It was a moving experience Sunday to watch Pastor Rebecca lovingly touch the foreheads of the three children who came for Baptism, Skyler, Gabby and Ryan Tucker. They were rapt wrapped in full attention as she touched their foreheads with baptismal water and softly said the words: “You are a ‘Beloved’ child of God!” A beautiful moment of dedication to a loving God!

Then another wonderful experience began of looking into the eyes of those who came for a renewal of their baptismal vows and of hope. As I lovingly looked into the eyes of all who came the words became more and more significant: “You, are a ‘Beloved’ child of God. Chosen and marked by God’s love!”

I have written those words on my hand so I would be sure to remember them, but as each of you came to be marked by the waters of Christ’s baptism, the words and the feelings flowed easily. I have also been moved this week to have one of those whom I blessed on Sunday send a word of inquiry as to the exact wording of the blessing. She wanted to capture the words again for her remembrance of the morning and the reassurance of God’s abiding love.

I’ve often, over the years, pondered the mystery of why Jesus began his public ministry in this way. Why did he come to John the Baptist, his cousin, to be baptized in the Jordan River? John, a fiery preacher, had a following of new, repentant believers who were finding their way back to God. John was telling them how to have a new relationship with God the Creator, by seeking forgiveness, but that wasn’t Jesus’s reason for coming. His commitment to speak out was just at its beginning and he wanted John’s blessing. But Jesus received more than he was seeking. The Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove, symbolic of purity and calling, but somehow it is the words of God that ring in our ears, that we remember and focus on—words from heaven: “You are my ‘Beloved’ Son, in whom I am well pleased.” Luke 3:21-22

Jesus opens our eyes to seeing God in new ways. Two of my favorite biblical scholars in recent years are Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan. Both have been in Buena Vista as guest speakers of the Collegiate Peaks Form and indeed have spoken all over the world. Both have written numerous books on God and Jesus. Dr. Borg’s book entitled Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time can provide a picture of Jesus as a real person.

My heart resonates with Dr. Borg’s description of God’s love. He writes: “I have learned that how we image God matters. The images of God that we hold will reveal our ideas of God’s character. Two frequently held images of God are:

1. God as lawgiver and judge who also loves us. In this image God’s love is conditional and requires belief before it can be received.
2. God as lover. God loves every person with compassion which is nourishing and life-giving. It has tenderness, hope, and concern and is fierce in defense of persons.

With February being the one month that has a day devoted to LOVE, I urge you to take the opportunity to express and claim both the human and the heavenly love you feel toward God, others, and the “Beloved YOU!”

Happy Saint Valentine’s Day!
"To bless means to wish, unconditionally, total, unrestricted good for others and events from the deepest wellsprings in the innermost chamber of your heart..."

A dear friend gave me a book awhile back that was very special to her and she wanted to share it. The Gentle Art of Blessing: A Simple Practice That Will Transform You and Your World, by Pierre Pradervand. The book sat on my "to be read" windowsill at the cabin for awhile, until recently, I felt led to pick it up and delve-in. Practicing Blessing. It seemed the perfect message for a new year and new season. Inside I found a fascinating story of lives changed by the adoption of a seemingly-simple spiritual practice: The Art of Blessing.

I love to see lives and hearts changed in a myriad of ways, so I have endeavored to undertake this practice and thought I would invite you to do the same. Let's see how this new year unfolds!

Here are the GUIDELINES for THE ART OF BLESSING:

*On awakening, bless this day, for it is already full of unseen good which your blessings will call forth; for to bless is to acknowledge the unlimited good that is embedded in the very texture of the universe and awaiting each and all.*

*On passing people in the street, on the bus, in places of work and play, bless them. The peace of your blessing will accompany them on their way and the aura of its gentle fragrance will be a light to their path.*

*On meeting and talking to people, bless them in their health, their work, their joy, their relationships to God, themselves, and others. Bless them in their abundance, their finances...bless them in every conceivable way, for such blessings not only sow seeds of healing, but one day will spring forth as flowers of joy in the waste places of your own life.*

*As you walk, bless the city in which you live, its government and teachers, its nurses and street sweepers, its children and bankers, its priests and prostitutes. The minute anyone expresses the least aggression or unkindness to life.*

*To bless is to acknowledge the omnipresent, universal beauty hidden to material eyes; it is to activate that law which all living beings自动运行*.

*To bless all without discrimination of any sort is the ultimate form of giving, because those you bless will change by the adoption of a seemingly-simple spiritual practice: The Art of Blessing.*

*You have the power to bless and to change the course of people's lives.*

*Persons and families on the Joys and Concerns list—healing and comfort*.

