



VISTA GRANDE COMMUNITY CHURCH UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

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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 2011 ...

Congregation at work throughout 2011

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PASTOR'S REPORT

Rev. Kim Schwartz

2011 was a great year at Vista Grande Community Church. Worship attendance and membership were up over 5% from 2010. Adult Christian Education (CE) attendance was also up. We have more children running around the church. All the leadership positions have been filled. We have two regular Sunday school teachers, plus substitutes and a youth teacher. Our energy level is high.

My areas of focus for 2011 were growth, worship, and spiritual formation. These three things overlap and support one another. Meaningful worship can help all worshipers grow spiritually and it can help attract new members. In order to grow in numbers we need to be able to share our faith, and learning to share our faith helps us grow spiritually. Adding new members means we have new talents and gifts to draw on for worship, leadership, and diversity.

In the past several years, we have tried many things to help us to grow. While they did not all result in direct increase in our worship attendance, I believe these activities prepared us for future growth. The growth this past year is the evidence of that strategy working. We learned that we needed to find new ways for our frequent guests to connect with the existing membership. We learned that there are many benefits of being a small church. We discerned that we want to have more young families attending and made a commitment to serve that group. Our steering committee, growth team, and worship team have developed leadership and creativity to support our growth, both in numbers and in faith.

As I look ahead to 2012, I see continued growth. This summer we will hold a Vacation Bible School (VBS) to serve young families that may be looking to teach progressive and inclusive values to their children. Much of our energy will go to this endeavor. We will follow up VBS with an invitation to worship with us in the park, then an invitation to a workshop on raising spiritually aware children. All of these activities will help us get to know new people and really connect with them.

I encourage you to read this report and to see all the work and ministry that we have accomplished this past year. You are an amazing congregation. I thank God for your commitment and faith. May our year ahead be pleasing in God's sight!

MODERATOR'S REPORT

Marcie Wegner

2011 Steering Committee:

Moderator – Marcie Wegner
Assistant Moderator - Brenda Griffin-Collins
Secretary - Donna Bristow
Treasurer - Jerry Moore
Financial Secretary - Jimmy Collins
Pastor - Kim Schwartz
Members at Large - Carolyn Gunning, Kevin Gardner

As 2011 comes to a close, I look back at the year at Vista Grande Community Church. Our congregation has been exceedingly generous with their giving of their time, talents, and tithes. Throughout the year, whenever something has needed to be accomplished, the members of this congregation have more than stepped up to the task. One of the most noticeable areas of emphasis is our work in missions.

We have had representation at all events and committees, and our events are well attended. Our choir has been very active and our congregation, as well as our visitors, have enjoyed their performances. Thank you to those members who have taken an active role in our men's, women's, youth, and fellowship activities. Thank you to all those members who do the hard work behind the scenes, the volunteers who clean the church, the ushers and greeters, those who provide food for fellowship, and those who see a need and step in to take care of it. Without all of your assistance, things would not happen.

I would like to thank the outgoing members of the steering committee for their service to Vista Grande Community Church. Your service above and beyond what was required is greatly appreciated and made the business of the church run much smoother. I would like to extend a hearty welcome to the incoming members of the steering committee. I look forward to a wonderful year with the current and new members.

I would also like to thank Maurine Hale, Jimmy Collins, and Pastor Kim for their hard work on the Use Agreement. Although it did not work out, I know that this committee spent a lot of hours and hard work preparing and meeting and really appreciate their efforts.

My job as moderator has been very easy this year because of the efforts and dedication of the congregation. I appreciate all of your efforts. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns, or if there is something else you wish for me to be doing.

STEERING COMMITTEE - ASSISTANT MODERATOR REPORT

Submitted by Brenda Griffin-Collins

I attended most of the Steering Committee meeting and filled in for the moderator when she was out of town. The most important part of my job was to find people willing to fill the three positions on the Steering Committee, occupied by folks whose time of service had expired. I was very pleased to be able to submit the following nominations:

Treasurer – Elizabeth Vincent; Member-at-Large – Carol Wisely; Secretary – Tammie Davis. They were approved at the Congregational Meeting on December 11, 2011.

I would be remiss if I did not give a big thank you to the three people leaving office. Each has served faithfully and a couple of them have gone above and beyond the call of duty. For their outstanding dedication, loyal contributions, and selfless service to God and this congregation, we thank:

Treasurer – Jerry Moore; Secretary – Donna Bristow;
Member-at-Large – Carolyn Gunning.

The full slate for 2012 consists of:

Moderator – Marcie Wegner; Assistant Moderator – Brenda Griffin-Collins;
Treasurer – Elizabeth Vincent; Financial Secretary – Jimmy Collins; Steering Committee Secretary – Tammie Davis; Members-at-Large – Kevin Gardner and Carol Wisely.

