



**VISTA GRANDE COMMUNITY CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

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Pastor: Rev. Kim Schwartz

COME, GROW WITH US

We are a caring church for thinking people, an inclusive community of faith, united in our common quest to know God, inspired by the spirit of Jesus, and committed to sharing that love in ways that will make a difference in the world.

We are:
An Open and Affirming
Congregation

We believe:
God's Love is for
All the People

We listen:
God Is Still Speaking



Congregation at work throughout 2009 ...

Congregation at work throughout 2009

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PASTOR'S REPORT

Kim Schwartz

2009 was a year of expanding horizons for Vista Grande Community Church, United Church of Christ (VGCC). In addition to all the regular activities of the church, we hosted our first annual Green Fling, we voted to become Open and Affirming (ONA), and we identified our core values. Congratulations on this amazing work!

As you read through this annual report you'll see that VGCC has continued its strong work in missions, learning for adults, youth and children, and support of the wider church through participation in our association and conference. In February, VGCC hosted a gumbo dinner fund raiser for Pastors for Peace (Thanks Bob and Julia Hollins for the great gumbo!). One highlight from our Christian Education efforts for 2009 is we had four youth graduate from confirmation in May, with two (Kevin Gardner and Riley Trousdale) choosing to be confirmed and join VGCC. Many members, including your pastor, are serving in association or conference roles. I am on the Rocky Mountain Conference Growth Ministry team, which works to support both new church starts and revitalization and growth for our existing churches.

Our "Green Fling" combined our semi-annual yard sale with our commitment to be an ecologically sound congregation and was an act of outreach in the community. That's a lot to accomplish from one event. We provided information on ecology and spirituality, recycling, power savings, and regionally appropriate gardening. We had a bouncy house and eco friendly crafts for the kids. There was a bake sale and bar-b-q. And of course a ton of yard sale items. We learned that we need to emphasize the free aspects of this event. To that end, several people have suggested we take a page from Hilltop UCC in Parker and give the yard sale stuff away (yes for free!). We need to decide in the near future if we want to make this an annual event. So who's game?

In October, we voted as a congregation to adopt an Open and Affirming statement (the full text is included elsewhere in this report). Our process lasted one year and included a Bible study, newsletter articles, a panel discussion and a survey. Our statement is very broad and challenges us each to face discrimination of any kind in our church. Our statement is so broad in fact that we discussed the need to pick one facet at a time on which to focus. So how will we live into our ONA statement in 2010?

At the end of the year we narrowed down our core values to Love grounded in Faith and Hope, Acceptance which includes Respect and Welcoming, and Caring Relationships-Family, Children, Community, and Friendship. One goal for this year is to evaluate all we do in terms of these core values. Also, by the end of the year we may decide we left something out or need to tweak these stated values. That's ok. In order for these values to have meaning, we need to continue to grapple with them, allowing subtle changes as we learn and grow. So how does this church measure up to our stated values?

In closing VGCC has had an amazing year of growth and commitment. May God bless our work, filling any gaps with grace, and strengthening us for the work ahead.

MODERATOR'S REPORT

Submitted by Jan Morgan

The 2009 Steering Committee consisted of the following:

Moderator - Jan Morgan

Assistant Moderator - Marcie Wegner

Secretary - Donna Bristow

Treasurer - Jerry Moore

Financial Secretary - Carolyn Gunning

Pastor - Kim Schwartz

Members at Large - Nancy Morlock-Hollins/ Jimmy Collins, Julia Hollins, Joanie King, Curly Solomon-Klebba

This Committee held monthly meetings to conduct the business of the Church. This officer could not have done this job without the invaluable help of the following members: Kim Schwartz, Donna Bristow, Jerry Moore, Carolyn Gunning and Curly Solomon-Klebba. We were able to continue many programs especially in the Mission area plus add some new and exciting things! The Open and Affirming (ONA) committee researched and developed our statement and this was then voted upon by the congregation and approved by the Rocky Mountain Conference. This will give us another avenue to impact and be identified in the community. We also conducted and tabulated our Time and Talents survey which also gave us a way to identify our Core Values. It was important to do this because we need to know who we are and what our values are before we can put ourselves out into the community and attract similar minded people. These Core Values will be used at our meetings in 2010 plus help us focus on making sure our efforts reflect these values. The Green Fling held in August also put an environmental message out to the community that we are a green church and are striving to that end. This event was evaluated and with some changes we will again offer it in conjunction with the annual yard sale. Shrine of Remembrance did not have any services in our building but continues to rent the South Hall building and thus gives us continued financial income. Our Youth Group is active and Children's activities are important throughout the year. We are blessed with a talented and great Music Director in River Saddler who stretches the choir each week. Please read on to see more details of our year. As always we encourage anyone to contact any committee member with ideas or concerns. This congregation is amazing and I am sure no matter what lies ahead we will continue to listen to God's voice to steer us onward.

ASSISTANT MODERATOR

Marcie Wegner

Nominating Report – The Steering Committee members discerned the gifts of others to choose folks to take the vacant positions due to members terming off. The following folks were nominated: Assistant Moderator (2 year term) – Brenda Griffin-Collins; Secretary (2nd term) – Donna Bristow; Financial Secretary (2 year term) – Jimmy Collins; Members-at-Large (2 year term) – Kevin Gardner and Carolyn Gunning.

The 2010 Steering Committee consists of:
Moderator – Jan Morgan; Assistant Moderator – Brenda Griffin-Collins;
Treasurer – Jerry Moore; Financial Secretary – Jimmy Collins;
Secretary – Donna Bristow; and
Members-at-Large – Kevin Gardner, Carolyn Gunning, Julia Hollins, Curly Solomon-Klebba.