*CUCU stretching and connecting in new, life-giving and inspiring avenues in the coming year*.

*Leaders of staff, teams, classes and committees, as they serve faithfully*.

*MUSIC and WORSHIP—growth in participation and experiencing God in our midst and feeding our souls together*.

*Welcoming efforts—grounds, programs, outreach to make CUCU accessible for all, spiritually, emotionally and physically*

*Learning, stretching, connecting—all of us reaching out to others, especially those of different cultures and religions*.

*P.S. And of course, above all, don’t forget to bless the utterly beautiful person YOU are!*

(Permission, from The Gentle Art of Blessing, by Pierre Pradervand)
Dear Friends and Colleagues in the Rocky Mountain Conference,

I don’t know how many times during my sabbatical I stopped to give thanks for your extreme kindness and generosity in providing a time of rest for your Conference Minister. I came to regard this time as the space between the heart-beats—that precious time of void, that brief pause in which no work is required and stillness is celebrated. I took full advantage of the luxurious hollowness of that space between the beats. For many, sabbatical provides a wonderful time for a majestic trip to see parts of the world otherwise unseen. For me, the space between the beats provided the opportunity for the stillness that allowed an inward dive into the parts of myself that often lay hidden by the busyness of my daily routine. The space between the beats allowed me a deep dive into my soul—and I am unendingly grateful. Perhaps the greatest insight from that deep inward dive was a reflection on my compulsion with activity; this somehow insatiable need to be “doing” all the time. Resting is hard for me, and having been raised with what has been dubbed the “Midwestern Work Ethic,” the idea of Sabbath—a time of intentional rest and self-care—rubbed against a long-instilled value of constant productivity. This is a value I clearly learned from watching my grandmother work in her kitchen, her house, and her garden from well before sunup to well after sundown, rarely even stopping to catch her breath. This pattern of constant self-servitude to perceived never ending responsibilities has informed my work habits most of my life. It is only when I have the luxury to stop working (that precious space between the beats) when I can embrace my God-created human being-ness. You see, in theological terms, rather than understanding myself to be of inestimable worth to God by just “being”—which is my understanding of God’s unending love and inordinate goodness for all of us—it is cross-wired in my brain that it is only through doing, and doing, and doing some more, that I am worthy. It is all too easy in the midst of my busyness for me to be a human “doing” rather than a human “being.” So, I have emerged from my sabbatical with a commitment to living as a human being rather than a human doing, and you are welcome to call me on it if you see me doing otherwise. 

And so, dear friends, the gracious gift of this space between the beats proved fully refreshing for me personally, and has renewed my focus for our shared ministry, which I will share more about further down. Along with the quiet reflection of my time away, I would also like to share a brief travelogue of some sabbatical experiences that inspired deep joy in my soul. I celebrated fully with my daughter Meghan as she married the love of her life, Myles Potter, on August 18 at La Foret. In early fall, I toured Colorado for its magnificent color and sights, and I reconnected with my father’s family on the Western Slope. While in Grand Junction, I toured the space [where] we will meet for Annual Celebration 2019 (it will be great!). On occasion, I took the opportunity to be a Denver tourist. Among other sites, I visited our Colorado State Capitol, marveled at the beauty of its stone architecture, and spent a bit of time with the fabulous fabric quilt honoring various women’s contributions to the state’s founding. The irony that our forefathers are etched in stone and bronze and our foremothers stitched in floss (let alone the nearly total omission of the contributions from people of color) may be an article for another day. I played tour guide for some of my conference-ministry colleagues, leading them through my beloved Yellowstone National Park… which many of you know is my holy space. Ahhh… A quick trip to Kansas City and its extraordinary Nelson Art Gallery, along with a bounty of time spent decorating my house for Christmas, rounded out my sabbatical time. Oh, by the way, I took an “Improv” class, too. Don’t be surprised if some of those techniques show up at Annual Celebration! Again, I give unending thanks for your generosity of time, treasure, and spirit. Please be likewise supportive of your pastors when their time for sabbatical comes, and really challenge yourself to find that holy space between the beats in your own lives.

Wishing you all a joyous Advent,...

Sue Artt, RMC Conference Minister

November 28, 2018
My dash crashed last summer. One night at supper, I coughed. A red light went on because my number one health fear is pneumonia. That disease nearly took me home two times in my four years here at assisted living. Something told me, even though I only coughed, that I was on the wrong path. By morning, I was very ill and couldn’t even get to the bathroom or feed my cats by myself.

Blood work and x-rays showed I had double pneumonia. Every day we had to make a new decision whether or not to go to the hospital. My doctors know I do not do well in hospitals, and with the right drugs, nebulizer treatments, and help from RA’s, I believed I might do better here.