STEERING COMMITTEE – SECRETARY’S REPORT

Submitted by Donna Bristow

This was a busy year for the Steering Committee as we continued to work on Church Vitality and Growth.

The committee met 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 11 monthly meetings, 1 special meeting, and 3 congregational meetings.

Highlights from webinars from the United Church of Christ Insurance Board were shared at our meetings to help us plan our Safe Church Policy.

The membership also gathered for four focus groups. These allowed the opportunity to discuss growth ministry with young families and the whole congregation, a leasing request, and missions for 2012.

Personnel Update: We had no staffing changes for 2011.

Lease Agreement: The Shrine of Remembrance (SOR) continued to lease South Hall. We continued our working relationship with SOR and provided the building for 3 funeral services. SOR has the option to purchase the property in 2019.

LOVE GROUNDED IN FAITH AND HOPE

WORSHIP AND MUSIC

Submitted by Pastor Kim

January: On January 9 we held a Renewal of Baptism with the chairs in the round, fountains, "rivers of blue cloth and ribbons," and a water experiment for kids' time.

February: We celebrated Black History month with bulletin covers lifting up African Americans who made significant contributions to the church and justice (including Glenn Burleigh who composed many anthems including "Order My Steps," Mildred and Richard Loving whose Supreme Court case against Virginia ended laws that banned inter-racial marriage, and James H. Cone ordain minister, professor and author of many works including *Black Theology & Black Power* (1969) and *A Black Theology of Liberation* (1970)).

March: We opened the season of Lent with a simple service. March 27 we had a praise worship with special guest musicians and vocalists.

April: On Palm Sunday we started outside and processed around the building and into the sanctuary singing "Prepare Ye the Way of the Lord." For Good Friday we pondered the seven last words of Christ with reflections from seven preachers (we are so blessed to have this wealth of experience in our congregation!) Easter morning was a celebration of Alleluias.

May: We waited to celebrate Earth Day until May 8 and combined it with Evolution Sunday.

June, July, August and Labor Day: In the summer, we learned new things about old stories from the Old Testament. The stories were: Jacob and Esau, Samson, Ruth, Daniel & the lion's den, Esther, Job, Elijah's contest with Baal's priests (this was worship in the park Sunday and we got to use fire!), Noah, and the Moses story where the Hebrews are told to make bricks without being given straw (for Labor Day).

September: We marked the 10th anniversary of the twin towers attack with a service dedicated to peace. We created a peace wall by placing folded paper cranes with prayers for peace on them into the holes in the brick wall in the sanctuary. Rally day on September 18 was another praise service and we took in four new members (plus one child and one youth) during worship.

October: This month we started with a multicultural service for World Communion Sunday and ended with a celebration of All Saints Day with an opportunity for worshipers to light a candle in memory of the dead.

November: To kick off our Mission of the Month of "One Nation Walking Together," we had a special prayer presented by several members, "the Prayer of the Four Winds," based on a text by Black Elk. Our special guest Sebrena Forrest of the Mohawk people was deeply touched by the prayer. She knows the granddaughter of Black Elk and shared with her our prayer. Black Elk's granddaughter was amazed and pleased that

her grandfather's words held meaning for us. On November 13, we added one more member to Congregation.

Advent and Christmas: Our theme this year was visits of angels. We had four large banners hung in our windows with four different angels on them, one for each Sunday in Advent. On Christmas Eve, the congregation were the actors in an all church pageant telling the story of Jesus' birth from Luke. Christmas day was on a Sunday this year so we decided to start worship 30 minutes later than usual with a causal service.

WORSHIP TEAM

Submitted by Curly Solomon-Klebba

Our worship team includes Pastor Kim, River Saddler, Judy Druelinger, and Curly Solomon-Klebba. The Worship Team has been working hard behind the scenes this year. We have met approximately once per quarter to plan worship themes, pick scriptures, design special worship events, and choose music.

This year, we've also looked at the purposes of worship, what is involved in good worship, and how to make the worship at our church home more effective.

We celebrated Earth Day, had a Praise and Worship Service, worshiped outside with our Picnic Day, and even had a special service on Pentecost Sunday. Over the summer, we decided to continue choir practices while Kim focused on the stories of faith stories of the Bible. In the fall, we looked at a multicultural worship and worldwide communion Sunday, Stewardship Sunday and Thanksgiving. We decided on an Angel theme for Advent, and discussed how to get more involvement in each Sunday's services.

