



The Church Bell

First Congregational Church, UCC
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What a joy it was to worship together in-person on Easter morning! The spirit of hope and excitement was palpable as we came together in our parking lot for our first in-person worship (outside of our cars) in over a year. I imagine the uplifting sounds of “Hallelujah Chorus” will be ringing in our ears for some time. Whether or not you were able to join us, I hope you see this worship gathering as a tangible sign of the Resurrection for our community of faith.

As we move into the Easter season, we will continue to see signs of new life around our church building. We will now have an outdoor, in-person worship service at 10:00 on Sunday mornings. We are pleased that our recently purchased sound system provides a high-quality experience for listening to both speakers and musicians. We learned last Sunday that it is a good idea to wear sunscreen, bring an umbrella or hat for shade, and come with water! During our worship time on Sunday mornings, we are excited to offer faith formation programming for our preschoolers - 5th graders (more information inside).

As we get into the warmer months ahead, we will plan to move the start time for worship earlier to take advantage of the cooler morning weather. We will communicate this change in advance of the change happening. Please also note that we will continue to offer online worship that will be available on our YouTube channel even as we return to in-person gatherings. Recorded worship will include the sermon, music, and prayers.

Along with in-person, outside worship gatherings, we are also pleased to be able to offer the opportunity for small gatherings to resume in the church building. *(continued on reverse)*

(Minister's Message, continued from cover page)

Groups who gather in the building will be required to register in advance and follow COVID building use policies for the sake of ensuring the safety of staff and group participants. We will also have an outdoor meeting space available for groups to use under the entryway by the Memorial Garden on the east side of the building. We will encourage the use of this space for small gatherings whenever possible, as outdoor gatherings still remain the safest option.

It is a joy to see new life springing up around us. In the buds beginning to form on the trees and the flowers emerging from the soil. In the chirping of birds to the scurrying of rabbits. As Easter people, may we also experience the joy of new life as it springs forth with such abundance in our community of faith. Christ has Risen, Christ has Risen indeed! Alleluia, Alleluia! -Rev. Ben

Easter Offering

Each year our Outreach Ministry Group selects an organization or mission for which we collect a special Easter Offering. This year, we are supporting immigrant students who are applying for residency under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. This year, we raised \$2,090 that will benefit first-time DACA applicants by providing grants for the \$495 application fee.



Thanks from Marge Curtiss

I would like to say a big “Thank you!” to all of my church friends who gathered via Zoom during the Happy Hour fellowship time on Sunday, March 7 to wish me well and to sing Happy Birthday to me as part of my 90th birthday celebration. I very much enjoyed seeing the smiling faces of everyone assembled, reminiscing a bit, and receiving all of your good wishes! An extra thank you goes out to all those who also sent greetings and/or visited me in honor of my birthday.

Thank you also to Rev. Ben for mentioning me in the prayer during worship that day, and to the church staff for their card.

All of you helped to make my birthday very special, for which I’m grateful.
With love from Marge Curtiss

Lenten Trail Walk

At the end of March, we gathered on the Poudre River Trail corridor for an evening trail walk, honoring the Spring Equinox - a time when the light and the darkness are in perfect balance. It was a time to explore and honor the balance of light and dark in ourselves as perfect, as well. 31 people participated in this ritual together and a glorious sunset bid us farewell as we left the trail at the end of the event!



Kids Faith Formation

We're so excited to welcome our families back to the church to offer outdoor faith formation programs for our kids during worship each week! Following the children's moment, our teacher companions will gather and escort kids to Sunday School. Kids ages 3-Kindergarten will meet in the courtyard outside the Sanctuary & our 1st-5th grade students will gather in the covered entryway area on the east side of the building near the memorial garden. Adults can pick up their children on the south lawn after worship.

We're looking forward to using an exciting new curriculum for our 1st-5th group called *Holy Troublemakers & Unconventional Saints*. We'll learn about people from different faiths and eras working for more love and justice in their corners of the world, even when that means rocking the religious boat. In particular, the material focuses on the stories of women, the LGBTQ+ community, people of color, Indigenous people, and others who are too often written out of religious narratives. These stories move us towards more love and a faith that works for the common good of us all. We hope you'll join us! We will be wearing masks, sanitizing, and maintaining social distancing as much as possible during our time together.