STEERING COMMITTEE – SECRETARY’S REPORT

Submitted by Donna Bristow

This was a busy year for the Steering Committee as we discerned our CPR (Context, Purpose, Results) which gave us some measurable goals to assess our growth. Working with our Context – “God’s love is for all the people” we were able to move forward with discerning our core values. The team surveyed the congregation and identified the top core values which we strive to follow in our ministry.

The committee met each month to discuss and handle the needs of the church, to connect to finalize events and activities, and to plan more for the coming months. There were 12 monthly meetings, 1 special meeting, and 3 congregational meetings.

The members also gathered for two focus groups; one to learn more about being an Open and Affirming (ONA) congregation and one to discern Vista Grande’s core values.

These are our core values:

LOVE grounded in FAITH and HOPE;
ACCEPTANCE which includes RESPECT and WELCOMING; and
CARING RELATIONSHIPS - FAMILY, CHILDREN, COMMUNITY, FRIENDSHIP.

The team developed a short term and a 3-5 year plan to live into these values.

LOVE GROUNDED IN FAITH AND HOPE

WORSHIP

Submitted by Pastor Kim

Vision for Worship

VGCC seeks to provide a welcoming, participatory worship, based on the Gospels of Jesus. While worship style may vary from traditional to contemporary, our worship will inspire us on our faith journey by being uplifting, mentally challenging, socially relevant to our daily lives lived out in our community.

In 2009 some important worship related items include:

- The worship arts team is back in action, creating new banners and other items to dress our worship space and inspire us visually.
- During Lent, we held an Ash Wednesday Service and a Tenebrae Good Friday Service.
- On April 26, folks brought their animals (or photos) to be blessed at our Blessing of the Animals service.
- During the summer, we held our annual outdoor worship at Fox Run Park.
- On November 8, we served as a neutral pulpit to assist the search process of the two Pueblo churches.
- The youth made a big impact on our worship bringing the pages of scripture for Palm/Passion Sunday alive through a reader's theater style presentation and through a fabulous Christmas pageant.
- Throughout the year, we were blessed by Cindy Solomon-Klebba, Brenda Griffin-Collins, Clare Twomey, and Marlene Urban-Funk who preached while Kim was on vacation, attending conference, or on study leave.

Music

Submitted by Curly Solomon-Klebba

The VGCC Choir averaged between 5 and 10 members throughout the year. We met regularly on Wednesday nights to practice the upcoming Sunday's worship music. In addition, we practiced some music more than a week in advance which meant we were able to do some difficult pieces. Having only 1 or 2 members per section (soprano, alto, tenor, and base) on any given Sunday may raise some issues, but we always knew the angelic heavenly multitudes were singing with us. The choir took a break over the summer, and began again in the fall. For Christmas Eve, we practiced for more than a month, and even added some practices to our regular Wednesday nights. Knowing that we were making a "joyful noise" for God and God's people made all the effort worth it.

We especially thank our Director, River Saddler.

Sanctuary Arts

Submitted by Shirley Martin

Sanctuary Arts Committee continued to ebb and flow. Over the years members come and go but the projects created remain.

This year was a revival of the committee. Together we created new banners for the side pillars. Kristine Gauthier created a lovely banner for the Easter season. Currently five members, Judy Druelinger, Jackie Moore, Roberta Povelite, Carol Wisely, and Shirley Martin, are working on a funeral banner which is meant to celebrate LIFE. It will not be completed in '09 but members are hoping for a 'dedication' of this new project in 2010.

This committee does no work, it does lovely happenings with much laughter and sharing of effort. All are welcome to join us. We have 'called meetings' on Tuesdays at one o'clock whenever we need to create a new happening. Ask one of the group for the next meeting date.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Vision for Christian Education

VGCC will provide stimulating, participatory educational experiences for all ages – children, youth and adults. Shared discoveries may include bible studies, study of church history, literature and other media that nurture our spiritual growth. While our educational experiences may be held at different venues we will seek to connect our learning to our daily lives.

Mid Week Study

Submitted by Pastor Kim

We had two mid week studies in 2009. During Lent we read and discussed *Hospitality – the Sacred Art, Discovering the Hidden Spiritual Power of Invitation and Welcome* by Rev. Nanette Sawyer. This look at hospitality as a spiritual exercise was quite challenging. The book asked us to look at our attitudes as well as our behavior. It dared us to extend hospitality to God, ourselves, our family, our friends, strangers, and even enemies. In the fall we studied ecology and spirituality. This study was based off of the class Pastor Kim took over the summer as her continuing education. Much of the material was new to the class and some of the theology was difficult to follow, but our horizons were widened to see the whole course of the evolution of the universe as part of the divine plan. We were urged to take our role as the only self-aware beings who have the ability to be in relationship with God quite seriously.

Children's Circle

Submitted by Donna Bristow

2009 was a fun year for our Sunday school program.

This was our fourth year using the curriculum *The Best of Whole People of God*. This program is adaptable to all ages which made planning for our children easier. The United Church of Christ is introducing a new curriculum beginning in the fall of 2010 which we hope to experience.

The units we followed focused on:

January/February - Unit 4 (2008-09 curriculum) – ***Called By God*** – This unit focused on discipleship and learning to listen to God's call to us.

March – Unit 5 (2008-09 curriculum) – ***Experiencing Lent*** – We talked about “new beginnings” and how we can make better choices to transform anger and fear to hope.