SANCTUARY ARTS

Submitted by Judy Druelinger

The Sanctuary Arts group has had a great deal of fun creating some new banners and wall hangings for our Sanctuary this past year. Among these were the Faith Can Move Mountains banner and the Flowers of Faith wall hangings. We all hope you have enjoyed the end results. We are currently working on a project that Pastor Kim requested for this year's Lenten Season. We could use an engineer for this one. We are a very small group and will be meeting on Monday at 9:00 a.m. and would like to encourage anyone with time, imagination, a pair of scissors (sharp or dull) or a sense of humor to join us. We also received a number of beautiful handmade banners from Christ Congregational UCC in Pueblo, and we will be working on adding hanging sleeves so we all can enjoy these during the coming year.

Sanctuary Arts team: Judy Druelinger, Carol Wisely, Jackie Moore, Shirley Martin, Roberta Povelite and Kristine Gauthier (our at home participant who has now moved out of state)

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 ADULT STUDY

Submitted by Pastor Kim

During Lent, Pastor Kim offered a class, *Beliefs Revealed*, which looked at Christian beliefs and perspectives throughout history. The focus of the class was to gain clarity on our own beliefs and to write our personal faith statements. The classes were: "Introduction and Ancient Creeds", "Reformation Creeds and Catechism", "Biblical Interpretation: literalist or not?", "A Touch of Tillich and a Bit of Barth, and Other Dead White Men from the Twentieth Century", "Theology from the Edge: feminism, liberation theology, black theology, ecology etc.", and "Sharing Our Personal Faith Statements". Seven people attended the class and wrote personal faith statements.

CHILDREN'S CIRCLE

Submitted by Donna Bristow

2011 was a good year for our Sunday school program.

For the first half of the year, we continued the new curriculum, ***Faith Practices***, produced by The United Church of Christ through The Pilgrim Press.

Faith Practices provides resources for worship, learning, and serving.

"Faith Practices is a living curriculum that undergirds the best intent of the 'God is Still Speaking' movement in the UCC. Faith Practices is designed to help us practice and discuss our faith in daily life. It gives us the tools and activities to become a voice for our Stillspeaking God."

Each faith practice is explored through discovery, scripture, discipleship, Christian tradition, mission, and vision.

In January/February, we explored the unit on *Living Creatively: Playing and Living Joyfully*. In today's world people of all ages need to give themselves permission to play. We believe God seeks to awaken a playful spirit among us.

In February, we concentrated on the unit, *Sabbath*. Sabbath is intentional time taken by individuals and faith communities to integrate the Divine with humanity and creation.

In March, we combined our Sunday morning time with the Mission of the Month, *Heifer International*. The children learned how this mission helped transform people's lives around the world. They had fun learning about these animals and sharing their art and knowledge with the congregation.

In April, we explored the faith practice, *Giving and Receiving Hospitality*. Hospitality begins when we perceive ourselves and others as strangers in a community of welcome.

In May, we picked up more exploration of *Living Creatively: Playing and Living Joyfully*

Summertime – we used a Vacation Bible School curriculum, a rain forest program of faith-filled fun, *Rainforest Adventure*.

Come fall, Kevin Beck and Donna Bristow shared in the Sunday morning time with our children working with a new curriculum, *Seasons of the Spirit*.
Seasons of the Spirit supports faith communities and families in their life together.

In September, we focused on the Season of Creation, a celebration of our interconnectedness with God and all creation.

During October – November, we accompanied the Hebrew people on their long journey through the wilderness toward a new land and new life,

During Advent, we joined with people of faith of long ago in words of longing, comfort, and hope.

A special thank you to Brenda Griffin-Collins who spent time with our children while Donna was on vacation and to Kevin Beck who shared this ministry this fall.

YOUTH SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

Submitted by Brenda Griffin-Collins

The Youth Sunday School Class presently meets on the second and fourth Sundays of the month. At this time last year the Youth Sunday School Class consisted of one student and a teacher. We studied the book of Proverbs and The Song of Solomon focusing on what it means to be wise.

When the fall rolled around the class grew and I decided to let the students select a topic for to study. After discussing what topics interested them, the class chose to study Religions of the World. I believe that one of the best ways to get in touch with what you do believe is to become acquainted with what you don't believe. Yet to have an understanding and respect for what others believe. It would have been overwhelming to go into great depth with many of the religions. Therefore I have been doing overviews and a little comparison between what Christians believe and the beliefs of Buddhist, Hindu, Ancient Egyptian, and Jewish faiths. As we entered the Christmas season we looked at why the Jewish faith celebrates Chanukah/Hanukkah, being mindful that Jesus was a Jew. However, keeping with the Vista Grande's study of Angels for Christmas we talked about the angel Raphael in the book of Tobit, found in the Apocrypha.

