full Council Meeting (pg. 2)

Thursday, August 13 — Noon

Gals' Lunch at Greenwood's, Ridgway (pg. 5)

Tuesday, August 18

Ouray School Educational Staff Appreciation
Breakfast (pg. 5)

Thursday, August 20

Ridgway Elementary and Secondary Schools
Educational Staff Appreciation Breakfast (pg. 5)

Saturday, August 22 — 9 AM

(Note the DATE Change)

Breakfast Forum (pg. 7)

Sunday, August 30 — 2 PM

Sunday Sundae Concert

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Weekly Activities



SUNDAYS

8:30 AM — Choir Practice

10 AM — Worship Service

(Communion is served the first Sunday
of each month)

MONDAYS — 9 AM ([via Zoom](#))

Centering Prayer

WEDNESDAYS — 10 AM ([via Zoom](#))

Women's Bible Study (pg. 3 & 4)

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.



(Continued from page 1)

ministry group gatherings... Offer kids' Sunday school...Alternative non-Sunday worship service not on the weekend...A Taizé service... A Parents' Night Out hosted at the church...Connecting with experts on a variety of topics, hosting presentations and discussions with them at the church.

5) *How will you be involved as we grow in faith, connection, unity, and heart?*

We will attend, volunteer, be present!...Join Council...Share what we need, so we can invite people in as sojourners, rather than as "strong ones."

What struck me as I listened around the tables was the sense that this church is grounded in the present moment, not "back there." There is a strong willingness to look ahead, rather than behind. So many great ideas just poured out from around those tables. It is a real gift to be part of a church that is grateful for its beginnings but not stuck in them. A church with eyes that look forward can be clay in God's hands—and that is, after all, what God calls us to be.

Blessings, Melinda

Council Highlights!

Your new Administrative Committee of UCSJ Council met in July and approved several items along with the regular business.

The 2025-2026 end-of-the-year surplus was distributed among several reserve accounts—thanks to all for your contributions to our financial security—good job!

Several appointments have been made for the coming year: Sue Stern—Treasurer; Linda Ingo—Financial Secretary, Joan Moyer—Recording Secretary, Gen Spangler—Congregational Life Chair (1-yr) and Joan Moyer—Worship & Music Chair (2-yr).

A new computer for the office has been purchased and installed.

Also of note, the Full UCSJ Council had their retreat in July, the highlight of which was the team building use of a gift evaluation system called "Strengths Assessment." Great way to start the new year.

The next full Council meeting will be Wednesday, August 12, at 2 PM at the church. And as always, please join us and let us know your concerns, questions, and comments.

Blessings, Pam Larson, Council Chair

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 June 30, 2026 (Fiscal Year End)

	YTD Actual	Year-to-Date Goal	Income ABOVE Goal	Annual Budget
Income	\$227,199	\$211,000	\$16,199	\$211,000
Expenses	\$206,416			
Net GAIN	\$ 20,780 (moved to Reserves)			

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)
August 2



UCSJ Finances

UCSJ was greatly blessed last church year by the grace and goodness of God and by the financial faithfulness of our congregation. We ended the church year with over \$20,500 in excess of our expenses. We had \$16,000 in contributions over budget and \$4,500 less in expenses than budgeted. At the June Council meeting, it was decided that rather than put all of this excess into General

Reserves, we allocate money to specific reserves in areas that we had to reduce in preparing the 2026-27 budget. Council approved putting \$10,000 into the Building and Maintenance Reserve; \$5,000 for Lot 14/15 property tax expenses; \$2,000 to Communications categories; \$3,000 to General Reserves; and the remaining amount of about \$750 to the Music category. Thank you for your faithful stewardship to UCSJ and we pray for God's continued blessings to our congregation.

Vince Snowbarger, Vice Chairperson of Finance

Bible Studies

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

Contact is Kathy Graff.

Women's Bible Study — Wednesdays at 10 AM, [via Zoom](#).

"Sing a Song to the Lord," (July 8 – August 19), contact is Carol Layton.