April/May - Unit 6(2008-09 curriculum) – ***Into the World with Jesus*** – We experienced stories of Jesus meeting us in our lives and how we can grow and change to follow Jesus.

Summer session – ***Tell Me the Stories of Jesus***. During the summer, we re-told the many familiar stories of Jesus.

September/October - Unit 1 (2009-10 curriculum) – ***Come Join the Circle*** – these stories focused on how we could live faithfully and understand discipleship.

October/November - Unit 2 – ***Sharing God's Dream*** – when even one human being opens to the full depths of God's dream within themselves, as Jesus did, great power is released within the world. We shared many dream stories from the Bible.

December - Unit 3 – ***Birthing a Blessing*** – During Advent and Christmas we focused on readings from Luke. Two women, Mary and Elizabeth, and the shepherds played vital roles in our stories.

Our Christmas Pageant this year was titled, *Benjamin's Top*. It focused on the gifts our shepherds may have given the Baby Jesus; a blanket to keep him warm, a walking stick for his many journeys, a new born lamb; and most important the gift of a spinning top from our youngest shepherd, Benjamin.

Thank you to Jackie Moore, Brenda Griffin-Collins, Vicki Trousdale, Jan Morgan, Lori Gardner, and Nancy Morlock-Hollins who spent time with our children while Donna was on vacation.

Youth Group

Submitted by Lori Gardner, youth group leader

The Top 10 Reasons VGCC Youth Group Rocked in 2009!

10. Camps, Camps, Camps! We had 5 of our youth group members attend Confirmation Retreat, High School Retreat and summer camp. And our leader and pastor attended, too. Gotta love La Foret!

9. Confirmation Class. We had 4 youth attend class weekly for 9 months exploring their faith, learning about the church's history and feeling God's love. 2 of our youth joined membership officially in May.

8. Apples to Apples. When we have extra time or just a game night meeting, this is by far our favorite game. We sure have some heated debates and lots of laughs over this game.

7. E.Y.E (Exemplary Youth Experience). A great training in Keystone brought lots of ideas on how to involve the whole congregation in the lives of our young people. The youth group did an assessment and discussed how they can be more involved in church and what they would like from the congregation. Kudos to Brenda Griffin-Collins, who stepped up and began a youth Sunday School class.

6. Lent. Our youth were great role models and leaders in the Palm Sunday Service. What an inspiration! The following week they put together a fun filled Easter Egg Hunt for the youngsters in our church. (While filling the eggs they got to enjoy some of the treats, too!)

5. The Cuba Bus. We joined the painting party in Parker, CO as the Friends Beyond Borders prepared to send another bus to Cuba in the summer. We made sure our artistic flair was made visible and VGCC was well represented.

4. Corned Beef and Cabbage, etc. The cooks of our congregation helped as we hosted our annual fund raiser dinner. The food was delicious (as always), the fellowship was heartwarming (as always), and the "Are you smarter than the youth group?" challenge was a laugh riot!

3. Advent Services. Not only did the youth help each week with the lighting of the Advent Candle, they provided the congregation with a touching Christmas pageant complete with shepherds, angels and the Holy Family. Everyone felt the Spirit of the season after the program and the youth were treated to a party at the Gardner's to celebrate together. Thanks to Donna Bristow and Pastor Kim for their invaluable help.

2. Halloween Fun! Our 2nd annual Halloween Party was bigger and better than last year. Everyone in attendance was amazed at the "Not So Spooky" Haunted Choir Room, enjoyed delicious cookies (self decorated!), and mastered the Pumpkin Bowling and Pin the Face on the Pumpkin games. We can't wait till next year!

And the #1 reason the Youth Group rocked in '09:

We are a small but mighty group! We are an amazing group of young people! And we put the "Grande" in Vista Grande Community Church.

Adult Education; a.k.a. Percolate

Submitted by Bob Howard

Adult Education at Vista Grande boiled down to discussing two books: *Confessions of a Christian Humanist* by John W. de Gruchy (Fortress-Minneapolis 2004); and *Black Elk Speaks*, told through John G. Neihardt; and beginning a third, *Living Gently in a Violent World* by Stanley Hauerwas and Jean Vanier. The format for Percolate typically is turning over questions provided by the leader to get at the heart of a particular chapter or portion thereof, with a commitment to engaging the authors. This is not a lecture, find the answers, or stump the teacher format!

Thus we had the privilege of getting to know a leading South African Congregationalist and Christian Humanist who shares his life story in both pre-and-post apartheid South Africa. We proceed slowly, intending to relate the narrative to our own lives. Thus, when he concludes, in short, by asserting, “hope and love are the two most enduring qualities of being truly human,” we relate it to Vista Grande’s study of Open and Affirming (ONA).

Black Elk Speaks was, for most of us, our first serious encounter with Native American spirituality understood against the post-Civil War government policies to manage and assimilate the Indians. We were able to piece together Indian geography and history, appreciate some of the vision, and learn about the reservation and urban Indian world, such as the UCC’s Charles Hall Youth Services in Bismarck, ND.

The word that keeps coming up at Percolate is transformative education – a very big word indeed. Dare I suggest that transformation is through much (even most) of what we embrace and do at Vista Grande.

May I count on the curiosity of readers to introduce a slice from our third book *Living Gently in a Violent World*? I hope so. In short, we are getting acquainted with L’Arche, a worldwide collection of live-in communities which welcome persons with disabilities along with the necessary mix of volunteers and professionals that support each one’s gifts and ability to grow at his/her own pace. We anticipate getting to know The Center for Reconciliation at Duke Divinity School in the process. Though L’Arche’s founder, Jean Vanier, was and is Catholic, the community is ecumenical today.