We will finish the school year by looking at the Mormons/Latter Day Saints, Islam, Jehovah Witnesses, Wiccans, and Pagans. I will close the year out focusing on what we believe as members of the United Church of Christ.

ADULT EDUCATION; a.k.a. PERCOLATE

Submitted by Bob Howard, Listener

What is Percolate? Try this:

We are an unassuming faith and learning community in the here and now at Vista Grande Community Church with curiosity and heart for loving God's world and the neighborhoods near and far which we call home and make room for us.

So picture a group of adults seated around a big square table with paperbacks open and you've seen "Percolate" at work. Add the sight and aroma of fresh perked coffee and head for an empty chair and a brief introduction.

Those paperbacks were one of the four choices in 2011, the first being *Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies* by Marilyn McEntyre. In a nutshell, her message was "Reclaim words as instruments of love, healing, and peace."

Paperback #2 appeared in April, i.e. *Living More With Less* (anniversary edition) by Doris J. Longacre. Five phrases from this book were instructive. "Do justice, Learn from the world community, Nurture people, Cherish the natural order, and Nonconform freely." In short: Mennonites and fellow believers of U.S. and Canada implement your faith practically with simplicity.

October 2011 rolled around with *The First Christmas* by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan. This book focuses on the differing gospel accounts in Matthew and Luke which promise overtures (rather like musical overtures). For example: Matthew 1-2 is a tiny version of Matthew 3-28 and Luke 1-2, a miniature of Luke 3-24. New Years and Epiphany are fanfares for Percolate's 2012 focus on aging in Joan Chittister's *The Gift of Years: Growing Older Gracefully*. Helen Prejean comments on a book which "brims with insight, pluck, verve, and courage."

The "Percolate format" at Vista Grande counts on participants reading the selected books though no one is put on the spot. Mainline and/or ecumenical articles are sources of possible study with the *Christian Century* a handy source of book previews. Gentle (and humorous) questions and points of view are welcome with our concern that everyone take part. Balance is crucial—no soap boxes please. You won't get your best choice every time but you will sometime.

Depending on the need, the leader provides initial questions. He may lecture (seldom and briefly) but his/her role is more likely as convener, cheerleader, listener, and wit in this early going group. One need: volunteers to make the process from one book to another known. The minister should be a welcome participant as able and part of planning desired by the group.

YOUTH GROUP 2011

*Submitted by Kevin Gardner
and Pastor Kim*

There was a lot that happened in 2011 for the VGCC youth. We lost a member from graduation but gained two, Maria and Olivia. We had a lot of traditional activities this year. We hosted the St. Patrick's Day dinner and we played some "Minute to Win It" games. As we have in many years before, we hid Easter eggs for the little ones all around the church. After that it was time for summer break and we did not meet until school started.

As we began to get back into the rhythm of school life we began to plan what we wanted to do in the upcoming winter. The youth chose to meet after worship on the first and third Sunday's of the month for youth group this fall. The Crop Walk was another big hit this year raising more money than we have ever had before. As we did last year we ended up going for ice cream afterwards. The youth also did the mission moment for the month of the Crop Walk because that was the mission of the month.

The young children of the church and their friends were thrilled once again by a Halloween party: planned, set up, staffed, and cleaned up by our youth.

In November, the youth started planning for a intergenerational worship to be held at the end of January by creating skits to illustrate the first exorcism from Mark.

Unfortunately, not all church members are available to come to church every Sunday so during the Christmas season, we took a trip to those who are homebound and caroled to them. It was delightful to see all of their faces light up with Christmas joy, even though the youth didn't know them too well.

As we look to the future, we see big plans, youth lead services, and even a graduation. With Pastor Kim taking over the Youth Group, there is no telling what fun activities the youth are able to do and what we can accomplish.

ACCEPTANCE WHICH INCLUDES RESPECT AND WELCOMING

MEMBERSHIP

Submitted by Donna Bristow

We began the year with 57 members. This fall, we received 5 new members, therefore, at the end of 2011, we had 62 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...

Virginia H. Black {June 24, 1924 – June 26, 2011}

Virginia was a long-time member of Vista Grande. She joined VGCC in 1978 and was an active member until she moved to Denver to be closer to family in 2003. While at Vista Grande, she was well-known for her mission activities and her support for peace and justice.

She was a kind matter-of-fact person who lived simply. She enjoyed helping others, reading, and the arts. She served in the Peace Corps in Peru and served most of her professional life as a social worker. She dedicated her life through volunteer work and enjoyed the company of people from different cultures. Virginia will be sorely missed by her family, friends, and the church world community.