Men's Bible Study — Saturdays at 8:30 AM, [via Zoom](#).

Contact is Bob Larson.



Education

“Sing a Song to the Lord” — Women’s Bible Study, Wednesdays, at 10 AM

Pastor Carol Layton will be facilitating a 7-week study (July 8 – August 19) of some of the songs which are found in scripture. While some of the songs are very familiar such as the Psalms and the Song of Solomon, there are others, such as the songs sung by Moses and Mariam, or Hanna’s song or Deborah’s song that are not as well known. [Click here to join via Zoom.](#)

“Swap and Take” Library

Located on the bookshelf in the library to the left of the door, the Swap and Take library is alive and well. New additions are available regularly. Make it a point to check it out.

Fall Community Book Study and Soup Dinner

Submit your book ideas to Mick Graff or Elise Shirey for the Fall 2026 UCSJ Community book study, soup and bread gathering on Wednesdays. Dates to come.

“On the Same Page”

The September book to be reviewed is *The Noticer* by Andy Andrews, dates to come. Copies are available on the pew by the front door (\$15). Or consider purchasing from your area bookstore, Amazon, or borrowing from the library as it has knowledge and guidance needed for everyone.

Elise Shirey, Education Chair

Sunday Sundaes Concerts



Come and enjoy some great music and ice cream sundaes following the concerts!

Mission & Outreach

The UCSJ Mission & Outreach (M&O) Committee is focusing this quarter on “**Serving in Practical Ways.**”

If you ever wonder what the current M&O projects are, check out the bulletin board above the name tags! We will always have our current projects highlighted there.

Can it be that time already!?! Our Ouray County educators are headed back to the office and classrooms in August. Let's join together to wish them well and let them know how much they are appreciated. UCSJ will be providing **Educational Staff Appreciation Breakfasts** to our county teachers and staff. Sign up to help set up or donate an item to share with our educators.

Ouray School — Tuesday, August 18

Ridgway Elementary and Secondary Schools — Thursday, August 20

We will also be collecting donations for **Peace Jam** and **Haven House** during the months of August and September. Keep an eye out for more details from these organization's champions on what they need.

Kate Kellogg — Peace Jam



Claudia Wolff — Haven House



Lisa Young, Mission & Outreach Chair

Congregational Life

Gals' Lunch

When: Thursday, August 13, at Noon

Where: Greenwood's in Ridgway

Remember that classic “What I Did on My Summer Vacation” first day-of-school assignment? Let's bring it back! We want to hear all about your adventures. Share a quick story, a neat thing you learned, or a favorite sight you saw this summer.



Sunday Sundae Concerts

(Fantastic music followed by ice cream sundaes)

Sunday, August 9, at 4 PM (see page 4 for details)

Sunday, August 30, at 2 PM



Save the Dates:

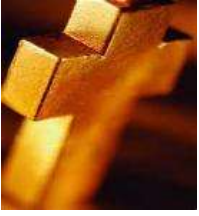
We have some wonderful gatherings coming up that you won't want to miss! Please mark your calendars and plan to join us:

Wednesday, September 2, at 5:30 PM — Ladies' Happy Hour at Jenny Cheek's home on Log Hill. Come enjoy some great company and catch up!

Thursday, September 24 — Fall Leaf Peeping. Let's head out together to enjoy the gorgeous autumn colors!



Carolyn Snowbarger and Gen Spangler



PLUM Corner

This month I want to review a topic that the Presbyterian Church is emphasizing. I made a reference to the Matthew 25 vision a few articles ago and think it appropriate to look at again. I highlighted other denominations service projects in this issue of PLUM Corner.

Presbyterian — This transformative movement calls on congregations, and groups to live out the church's mission through bold and compassionate discipleship. Rooted in Jesus' teachings in Matthew 25:31-46, this movement invites you to engage in [three core pillars](#): building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism, and eradicating systemic poverty.

The Matthew 25 vision builds from the theme of wholeness or peace—shalom in the Hebrew text and Eirene in the Greek and orients us toward what we are building, cultivating, and creating with God in lives and communities. We build beloved communities in part by dismantling the harm caused by racist structures. We cultivate economic wholeness when we act to eliminate the destructive influence of poverty on people and communities. These actions can welcome abundant life, equity, and hope in our shared journey.