L’Arche is where one preposition and not another makes all the difference. Put simply, it is not about the able doing good things for the disabled. It’s about the able professionals and many volunteers and the disabled living with one another in community. Our Percolate group is keen to understand how this concept plays out in a typical household given the full range of disabilities (and abilities).

Lest anyone suppose L’Arche is custodial, it is not. It’s about breaking down walls of fear thereby being able to welcome transformation no less in a place of belonging that helps each member grow to greater freedom.” Do you wonder why we are intrigued? Come share the wonder.

ACCEPTANCE WHICH INCLUDES RESPECT AND WELCOMING

MEMBERSHIP

This year, we began the year with 54 members. We were happy to receive Kelley and Mike Agnew, Randy and Michelle Wright, and Brooke Dupree into the ministry and fellowship at Vista Grande; Nick and Margaret Natelli as associate members; and Mike and Kristine Gauthier transferred back after a couple of military assignments in the Southeast U.S. We also received Kevin Gardner and Riley Trousdale into membership through confirmation. We placed one member on the inactive roll.

We were deeply saddened with the death of Sam Wisely.

At the end of 2009, we had 63 adult and confirmed youth members on our active roll. Sunday guests were treated to our “banana bread” theology; a loaf of banana bread and a message from the church with the invitation to participate in the life of Vista Grande.

In Memory of...

Albert (Sam) Alden Wisely – March 5, 1946 – January 25, 2009

Sam, husband of Carol and father of Shawn and Todd, passed away quietly at home while battling pancreatic cancer, surrounded by his loving family. He was in death as he was in life, a quiet, private man who loved his family and his God. He was born in Cairo, Illinois, and graduated with a Master’s of Science Degree in Rehabilitation Administration from Southern Illinois University. Most of his professional career was spent as a Defense Contract Administrator in St. Louis and Colorado Springs. After moving to Colorado Springs, the family attended a Methodist church close to their home, but their son, Shawn, reminded his parents that he had been confirmed in a UCC church in Illinois, so they decided to try to find one. They began visiting UCC churches in the area but were drawn to VGCC because of its small, family atmosphere that was similar to the church they had left in Illinois. They joined in 1985 and have been members since then. Sam was extremely hardworking, highly creative, and had high ethical standards. One thing that he said that he would like to see happen at VGCC was to have a Columbarium built on the grounds so that people who had passed away would have a resting place for their ashes close to their loved ones.

A memorial service was held for him at VGCC on January 31. The family asked that in lieu of flowers, donations be given to the church to be used for those in need. A Pastor’s Discretionary Fund was established with those funds and has already been put to good use. Thank you Sam; you will be greatly missed but your spirit lives on.

William “Bill” Robert Gallegos; January 16, 1930-August 24, 2009

This year, we were also saddened by the sudden death of Bill Gallegos. Bill was one of the new church start sponsoring committee members who founded Vista Grande in the early 70s and worked tirelessly for many years. Before retirement, Bill was a teacher at James Madison Elementary School for many years and continued to be an avid runner. His wife, Faye Gallegos; son Jimmy and daughter Patty survive him. The following is a quote that Bill lived by, “Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.”

ONA ~ Open and Affirming

Submitted by Cindy Solomon-Klebba

Any journey begins with a first step. For Vista Grande Community Church the journey to becoming an Open and Affirming church (ONA) began before I arrived. God had already prepared the congregation for the journey and provided Rev. Kim Schwartz as the ideal leader for the process. As an ONA team came together, we met to discuss what the process would look like and how we could best help the congregation come to a decision based on God's leading.

Classes on the Bible and Homosexuality were offered and all of us learned not only about the scriptures, but (perhaps more importantly) about each other. Throughout this time many conversations took place about where people were in the process and what other events might be helpful for everyone's understanding.

A panel was assembled and they presented their own stories and insights to the congregation after service. Members of Vista Grande participated on the panel, which also included friends from other churches who shared their process with ONA as well as parents of a lesbian daughter who shared the importance of accepting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) members as criteria for their own comfort.

The ONA team developed a survey to assess where the congregation was on this journey. The responses were terrific! People were open to sharing their thoughts and prayers throughout. As the church moved closer to an official statement, the ONA team met with Rev. Malcolm Himschoot from the wider denomination who helped guide us through the remainder of the process.

After much discussion and prayer, a date was set for an official vote. As God has a sense of humor, that Sunday was so snowy we had a small group and decided to postpone the vote for 2 weeks to allow as wide a representation as possible. With the new date and good weather, the church voted on October 25, 2009 to officially join the list of Open and Affirming churches in the UCC. Our status was received and approved November 12, 2009 as Vista Grande became the 840th church within the UCC to proclaim itself officially Open and Affirming to ALL God's people.

We have come a long way since that first step. God has been with us all along the way and we have all grown in our relationship with the Divine and with each other in the process. And isn't that how God's journeys always works?