OPEN AND AFFIRMING (ONA)

Respectfully Submitted by Cindy Solomon-Klebba

As the first mainstream Protestant denomination to support marriage equality, UCC continues to stand at the forefront of LGBT rights issues. Believe Out Loud (BOL), a trans-denominational social marketing campaign celebrates its second anniversary next month (on Valentine's Day.) BOL provides a prominent witness to those who need to know that other progressive Christians stand with them in support of equality. UCC itself now consists of nearly 1,000 ONA congregations of its 5,000.

In April VGCC supported Inside/Out Youth as our Mission of the Month. We welcomed members of the group, including the director, as they shared their stories and information with us. The church raised \$405 for Inside/Out.

As we set our missions for 2012, we again chose to support Inside/Out and moved the month to June to fall within national Gay Pride month. This will be a great lead-in for those who want to support Colorado Springs Pride, which is celebrated in July.

Most significantly, VGCC continues to provide a welcoming place for worship for all kinds of families and people of all orientations/gender identities. Just as we have seen growth in this area, we will continue to reach those who are looking for a church home more reflective of the inclusivity expressed by Jesus and his radical welcome of all people.

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.”

GROWTH MINISTRY

Submitted by Jan Morgan

Team members: Jan Morgan, Dave Bristow, Donna Bristow, and Kim Schwartz

The Growth Team continued in 2011 discussing and exploring the Rocky Mountain Conference workshop on growth ideas.

We implemented the friendship pads which are passed during the worship service. This gives us a means of tracking members and visitors and determining growth numbers.

The team held "focus on growth" meetings and got member ideas on activities and how to keep people involved and staying "connected." The church membership agreed to focus our growth on **young families**.

Pastor Kim and Dave attended a social media workshop to learn how to reach out to our young families and how to connect them to the church.

The team began planning for VBS (Vacation Bible School) as our big family event for the summer of 2012! Congregation members were contacted and plans are being made for this to begin in the new year!

CARING RELATIONSHIPS – FAMILY, CHILDREN, COMMUNITY, FRIENDSHIP

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 – La Puente (\$310) + (\$243 for in-kind donations)

La Puente Home is the only organization in the San Luis Valley of Southern Colorado that supplies emergency shelter services, and each year it provides over 11,000 nights of lodging to more than 1,000 individuals. Families, migrant workers and others in need are welcome to share nutritious meals, rest in a safe environment, and find help in resolving difficult situations.

February – Zawadi Fund International (\$928)

The Children and Youth Empowerment Centre (CYEC) is a group addressing the problem of street children in Kenya. The centre provides education and training for its residential students. Our guest mission speaker was Mary Tolar, a founding director of Zawadi Fund International.

March – Heifer International (\$1,397.38)

Across the globe, Heifer doesn't feed families, it helps families feed themselves. Heifer is about self-reliance and providing hungry families a practical way to improve these conditions while improving the environment.

Our guest mission speaker was Kris Darling, our local rep for Heifer International.

The children focused on this mission for the month of March during their Sunday morning gathering.

April – One Great Hour of Sharing (\$787.20)

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).

May – Inside/Out Youth Services (\$405)

Inside/Out Youth Services is the sole lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning youth organization in the El Paso County region. Inside/Out emphasizes a broad range of support services and programs for youth 13-22 years old. We welcomed a guest mission speaker from Inside/Out

June – Strengthen the Church (\$573)

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.

July – Northern Churches Care (NCC) (\$182)+ (\$3,627 for in-kind donations, which included miscellaneous food items, school supplies, 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 9th Annual Health Fair and Back to School Program on July 30. This year, we had four participants from Vista Grande.

August – InterVarsity Kenya Global Project (\$324)

InterVarsity is a student led movement across thousands of campuses in the U.S. and abroad. It strives to develop students into Christian leaders who are able to minister in the workplace and beyond. Our guest mission speakers were Ryan and Brittini Davenport who had first hand experience with Kenya Global Project.

September – The youth mission

CROP Walk Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty (\$570 + \$10 Admin cost)

Our youth and a few adult supporters walked the 5K route to show their support to stamp out hunger. VGCC sponsored our walkers.

October – Neighbors in Need (NIN) (\$650)

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.

November – One Nation Walking Together (\$1,195)

Is a non-profit organization committed to making a positive difference in the lives of Native Americans. Urban Turzi and Sebrena Forrest were our guest speakers.

December –The Christmas Fund (\$1,567.90)

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 2011, Vista Grande also supported the following missions:

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 by providing the dinner meal on March 28 and June 20.

Central Asia Institute - Pennies for Peace (\$136.05)

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.