As I write this in August, I have been sitting in my recliner ever since doing everything asked of me. Now I wait to see if I could turn a corner by myself or not.

I mean, after all, I am eighty-six with badly damaged lungs. Antibiotics were changed and seemingly slowly trying to change the downward path I probably was on.

It’s been quite the experience. With much prayer, determination, a calling for patience, tomorrow’s blood work will tell us if I’ve now turned the corner. I do believe I have.

You know, such an illness does more than play havoc with your body. It makes my inner self sort of step up. It makes me think about the “what if’s” and rearranging my priorities. The list goes on and on. However, after a while, I begin to dwell on the “what if’s” and I get depressed. But I have learned that somewhere in my DNA there’s this fight, this determination to focus on my place in this world, and I try to dwell on when I’m well again and try to find a positive side to it all.

You know, I have a distinct flashback. I feel compelled to add this.

As I was growing up in Atlanta, Georgia, we had two homes—the other on St. Simons Island. It was a three-hundred-mile trip the day after school let out and it was the trip I lived for as far back as memory serves. Why? That was and still is where the ocean and the wide sandy beaches were. It was the salty air, the seagulls hovering above me, and I was convinced from the beginning that it was my life coach to feeling free.

So, on one such trip, as my daddy turned the car and stopped, I thought my ten-year-old heart would burst. I shoved open the car back door, kicked my shoes aside, and simply started running as fast as possible.

Running at water’s edge, my arms splayed wide, like asking God to live with me, I simply abandoned myself to the water and the salt and the air and the gulls. I was still running when I awoke.

Why did I add for you this old memory? After mulling it over, it reminds me to not give up to pneumonia. I ran and ran and jumped, looked up, reached for God. I was made in His image, so of course I had a purpose for good. I just have to heal these old lungs so I can get back to my dash. Thank you all for reading me for twenty-eight years.

The view from the mountain is wondrous.

~ Jean Brody

Jean Brody is pleased to have participated in CUCC’s Living Gift Market even from afar.

As we undecorate and repack our Christmas treasures from 2018, here is Stuff You Might Not Know about items that have been a part of CUCC for many years.

The crèche figures were from Charlotte Smith. I heard that the missing Joseph was in need of repair and he was beyond help. So, I guess we’re fortunate to have a stand-in—and the distance makes it work.

The stable was made by Art Williams, VirJeanne’s husband.

The crocheted angel that graces the top of the Christmas tree was made by Rosie Smith. She and Frank moved to Oregon sometime around 2002. Both were very creative. Frank honored us with his violin talent many times.

The stand for the Advent candles was created by Bob Smith. (My plans were to ask about the process, but we know about plans!) No definite year could be remembered, but it has served more than 10 yrs. *** An interesting happening…. one year, a while after the lighting tradition, something caught Janet Steiner’s eye as she sat next to the stand. One of the candles had burst its seam. There was wax flowing rapidly and steadily onto the carpet. She threw her bulletin down to catch as much as possible, however, most of it had already hit the floor. The very next week, Bob had installed plastic cups under the candles!

SYMNK

Siblings Skyler, Gabby, and Ryan Tucker were baptized by Pastor Poos and Rev. Marge Erickson on Sunday, January 13, 2019, as their proud family looked on.

To the church family,
Thanks to all of you for being there for our mother through the years—She truly loved the Lord, and her church.

Love,
The Lambert and Fauser Families
**MONDAY MORNING MEN’S GROUP**  
**Mondays at 8:00am**  
**Grace Church Annex**  

**Advent Devo Team**  
Adult Education for men of CUCC is being held at Grace Episcopal Church. There are three men from CUCC (Ron Rak, Ron Erickson, and Owen Lentz) and about five from Grace. They are studying “Natural Grace” by Michael Fox and Rupert Sheldrake. Fox represents the theological tenancy of Original Blessing and Sheldrake is a biologist. They discuss science and religion each from their own background. The sessions last one to one and one-half hours and is open to men of CUCC and the community. All Men are invited to learn, discuss and grow! (sorry, ladies, but you’ve got TELLS)

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**Backpack Program**  
Food items always in demand:  
* Shelf-stable milk (Horizon milk in cartons on shelf at Walmart, white or chocolate)  
* Fruit cups (individual)  
* Chef Boyardee, pasta, etc.  
* Pudding Cups  
* Granola or Cereal Bars  

As always, cash donations are appreciated, too!

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**On a Musical Note**  
Anyone with a song in their heart is invited to participate with the CUCC musical family. Our robed and lofted Choir sings most Sundays. Practice is on Wednesdays at 6:00pm.  