Open and Affirming (ONA) Statement

(Approved by Vista Grande Community Church Steering Committee – September 15, 2009)
(Adopted by the congregation – Oct. 25, 2009)

Whereas, we understand that God created humanity in a variety of forms and that God called this diversity “good,”

Whereas, we observe that Jesus showed no partiality, ministering to all people including the marginalized and outcast,

Whereas, as disciples of Jesus, we are called to restore justice wherever God’s creation is broken or divided,

Whereas, we acknowledge that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered persons have long been excluded, rejected, and dishonored by the church,

Whereas, we believe that God’s love is for all the people,

Therefore, we, the congregation of Vista Grande Community Church United Church of Christ in Colorado Springs, CO declare ourselves to be Open and Affirming. We strive to be a congregation that includes all persons, embracing differences of sexual orientation, gender and its expression, marital status, family make-up, age, mental and physical health and ability, racial and cultural identity or background, and educational and socioeconomic status. We welcome all to share in the life, leadership, ministry, fellowship, worship, sacraments, responsibilities, blessings, and joys of our congregation’s life in Christ. “No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.”

THE CENTER FOR PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIANITY

In 2004, Vista Grande affiliated with The Center for Progressive Christianity (TCPC).

We acknowledged as a whole that we:

1. Have found an approach to God through the life and teachings of Jesus.
2. Recognize the faithfulness of other people who have other names for the way to God’s realm, and acknowledge that their ways are true for them, as our ways are true for us.
3. Understand the sharing of bread and wine in Jesus’ name to be a representation of an ancient vision of God’s feast for all peoples.
4. Invite all people to participate in our community and worship life without insisting that they become like us in order to be acceptable (including but not limited to believers and agnostics, conventional Christians and questioning skeptics, women and men, those of all sexual orientations and gender identities, those of all races and cultures, those of all classes and abilities, those who hope for a better world and those who have lost hope.

5. Know that the way we behave toward one another and toward other people is the fullest expression of what we believe.
6. Find more grace in the search for understanding than we do in dogmatic certainty – more value in questioning than in absolutes.
7. Form ourselves into communities dedicated to equipping one another for the work we feel called to do: striving for peace and justice among all people, protecting and restoring the integrity of all God's creation, and bringing hope to those Jesus called the least of his sisters and brothers.
8. Recognize that being followers of Jesus is costly, and entails selfless love, conscientious resistance to evil, and renunciation of privilege.

Vista Grande became a *God is Still Speaking* church in 2004.

Learn more by visiting these websites:

www.tcpc.org

www.ucc.org

CARING RELATIONSHIPS – FAMILY, CHILDREN, COMMUNITY, FRIENDSHIP

PASTORAL CARE TEAM

Submitted by Dave Bristow

Over the past year, the Pastoral Care Team has met on multiple occasions. Our principal role is to provide a support mechanism for our pastor and a focus group for comments from the congregation. We have discussed many topics related to the growth of our church, the pastor's role, congregational expectations, goals and continuing education for the pastor. At the close of the year, we discussed a book written for the Alban Institute, *When Better Isn't Enough* by Jill M. Hudson, which discusses the church in a time of transition – from the modern era to the postmodern and how we might use it for evaluation purposes.

Our team members are Dave Bristow, Carol Burbank, Judy Druelinger, Carolyn Gunning and Bob Howard.

MISSION OF THE MONTH
Submitted by Donna Bristow

Vision for Mission

Mission/outreach is an integral part of VGCC ministries. We will pursue opportunities that are denominational and ecumenical, local and global, participatory and financial. Our mission and outreach will make a difference – empowering recipients and inspiring givers to act in the spirit of Christ.

Missions and amounts collected...

January – Mission Medical Clinic (\$6) Our Church's Wider Mission (\$457)
Our mission for January switched gears half way through January when we received a plea from our conference to help in the short fall for Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM). A small donation was still given for Mission Medical and that was forwarded to them. OCWM offerings are used to fund the mission of the United Church of Christ.

February – Pastors for Peace Caravan (\$651)
This mission was in support of the 20th Friendshipment Caravan to Cuba as an act of solidarity with our Cuban sisters and brothers. Vista Grande hosted a fundraising dinner for the community as well as taking a support offering.

March- One Great Hour of Sharing (\$960)
One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) – supports international programs of health, education and agricultural development, relief, and refugee assistance. This is one of the 5 for 5 special mission offerings received by the United Church of Christ and part of Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM).

April – Heifer International (\$592)
Every corner of the world is touched by gifts to Heifer International. Every \$5,000 gives 30 hungry families a new beginning—a life with the promise of enough to eat, a life of dignity and self-reliance.

May – Strengthen the Church (\$512)
This is one of the 5 for 5 missions of the United Church of Christ. This offering grows the UCC's future by funding The Stillspeaking Ministry, new and renewing churches, youth and young adult ministries, and lay and pastoral leadership formation.

June – La Foret (\$367.35 + \$335 was received in March)
La Foret's Mission – In a world which needs compassion, tolerance, and love, La Foret is committed to nurturing the spirit, refreshing the weary, and inspiring healthy and confident future generations. Our mission was to raise money to help our own young people attend these life-changing camps.

July – Northern Churches Care (NCC) (\$3,554 for in-kind donations which included miscellaneous food items, Thanksgiving food items, and warmth tree items)
Our mission was to support NCC as best we could throughout the year.
NCC’s Mission – To love our neighbors in Colorado Springs by helping with their emotional, physical, financial, and spiritual needs. VGCC also supported the 7th Annual Health Fair and Back to School Program on August 1. This year, we had eleven participants from Vista Grande.

August – Interfaith Hospitality Network

This mission is in support of an ecumenical program that allows homeless families to have food and shelter needs met while they look for employment and save money to get established into housing. VGCC was a support church for Central United Methodist Church.

September – Neighbors in Need (NIN) (\$616)

This is one of the 5 for 5 missions of the United Church of Christ. This offering supports the UCC’s ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States.