Pastors for Peace, the Cuba Caravan (\$641)

On July 12, Vista Grande hosted a celebration dinner and fundraiser for the caravanistas traveling through Colorado. Our guest speakers were Tom Cherveney and Jim Bouman.

Our mission giving for 2011, through cash, in-kind gifts, and volunteer hours totaled more than \$18,461.

PENNIES FOR PEACE

Submitted by Carolyn Gunning

You have responded to the Pennies for Peace mission way above expectations. The collections have been very consistent over the years and we thank you so much for your generous hearts.

Jimmy made two deposits in 2011, one in January for \$63.57 and one in July for \$72.48. Since then there has been a series of news items about this particular mission, Central Asia Institute, and the integrity of its founder, Greg Mortenson. While still believing in the philosophy of the institute, we will not be sending any more money to them until this conflict has been resolved.

Until that time we will continue to collect the pennies (and nickels, dimes, quarters, etc.) in the same jar, only this time it will be called the "CHANGE FOR CHANGE" mission. Hearts and lives have been changed because of you. We would like to see that continue.

PS As of Jan. 11, 2012, the conflict has been resolved and VGCC will continue to support this mission as Pennies for Peace.

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

Submitted by Donna Bristow

The prayer shawl ministry at Vista Grande began in 2005. After more than six years in this ministry, we continue to receive donations and knit shawls with loving attention. We have knit over 180 shawls.

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 recipient of a shawl.

THE WIDER CHURCH

Vista Grande was well represented at Wider Church activities.

The Rocky Mountain Conference Annual Meeting was held at Salt Lake City, Utah in June 10-11, 2011. Our voting delegates were Dave and Donna Bristow. Cindy and Curly Solomon-Klebba and Pastor Kim also attended.

Cindy was awarded the Herbert and Jean Hosanna Graduate Studies Scholarship for the fall 2011 and winter 2012 semesters at UCCS. She is currently completing a master's in history.

The Southeastern Association Annual Meeting was held at Christ Church UCC in Pueblo, CO on October 9, 2011. Our voting delegates were Marcie Wegner, Dave and Donna Bristow. Pastor Kim, Maurine Hale, Max Hale, and Bob Howard also attended.

2011 Participants on Conference and Association Teams:

Rev. Kim Schwartz serves on the Growth Ministry Team and Clergy Retreat Team for the Rocky Mountain Conference; Rev. Maurine Hale serves on the Endowment Team for the Rocky Mountain Conference and served as Chair for the Church and Ministry Committee for the Southeastern Association until October 2011; Donna Bristow serves on the Clergy-Parish Ministry Team and served on the Nominating Committee for the Conference until June; Lori Gardner serves on the Faith Nurturing Team for the Conference and Middle School Retreat Planning Team; and Kevin Gardner served on the High School Retreat Leadership Team.

Elizabeth Vincent serves on the Peace and Justice Team through the Western Association.

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

FELLOWSHIP

During this year, our congregation celebrated through group fellowship.

In February, our Annual Friendship Dinner was held at TGIFriday's. They had an ideal room for our private gathering. 34 folks attended.

During March, the youth sponsored a St. Patrick's evening with corned beef and cabbage dinner and "minute to win it" games. If laughter is the best medicine, we were all very healthy that night!

In April, the youth held an Easter egg hunt for our children following the Easter worship service.

In July, Vista Grande hosted the Pastors for Peace Cuba Caravan celebration dinner with a potluck dinner. Tom Cherveney and Jim Bouman were the guest speakers.

Movie Nights were held in homes during the summer months. We viewed *Temple Grandin*, *Contact*, and *Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story*. Our gracious hosts were Jerry and Jackie Moore, Cindy and Curly Solomon-Klebba, and Brenda and Jimmy Collins.

In August, we had our outdoor worship and picnic at Palmer Park, Meadows Pavilion with great outdoor fellowship and games.

In September, we had our fall Rally Day. This year we had a praise service followed by a potluck lunch.

The youth held a Halloween Party for the kids. Adults were welcomed too.

In November, we held our traditional Thanksgiving dinner and decorated the church for the Advent Season. We made an evening at Coronado High School to see Kevin Gardner perform in the musical, *42nd Street*. The pie at Village Inn was also a great hit.

Throughout the year on the second Wednesday of the month, the men's fellowship gathered for breakfast at a local restaurant. This fall, the women took the opportunity to meet for breakfast or lunch on a Saturday.