At its core, Matthew 25 is about the healing and restoration of relationships, systems, and societies that reflect God's justice and love. Jesus was often referred to as the Prince of Peace. Like Christ, Matthew 25 seeks to embody wholeness in action. The above article is from the Presbyterian (USA) web site.

Lutheran ELCA — [“God’s work our Hands” website](#) is a theme that continues year after year in the ELCA calendar. It is designed to be nationwide and take place on the second Saturday of September. On Sunday, September 13, congregations of the ELCA will gather for our dedicated day of service, “God’s work. Our hands.” Since 2013, “God’s work. Our hands.” has inspired people of all ages to put their faith in action through service projects that share God’s love with all God’s people.

United Church of Christ — Launched just two months ago, the [United States of Kindness](#) has taken off and is picking up steam in 2026. The response to this initiative has been extremely positive within the United Church of Christ, with 106 distinct UCC signups, representing 6,117 people from 29 states across the country.

The UCC is part of this collaborative effort with the [Values in Action Foundation](#), bringing together national brands, schools, civic leaders, first responders, influencers and nonprofits to create a more connected, compassionate country through the simple power of everyday acts of kindness. Celebrating the 250th birthday of the United States, the campaign challenges all Americans to complete and share 250 acts of kindness in 2026.

Methodist — I believe it is important for us to know how our denomination responds to God’s Call to serve. We can get a look about how this is happening by going to [this web site](#) and selecting “How We Serve” from their web page.

Tom Chase



City Market Community Rewards

**THANK YOU TO THE 19 HOUSEHOLDS
WHO HELPED UCSJ RECEIVE \$104.98 LAST QUARTER!**

It's easy to help UCSJ receive donations using your City Market/Kroger card. You just need a digital account, so if you already have one just click [here](#) and scroll down to the “Link your shopper’s card” to get started and search for United Church of the San Juans, select, and save. If you don’t have a digital account, you will need to create one. Any transactions moving forward will be applied to the program at no added cost to you.

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, August 22, at 9 AM Note the Change in DATE!



Dr. Joel Keats will be the speaker, and the title of his talk is “Past, Present, and Future of Nuclear Power in the United States.” This should be of interest to everyone because the price of uranium has been going up with both old and new uranium mines opening up in Western Colorado. The future looks bright for nuclear energy.

Dr. Keats is a native of Western Pennsylvania and a graduate of Louisiana Tech and The Ohio State University College of Medicine. He trained in Diagnostic Radiology at the University of Southern California and Los Angeles County Hospital. After service with the 2nd Marine Division as a medical officer and two decades of private practice, he became an Assistant Professor at the University of Pittsburgh (1988) and an Associate at the University of Southern California (1999-2012). From 1987-1992 Joel was Chief consultant for Radiation Science and Physicians for Social Responsibility. He was a Consultant for the Atomic Energy Commission, the Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission and The Radiation Effects Research Foundation.

Ken Sloan

Picture Time!

It's time to update your photos in the church membership directory!

**Sundays (July 26 – August 2)
following worship**

Our own Max Sheppard will be happy to take your picture.



August Birthdays

- 3 – Susan Wing
- 7 – Josie Snapp
- 9 – Charlie Scholpp
- 9 – Anita Posey
- 12 – Bailey Sherwood
- 12 – Elliot Kristoffersen
- 14 – Barbara Eliason
- 23 – Lucy Scholpp
- 23 – Gail Callahan
- 26 – Shirley Didier
- 28 – Marsha McCall
- 28 – Randy Parker

August Anniversaries

- 13 – Ken & Sandy Sloan
- 13 – Mike & Katy Kristoffersen
- 13 – Pam & Ken Stofferahn
- 20 – David & Lisa Young
- 20 – Tim & Gen Spangler
- 21 – Mick & Kathy Graff

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, August 12

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 events 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*



And like us!

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