MSG (Musical Support Group) is more casual and sings a variety of musical types. MSG sings on the 2nd Sunday of each month practices on the 1st Wednesday at 6:00pm.

**Did You Know?**  
Copies of Sunday messages can be found in the file box outside the office door. They’re also on the church website at www.bvucc.org/home/sunday-messages. A link to the latest message is included in the weekly email blast. Messages are also available in large print before the service—ask a greeter.

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**CUCC has a form for “Memorial Instructions.” This is a helpful tool for you, your family, and your pastor to know your wishes for your memorial service and memorial gifts. See Pastor Rebecca or the office for a form, email for a copy to office.bvcucc@gmail.com, or pick one up in the kiosk at church.**

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**LET’S BE GREEN!!!**  
Please recycle everything possible at CUCC. We have bins in the office and Fellowship Hall to make it easy. Please do not put cardboard boxes in the dumpster. Flatten and put next to the recycle bin in the FH or give to Pastor Rebecca. The earth thanks you!
Kudos Column

Trustees for bathrooms, new thrones, parsonage removal, and snow removal. Bowie for the beautiful box in the narthex for mission collections and all the worship leaders who made Advent and Christmas a beautiful, spiritual, and inspiring season.

WOW!!! So much showering of cookies, goodies Christmas! We are grateful (and our tummies are full and happy!)

Clarke, Rebecca, Rocky, and the Critters (some of whom get carrots!)

MEMORIAL LEGACY for Pastor Rebecca’s Mother & Dad: RASMUSSENS’ RETREAT

In Mildred’s memory, we invite you to join us in making a donation to Rasmussens’ Retreat. Funds will go to renovating a hallway into the fellowship hall. Thanks for the cards, gifts, and hugs for are eternally grateful (and our tummies are full and happy!)

In Mildred’s memory, we invite you to join us in making a donation to Rasmussens’ Retreat. Funds will go to renovation.

Mission and Ministry News (becoming Outreach Team—FE)

Our January meeting included those members who will begin their terms after the annual meeting: Ellen Kely, Laurie Stevens and Ken Rehborn. We all agreed that the Heifer International fundraiser should continue next fall. Over $2,600.00 was donated, thanks to enthusiastic participants. Also very enthusiastic is Ken Rehborn and his Backpack team of volunteers, due to a $500 grant recently received from the Chaffee County Community Foundation. Looking forward to the restructuring of our church’s Boards and Committees, we will participate in a special leadership training session on February 17. Also ahead will be our preparations for the Lenten Soup suppers beginning in March. Other ongoing projects are the Bob Dwyer child sponsorship initiative and the Fair Trade Coffee sales benefitting small coffee growers and supporting cafes with chaplain services in our armed forces, a program begun by the United Church of Christ. We thank you all for your continued commitment to these programs.

Respectfully submitted, Barb Groy (Diaconate chair)

CE News for February (becoming Faith Education Team—FE)

Going forth in the new year as the Faith Education Team, your newly elected representatives would love nothing more than your input and ideas about what your education and faith needs are. We strive to include as many activities and programs as we are able in order to provide spiritual inspiration and growth for all our church family—for all ages and abilities. We need teachers to nurture our younger members during Children’s Church and we want to provide many learning opportunities throughout the year for everyone.

There will be community education on opioids provided by the Health Department on Thursday, February 28, 7:00pm-9:00pm in the sanctuary. Adult Education has just begun a new study on the Richard Rohr book “Wondrous Encounters” on Sunday mornings at 9:00AM. Betsy Neas is hosting a spiritual study and light lunch on the third Thursday of the month (in lieu of Journey Group and Rainbow Place until Molly Stuart returns in May). TELLS is beginning a new book, too (“The Curious Charms of Arthur Pepper”), so be sure to join in wherever your interests lead you.

Respectfully submitted, Helen Duncan, Chair

Diaconate Notes

A combined group of outgoing and new members for the Worship/Congregational Life Team met January 9. Current duties and possible changes to the meeting date were discussed. Out-going members Doyle Nyberg and Elizabeth Shelby were thanked and recognized for their commitment and service.

Thanks to all who continue to sign up for the various duties for worship. The sign up clipboard is on the bulletin board in the hallway into the fellowship hall.

Diacconate came in at 54% of approved budget.

Christmas services went smoothly. The Christmas Vigil, Christmas caroling, and a well-attended Christmas Eve service were highlights. Thanks to all who helped unhung the Greens!