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

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Submitted by Carolyn Gunning

After too long a break during which the women of the church were extremely busy with other projects in the church, we have decided that we really miss the fellowship of our sisters and want to resume our monthly meetings. So on October 22, eight of us met at Gunther Toody's for breakfast with our very own celebrity waiter, River! Following the breakfast, we caravanned to the Broadmoor church for its annual Alternative Gift Fair. Following the same format as before, our next meeting was a lunch meeting on November 12 at Gertrude's where ten of us were able to make it. In December, eleven of us met at Roberta Povelite's home for a delicious potluck brunch and cookie exchange. Our first meeting of the new year will be lunch on January 21 at 11:30 at Cheddar's Casual Cafe up on Interquest Parkway. All women are welcome to join us. We have a lot of fun over a good meal and try to solve all the world's problems at the same time!

BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

Submitted by Jerry Moore

Our facilities and grounds have had only minimal maintenance this year, with no real upgrade or touch-up activities. As noted in our 2010 Report, "We still have many items on our "to do" list, among them refinishing wood-work inside and out, some interior painting, carpet replacement, and repaving our asphalt driveway and parking lot. Hopefully, we can make a dent in this list in 2011." Unfortunately, no dents were made, due to lack of funds and limited time and talent available in our small congregation. We did have two general Saturday work days, one in the spring and one in the fall, which helped keep things looking decent on the outside and inside of our building.

Drainage of our roof and balcony had to be addressed this year as leakage inside became a persistent problem. Caulking and a new balcony drain hole have helped alleviate the problem, but more will have to be done to totally resolve the situation. We also had to call in plumbers and appliance repair people to fix our dishwasher, irrigation system head-end, and a wall-mounted toilet in the men's restroom. Worrisome cracks are opening up in the fellowship hall's concrete floors and similar settling is also causing problems in the concrete entryway and surrounding brick walls. This situation also needs to be addressed.

Over the years our facilities have been plagued by minor vandalism since our grounds are pretty dark at night. This year our building was hit on the parking lot side by graffiti artists. Fortunately, their obscene work was pretty well contained and was completed the Friday night before one of our work days. It was fairly readily removed with a combination of special graffiti cleaner and elbow grease. Also, our storage shed was struck by thieves (not vandals). They pried two padlock hasps off and gained entrance without really doing much damage. The only things noted missing were two (full) 2-gallon gasoline cans.

We noted in last year's report that the large blue spruce tree on the northeast church lawn had suddenly turned brown and appeared to be dying. Efforts to keep it alive appear to have succeeded, for which we are quite grateful since it is a beautiful tree.

COMMUNICATION AND ADVERTISING

Submitted by Donna Bristow

Throughout 2011, we advertised our Sunday worship and other activities in *The Independent* (a diverse voice for Colorado Springs). We subscribed to a weekly ad and the Easter and Advent Worship Guides. VGCC was also included in the Pride Guide.

We continued our ad, along with other UCC Open and Affirming congregations, 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).

Throughout 2011, we continued the section in our newsletter with a member of the Steering Committee writing an article most months. This has given our readers a way of learning more about the members they have elected to be on the "steering" committee.

Our monthly newsletter, *Vista Views*, was available through our website and paper copy. This gave the option for our congregants to read the Vista Grande's news and support going green with less paper and printing costs.

Communication to the congregation was also made through weekly e-mail and the printed announcement sheet in the weekly bulletin.

Communication goes both ways. If you have something to share or a suggestion to be made, pass it on. Read the various means of communication made available to you.

Our website is www.vgcc.org and Vista Grande is also on Facebook! A Social Media Team is working on ways to post stories and photos! And look for revamped website in 2012.

Our e-mail address is vgcc.ucc@att.net

FINANCIAL SECRETARY

Submitted by Jimmy Collins

Year	Number of Pledges	Amount Pledged	Amount Collected	Difference
2011	21	\$65,804	\$65,209	\$595
2012	22	\$68,494		

TREASURER

Submitted by Jerry Moore

General Fund

2011 Budget Amounts	Actual 01/01/11 - 12/31/11	Approved Budget 2012	
Income			
<i>Plate</i>	1,200.00	658.40	800.00
Pledged	65,804.00	65,209.00	68,494.00
Non-Pledged	3,600.00	3,837.00	3,600.00
South Hall Rent	24,000.00	26,000.00	24,000.00
Sanctuary Use	600.00	900.00	900.00
Other	4,800.00	208.57	2,000.00
Totals	\$ 99,204.00	\$ 96, 812.97	\$ 99,794.00
Expenses			
Christian Education	600.00	301.60	750.00
Banking/Finance	12.00	264.56	50.00
Membership	4,315.00	3,073.50	3,500.00
Mission	2,100.00	2,110.00	2,100.00
Office & General	4,210.00	3,853.18	4,810.00
Property	13,700.00	14,996.77	15,900.00
Worship	1,000.00	349.80	400.00
Payroll	78,302.00	75,668.72	79,100.00
Totals	\$ 104,239.00	\$ 100,618.13	\$ 106,610.00

Note: This budget results in an unfunded requirement of approximately \$7,000.