October – One Nation Walking Together (\$538*)

Is a non-profit organization committed to making a positive difference in the lives of Native Americans.

November – Northern Churches Care (\$413)

VGCC collected Thanksgiving food items and money for rent assistance to help keep families in their homes.

December –The Christmas Fund (\$929)

This is one of the 5 for 5 missions of the United Church of Christ. Proceeds are used to provide gifts to clergy and lay employees in all stages of their lives and ministries to and through the UCC.

During 2009, Vista Grande also supported the following missions:

Share Colorado/Food Share America (FSA) is for anyone who wants to save money. FSA offers a wide variety of frozen meats, fresh produce, and other grocery items. Check out the website at www.foodshareamerica.com.

VGCC was a host site for this self-help food program until September when we stopped supporting this mission. (See page 15)

Central Asia Institute (Pennies for Peace) \$161*

Greg Mortenson’s mission is to provide secular schools for children in Pakistan. Our mission was to collect pennies for peace to help Greg with his mission.

Our mission giving for 2009, through cash, in-kind gifts, and volunteer hours totaled more than \$16,000.

* Mission amounts are rounded to the nearest dollar.

Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN)

Submitted by Jackie Moore

IHN is a support network of churches committed to helping carefully selected financially destitute families get back on their feet by providing housing, meals, job assistance, counseling, transportation, and other assistance as needed. Housing is provided by the larger churches, which have facilities (often classrooms) which can be converted to private sleeping quarters for four families at a time. Families rotate through these churches, spending a week at a time in each church. VGCC supports one of the host facilities, Central United Methodist Church, by providing and serving an evening meal when that church hosts a group of families. In 2009, our church provided meals on two occasions, June 15 and October 5. VGCC servers included Carolyn Gunning, Nancy Morlock-Hollins and Bob Hollins, Jackie and Jerry Moore, Joanie King, and Donna Bristow, providing meals for a combined total of seven families, including some 22 adults and children.

SHARE Colorado

Submitted by Jerry Moore

Vista Grande Community Church has been a host site for SHARE Colorado for well over a decade. This mission, operated by Catholic Charities, involved ordering and distributing food on a once-a-month basis – not free food, but reduced cost food, made possible by the use of many volunteers at all levels, ordering and paying in advance to reduce excess food on hand in the warehouse, and asking customers to bring their own boxes or other containers to pack and carry their food home. The joy of this mission was that we had many volunteers involved who were not associated with our church, yet were faithful workers who stayed with us for years. Distribution days were “events,” opportunities to see both steady clients and volunteers and enjoy being involved in a productive venture. Unfortunately, all efforts by Catholic Charities and several different program directors to make this a “break even” activity failed, and in 2008 the program was sold to a newly formed non-profit agency, Food Share America. We stayed with the new venture for about a year, but found our volunteers and clients gradually diminishing, perhaps perceiving a diminished value for their money. Finally, participation shrunk to the point where the efforts to maintain it were not justified by the number of clients served. We steered our few remaining customers to other nearby distribution sites and our participation in the program ended in September 2009.

Pennies for Peace

Submitted by Carolyn Gunning

We began our penny drive to benefit the Central Asia Institute in 2008. The Institute was started by Greg Mortensen as a way to raise funds for the building of schools in the Pakistan and Afghanistan area that are secular and include females, hoping to “build peace” at the same time they are building schools.

Our goal in 2008 was to collect 10,000 pennies (\$100.00) but we exceeded that goal and collected 13,321 (\$133.21). Several people indicated a desire to continue this program in 2009 which we have done. The results have been outstanding! We have collected 16,134 pennies, an increase of 2,813 over last year! I want to thank all the members (and their friends!) who have been so diligent about bringing in their pennies for this very worthwhile cause. We will be sending a check to the Central Asia Institute soon. Meanwhile, we will be starting on next year’s collection!

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Submitted by Alta Brown

The prayer shawl ministry at Vista Grande began in 2005. After more than 4 years in this ministry, we continue to have industrious women constructing more gifts with loving attention and fellowship.

Everyone is welcome to participate in this ministry. The yarn is blessed before it’s knit; knitters, knotters, and fringers are blessed to fulfill this ministry; and completed shawls are blessed before being given away. We find ourselves doubly blessed with the rewards of giving shawls that put smiles and tears on faces.

The prayer shawl ministry met on Wednesday evening from 6:30 – 7:30 p.m. during choir practice. Everyone is invited to come and knit at the church or take yarn to knit at home. A journal containing some pictures and stories reminds us how important this ministry is to the recipients.

Some prayer shawls were given to patients at Memorial Hospital; others were given to church and family members and friends who needed a wrap of prayers.

FELLOWSHIP

During this year, our congregation was brought closer through group fellowship.

We started our activities in February with our Annual Friendship Dinner at Antonio's Italian Restaurant. We sponsored the Cuba Caravan Dinner for the Southeastern Association. In March, we had a St. Patrick's Day dinner of corned beef and cabbage along with the evening entertainment of "*Are you smarter than our youth?*"

In April, the youth held an Easter egg hunt for our children following the Easter worship service. In May, we celebrated Pentecost, the birthday of the church, with a potluck lunch following worship.

In July, we went to a Sky Sox baseball game and held a tailgate party. The tailgate party was rained out after 45 minutes and the game delayed 2 hours!

During the summer, adults gathered to watch movies in members' homes. *Ironed Jawed Angels* was hosted by Jerry and Jackie Moore, *Fireproof* was hosted by Brenda and Jimmy Collins, and *Places in the Heart* was hosted by Lyn and Carolyn Gunning.