Services and Events:

January 12 - Ruth Lambert Celebration of Life service was held at 11:00am and was well-attended.
January 13 was Baptism Sunday. Three children were baptized and baptism renewal vows were a part of the service.
January 19 - Bob H. Smith Celebration of Life service will be at 11:00am. Lunch will be served in Fellowship Hall.
January 27 - CUCC Annual Congregational Meeting at 11:15am.
Ash Wednesday services will be held at Grace Church on March 6. CUCC will host Lenten services/soup supper on March 13, 27 and April 10.
The Congregations Alive conference will take place Feb. 7-9, 2019 at First Plymouth UCC in Englewood. CUCC members are encouraged to participate.
February 10 is Boy Scout Sunday.
Team Transition will be addressed at the February 17 All-Team Launch Party. Rebecca will be gone the 2nd weekend in March (March 9-10). Ben K. from Greeley will be filling in.

Respectfully Submitted, Barb Groy (Diaconate vice-chair)

General Contributions through December, 2018

- $146,541 Year to Date
- $159,347 Budget
- $153,255 Last Year YTD

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Respectfully Submitted, Barb Groy (Diaconate vice-chair)
The schedule for RMC camps at La Foret is posted on the bulletin board. See [www.rmcucc.org/camps](http://www.rmcucc.org/camps) for more info.

CUC has scholarships available! Talk to Pastor Rebecca.

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**Dear Friends,**

Norm & I thank you for 7 years of prayers, hugs, & kind words to us and for our daughter, Terri. You have helped to carry us through this unwanted journey & we are so grateful for your kindness to us. We were able to spend a week with Terri, Andy, & her two girls at Christmas—a special gift. Again, thanks for each of you. We look forward to being with you in the church in the spring.

Love from us,
Norm & Shirl Holloway

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### SAVE THE DATE FOR THE CUC ALL-TEAM LAUNCH PARTY!
**Sunday, February 17**
**12:00pm - 2:15pm**
**Food! Fun! Fellowship!**

In lieu of the old Boards or the new Teams meeting in February, we will be launching the new Teams and beginning this new venture in the life of the church.

Whether you’ve served on boards for years at CUC, are brand new to this exciting adventure, or are someplace in between, we are all beginning together on a new journey – and we want to begin together.

Please join us to get better acquainted, gather around the table for food and fellowship, and have time to bond together as a new team.

**Opening Fun in Fellowship Hall**
**Introduction to Our New Team Structure**
**Lunch with Your Team**
**Individual Team Meetings**

Please RSVP to aawaldorf@mac.com that you’ll be there. If you absolutely, positively cannot make it, please let her know that also. If you have any questions feel free to call Arlene at 719-395-8873.

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### Reaching the Pastor

If I’m not at the church, I might be out visiting, at a meeting, or writing a sermon.

Leave a non-urgent message at the office at 719-395-2544, call my cell at 719-252-6890, or email me at revbecca@icloud.com.

Feel free to set up an in-person appointment by phone or email.
We have much improved WIFI now.
The women’s old bathroom now has one new hi-
The new women’s bathroom will have two new hi-
eir
The remodeling of the men’s bathroom is complete except for painting.
The repair to the back hall flooring is completed.
The remodeling of the men’s bathroom is complete except for painting.
The women’s old bathroom now has one new hi-rise toilet that was recently donated.
The new women’s bathroom will have two new hi-rise toilets soon.

Next meeting is scheduled for February 20 at 7:00pm.

The Collegiate Peaks Chorale is recruiting for a spring 2019 assembly and organization of the singing group.

Recent visitations included Elvin Frantz (healing) and the McCalls in Denver (conducted memorial service for their son).

Helen reported that the recent December Heifer Project outreach program was much more successful than expected, and the new Outreach Team is coordinating with Grace Church for Lenten Soup Suppers, which will start March 6, alternat

A shoe collection promotion is being planned to fund a summer tour with Up With People for Isaac Russell.

CUCC Board of Trustees Newsletter
New team members for both Finance and Facilities were invited to the meeting. Many projects have been or are close to being completed:
- We have much improved WIFI now.
- The Parsonage projects/repairs are finished.
- The repair to the back hall flooring is completed.
- The remodeling of the men’s bathroom is complete except for painting.
- The women’s old bathroom now has one new hi-rise toilet that was recently donated.
- The new women’s bathroom will have two new hi-rise toilets soon.

The Trustees are continuing to help during the transition period before the new Teams take over on February 17. Staff or others should continue to contact the Trustees if help or maintenance issues arise before then.

There is no scheduled Trustees meeting in February. This was the final meeting of the CUCC Board of Trustees if the new organization is approved by the congregation 1/27/19.

Respectfully submitted,
Ron Hassell, Chair