Restricted Funds for 2011

		Income	Expense
7205	General Revolving		\$ 512.90
7240	Other Mission/Outreach		641.00
7245	Mission of Month		9,049.53
7290	Youth Activities/Programs		98.98
Totals		\$ 9,992.18	\$ 10,302.41*

*Some funds will carry over to 2012.

Restricted Funds Detailed – Missions & Special Projects/Activities in 2011

VGCC does not budget for Restricted Funds. Generally speaking, we spend what we get in special offerings for specified missions or activities. Here are the different activities/missions supported in 2011 and the offerings received. Some on-going missions/activities, such as the Prayer Shawl Ministry, Pennies-for-Peace, and Youth Programs, carry balances for some time and from one year to the next. Most of the others are paid out the same month or the month following the taking of the offerings. Starred activities also received non-cash donations in addition to dollar values shown.

1.	Pennies-for-Peace (On-Going)	\$136.05
2.	Youth Programs	220.75
3.	Prayer Shawl Ministry	160.00
4.	MOM – La Puente*	310.00
5.	Special Mission – Pastors for Peace Caravan.	641.00
6.	MOM – One Great Hour of Sharing	837.20
7.	MOM – Strengthen the Church	573.00
8.	MOM – Inside/Out Youth	405.00
9.	MOM – Northern Churches Care*	182.00
10.	MOM – Zawadi Fund International	928.00
11.	MOM – Heifer Project	1,397.38
12.	MOM – Kenya Global Project	324.00
13.	MOM – Neighbors in Need	650.00
14.	MOM – One Nation Walking Together	1,195.00
15.	MOM – CROP Walk	465.00
16.	MOM – The Christmas Fund	1,567.80
	Total Restricted Income	\$9,992.18

Funds on Hand (Includes Checking Account and Money Market Savings Account)
as of 12/31/2011 **\$ 42,323.05**

Congregational Annual Meeting Sunday, January 30, 2011

Attendance – 30 members, 1 guest

The 2010 Moderator, Jan Morgan called the meeting to order at 11:15 a.m. and thanked Faith D. for providing the refreshments. Pastor Kim opened with prayer.

The minutes of the Dec. 12, 2010 meeting were circulated. Motion made by Carolyn G. to accept as written. Seconded by Dave B. Approved.

Bylaws amendment –

The following amendment was presented from the Steering Committee and therefore needed no second.

Current wording:

ARTICLE IX - The Steering Committee

IX. 1 NUMBER OF MEMBERS - There shall be nine members. Five members will be the officers, and four additional members will be elected by the congregation.

Recommended change:

ARTICLE IX - The Steering Committee

IX. 1 NUMBER OF MEMBERS

There shall be a minimum of seven members. Five members will be the officers, and a minimum of two at-large members will be elected by the congregation. These at-large member numbers can be increased as deemed necessary by vote of the congregation. Approved.

The annual report was distributed.

Jan drew attention to all the Mission offerings and the generosity of the congregation. Marcie W. made a motion to accept the report. Curly S-K. seconded. Approved.

Jan had a basket full of mission acronyms. Various members drew from the basket and gave the full name.

Nominations: The Steering Committee still has a vacancy for Moderator and Treasurer. Marcie Wegner volunteered to be the Moderator. Jerry gave a plea for someone to be Treasurer as he has completed his term according to our bylaws. Marcie was voted in as Moderator. Approved.

Maurine made the motion to allow Jerry M. to serve as Treasurer until the vacancy is filled. Seconded by Jimmy C. 26 yes/2 no. Approved.

Other business: Carolyn reminded folks of the Friendship Dinner on Feb. 11 at TGI Fridays. Carolyn mentioned the "idea box" for folks to suggest ideas for worship, fellowship, etc. The greeter/usher/refreshment list for March and April was circulated. Kim reminded folks of the Time/Talent forms.

Celebrate Mission: Dave B. highlighted the percentage of our mission giving vs our operational budget numbers. VGCC gives almost 20%. Dave showed the Our Church's Wider Mission video put together by the Rocky Mountain Conference.

Jerry talked about an investment program, UCC Funds. Currently our 90-day CD is making little to no interest. Discussion and clarification was given. This will be brought to the Steering Committee for review.

The outgoing Steering Committee members were thanked with a certificate and a small gift.

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m..

Respectfully submitted, Donna Bristow