In July, Vista Grande hosted an Ice Cream Social to send off the Cuba Caravan. In August, we held our Green Fling which turned out to also be a time of fellowship for our workers and an outdoor worship and picnic was held at Fox Run Park.

In September, we had another Ice Cream Social following Sunday worship and attended an Air Force football game and a tailgate party. In November, we held our traditional Thanksgiving Dinner and decorated the church for the Advent Season.

Throughout the year on the second Wednesday of the month, the men's fellowship gathered for breakfast at a local restaurant. A smaller group also met at the golf course. This year, the women met on a few occasions. In March, they met for lunch at Mimi's; in June, breakfast at The Egg and I; in October, a luncheon was held at Roberta Povelite's; and in December, a Christmas fellowship and Baby Shower was held at the church.

Each Sunday, the congregation was treated to coffee fellowship. Thanks to all the folks who provided goodies for fellowship hour.

COMMUNICATION AND ADVERTISING

Submitted by Donna Bristow

Throughout 2009, we advertised our Sunday worship and other activities in The Independent (a diverse voice for Colorado Springs). We subscribed to a weekly ad and also participated in the quarterly Going Green Section and the Easter and Advent Worship Guides.

We paid for an ad in Out Front Colorado which is the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender newspaper in the Denver/Front Range area. We also had a free listing in a local business directory (gomylocal.com).

Beginning in August, we started a new section in our newsletter with a member of the Steering Committee writing an article each month. This has given our readers a way of learning more about the members they have elected to be on the "steering" committee. These articles have been very insightful.

Our website is www.vgcc.org and Vista Grande is also on Facebook!

THE WIDER CHURCH

Vista Grande was well represented at Wider Church activities.

The Rocky Mountain Conference Annual Meeting was held at First Congregational UCC in Boulder, CO in June 2009. Our voting delegates were Dave and Donna Bristow. Pastor Kim presented a workshop following the keynote address. Bob Howard, Liz and Johnathan Schwartz also attended.

The Southeastern Association Annual Meeting was held at The Congregational United Church of Christ of Buena Vista in October 2009. Our voting delegates were Jerry and Jackie Moore and Dave Bristow. Pastor Kim, Maurine Hale, Max Hale, Bob Howard and Donna Bristow also attended.

Donna Bristow, Dave Bristow, Carolyn Gunning, Maurine Hale, Bob Howard, and Kim Schwartz attended Ecclesiastical Councils to vote on In Care students journeying toward ordination.

2009 Participants on Conference and Association Teams:

Rev. Maurine Hale serves on the Personnel Committee and the Endowment Team for the Rocky Mountain Conference; Maurine also serves as Chair for the Church and Ministry Committee and Clergy Dean for the Southeastern Association; Rev. Max Hale is the Annuitant Visitor for the retired clergy in the Rocky Mountain Conference (South of I-70); Rev. Kim Schwartz serves on the Growth Ministry Team for the Rocky Mountain Conference; Donna Bristow serves on the Church and Ministry Committee and on the Nominating Committee for the Conference; Lori Gardner serves on the Faith Nurturing Team for the Conference; and Kevin Gardner serves on the High School Retreat Leadership Team.

BUILDING AND GROUNDS

Submitted by Jerry Moore

Not much has been done this year with regard to our facilities, other than routine maintenance. All the work we were hopeful of accomplishing in 2009 (as reported in our 2008 report) remains to be done. Refinishing of woodwork inside and out, painting, and carpet replacement are still on our "to do" list, as is the stripping and re-paving of our asphalt driveway and parking lot. We hope to at least make a dent in this list in 2010, but as explained in the following paragraphs, our limited financial reserves took an unexpected dip during 2009.

Unfortunately, our property suffered from some costly vandalism to our sewer line in June of this year. When the new main building was built, the sewer line for that facility ran out from the east (Union Boulevard) side, then followed the sidewalk down the slope, running under the Union Blvd entrance to South Hall parking, and then angling away from the sidewalk to connect with the sewer line from South Hall (which ran from that building at an angle to the sidewalk, and then followed the sidewalk on down the hill for several hundred more feet). An access pipe to the main building's sewer line was placed in the sidewalk, just a few feet south of the driveway into South Hall. It was on the inside edge, flush with the sidewalk, with a standard plastic cap in place. Some vandal noted its presence and proceeded to break and remove the cap, stuff the cap's pieces and a bunch of rocks into the vertical access pipe. Of course, the rocks fell down into the main sewer line and clogged it. Fortunately, the sewage from the church backed up the open access pipe and overflowed on the sidewalk (where it was noticed) rather than back up into the church. Unfortunately, solving the problem was beyond the capabilities of the typical roto-rooter operation, which at best would only push the rocks further into the main line, leaving them to gather again and clog up somewhere else. The only plausible solution was excavation and cutting out and replacing the clogged drain. This was accomplished at a cost of \$5,000. This was covered by the church's UCC insurance policy, less the \$1,000 deductible.

While the sewer line was open, the excavator "scoped" the sewer line in all directions to make sure that all the rocks were captured. The lines were clear of rocks, but roots were noted in the sewer line between the excavation point and where the line connected to the South Hall line. Because roots in the pipe meant cracks in the pipe and future problems, the decision was made to replace that portion of the line while the excavation was still open. That part of the job cost another \$4,000, but was undertaken then to avoid future, more expensive repairs. This was considered maintenance rather than damage from any act covered by the insurance policy.

Around the same time a graffiti "artist" applied a modestly sized work to the north wall of the church. We called the city "graffiti hot-line" and were delighted when a city employee came out with all the equipment and chemicals to pressure-hose it off the wall within a day or two of being called (at no charge to the church). A little earlier we also had a small amount of graffiti applied to items in our playground, but were able to clean that up in-house pretty easily. No further attacks were suffered for the rest of the year.

FINANCIAL SECRETARY
Submitted by Carolyn Gunning

Year	Pledging Units	Amount Pledges
2009	23	\$67,810.00
2010	21	\$59,885.00

TREASURER
Submitted by Jerry Moore

General Fund

2009 Budget Amounts	Actual 01/01/09 – 12/31/09	Approved Budget 2010
Income		
Plate	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,200.00
Pledged	67,810.00	59,885.00* **
Non-Pledged	3,500.00	1,400.00
South Hall Rent	24,000.00	24,000.00
Sanctuary Use	1,200.00	600.00
Other	760.00	800.00
Totals	\$ 98,470.00	\$ 87,885.00

* Includes a paid-in-full pledge of \$1,320 for 2010

** Includes pledges received after congregational meeting.

Expenses		
Christian Ed	\$ 320.00	\$ 320.00
Banking/Finance	12.00	4.00
Membership	2,760.00	2,800.00
Mission	1,600.00	1,600.00
Office & General	3,530.00	3,970.00
Programs	0.00	700.00
Property	19,138.00	14,550.00
Worship	650.00	700.00
Payroll	70,460.00	68,500.00
Totals	\$ 98,470.00	\$ 95,250.00

Restricted Funds for 2009

	Income	Expense
7205 General Revolving	\$	\$ 2,158.00
7240 Other Mission/Outreach		442.00
7245 Mission of the Month		6,160.02
Totals	\$ 9,693.76	\$ 8,760.02***

*** Some funds will carry over to 2010

Restricted Funds Detailed – Missions & Special Projects/Activities in 2009

VGCC does not budget for Restricted Funds. Generally speaking, we spend what we get in special offerings for specified missions activities. Here are the different activities/missions supported in 2009.

1.	Miscellaneous. Includes \$200 for Confirmation Camps, \$1,383.00 for Pastor's for Peace Caravan (from the gumbo dinner – before expenses), and \$75 for special accompanist music	\$ 1,658.00
2	Mission Medical Clinic was MOM (Mission of the Month) before diversion to RMC shortfall.	6.00
3	MOM – Special offerings for RMC budgeting shortfall/OCWM	457.00
4	Sam Wisely Memorial (Pastor's Discretionary Fund)	860.00
5	MOM – Pastor's for Peace Caravan	651.00
6	MOM – One Great Hour of Sharing	960.00
7	MOM – Youth Activities/La Foret Camps	702.35
8	MOM – Heifer Project	592.00
9	MOM – Strengthen the Church	512.00
10	Pennies for Peace	161.34
11	MOM – Green Fling Outreach, gross receipts \$638.06 Net profit of \$196.06 to Mountain Field Institute	638.06
12	MOM – Neighbors in Need	616.00
13	MOM – One Nation Walking Together	538.01
14	MOM – Northern Churches Care	413.00
15	MOM – The Christmas Fund	929.00
	Total Restricted Income	\$ 9,693.76

Funds on Hand (Includes Checking Account, Money Market Savings, and short-term CDs):
December 31, 2008 \$36,721.76
December 31, 2009 \$39,219.57

Congregational Annual Meeting Sunday, January 25, 2009

Attendance – 22 members, 5 guests; 4 children and 1 infant

The 2008 Moderator, Lyn Gunning called the meeting to order at 11:20 a.m.
Pastor Kim opened with prayer.

The minutes of the Dec. 7, 2008 meeting were circulated. Motion to accept as written. M/S/A

The annual report was distributed.

The gathered members were asked to share a highlight from 2008.

Here's the response:

- Mission giving
- Music program
- Kim doing cartwheels
- Christmas pageant
- Halloween party sponsored by youth
- Pennies for Peace mission

A motion was made to accept the report as printed. M/S/A

Marcie Wegner convened the rest of the meeting as Assistant Moderator.

Pastor Kim shared some of the activities that the Steering Committee has placed on the calendar for 2009.

- Feb. 8 – ONA panel discussion
- Feb. 13 – Friendship Dinner
- Feb. 17 – Rev. Lucius Walker; Pastors for Peace Fundraising Dinner held at Vista Grande
- March 13 – Corned Beef Dinner fundraiser for youth
- April – Easter
- May – an event for “them”
- Aug. 8 – Yard Sale
- Aug. 9 – Outdoor Worship and Picnic

Other suggestions were:

- To start up Women's Fellowship. *All it takes is an organizer.*
- The Pennies for Peace mission was a big hit. Therefore, the jar will be brought back for your pennies for Central Asia schools. A donation of \$500 from an outside organization was sent along with our donation.
- To have a child friendly mission. *One where the children can see how their coins are used.*
- To help each other; “Trading Graces.” *This would be an internal mission to help each other as needed; pay it forward.*
- To have an updated directory. *It will be assembled shortly.*
- To have a “30 pieces of silver” mission at Easter. *This would go to a community project.*

The nominating committee didn't call the membership to ask where you would like to serve so it is up to you to call Marcie Wegner and express how you will serve; e.g. ushers, greeters, etc.
The meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m. Kim closed with prayer.

Faithfully submitted by Donna Bristow These minutes were approved Dec. 6, 2009.