This marks a significant new phase of experimenting how best to offer our programs as we begin to gather in person again. Thank you for your support as we continue to evaluate these offerings and try new things.

La Foret Adult Opportunities

La Foret invites adults 18+ to attend Contemplative Camp at LaForet July 18-24. This year's event will, once again, be led by spiritual educator Rev. Dr. Sal Palmer and author and Buddhist practitioner Dr. Ron Frost. Detailed information and registration are available now at laforet.org/events.

In addition to Contemplative Camp, La Foret and the Rocky Mountain Conference is hosting a series of contemplative spaces over Zoom through the summer. Part of the aim of these gatherings is to cultivate a community of people regionally who are interred in contemplative/inner life practice. More information is available at laforet.org/events.

Youth Group Activities

Thank you all for your patience as we've navigated Zoom over the last year. While it's been so important to keep each other, our families, and our community safe, we have so very much missed our time together in person, in the youth room, on the road, on the Rosebud, at La Foret, and in the Gaga ball pit! We are working on a few outdoor, socially distant activities for us over the next couple months like hikes, time at the park/outdoor games, and yes, Gaga ball. :) Youth families will soon receive a calendar of Spring opportunities for Youth Groups.

Vacation Bible School

Vacation Bible School will be happening with COVID-safe outdoor activity days at the church this summer the week of June 28-July 2! More information and registration will be coming soon!

Weekly In-Person Worship

We are excited to offer in-person worship weekly at 10am in the west parking lot! Please RSVP to the church office (970-353-0828, ext. 25 or laura@firstconggreeley.com) each week. Unlike Easter, we will not assign seating moving forward. We will have chairs available as you arrive, but you are also welcome to bring your own! Ushers will be available to help those who require assistance. Please remember to wear sunscreen, bring a water bottle, and bring a hat or umbrella for some shade.

Food Bank Offering

In lieu of Easter lilies, this year we received donations for the Weld Food Bank and offered flowers on the Easter altar in memory and honor of our loved ones. Through this, we raised \$950 for the Weld Food Bank, which will provide 3,800 meals to our community. Thank you for your generosity!

Happy Hour Continuing

We are excited to continue offering an online Happy Hour & Fellowship time every Sunday from 3-4pm on Zoom. Happy Hour is an informal time for people to visit and connect with one another and will now be hosted by members of the congregation. See the weekly email blast or reach out to the church office for the link to join.

Conversations on Race

After beginning our Sunday Morning Conversations on Race in July of 2020, the group has finally completed the UCC curriculum. Members have been transformed by the process, and have noticed shifts in our awareness of our own implicit bias. The group has elected to continue learning together, this time bringing the material into a more local context - Northern Colorado. For 6 weeks, beginning Thursday, April 15th at 5:00pm via Zoom, we will dig deeper into Greeley's history and listen for the voices on the margins. We'll be exploring the histories of people of color in our region to see how it might shape our commitments moving forward. For more information, please reach out to Rev. Tamara or Rev. Ben.

Praxis Project

Our Praxis conversations continue each Wednesday evening at 8:00pm. If you would like to explore ways to enliven or en-LIVE-IN to your faith join us! Topics change but the chance to practice your faith in new ways with this community is a constant.

Lutheran Family Services Rocky Mountains Refugee & Asylee Programs

LFSRM is the refugee resettlement agency in northern Colorado and we have several direct & indirect opportunities for welcoming newcomers to our community. These include a mix of virtual and in-person and can be flexible with your schedule: citizenship tutoring, mentoring new families, helping staff set up apartments before arrival, assisting with summer camp, and/or putting together items for airport pick-up bags and apartment bins. Please contact Alex at alex.kloehn@lfsrm.org for volunteer orientation dates; info is also found on lfsrm.org and our Facebook page (facebook.com/RockyMtnRefugee).

Grief Group

We are starting a Grief Group at First Congregational Church. If you are feeling heavy-hearted or dealing with a loss, consider joining us for a meditative time of learning, sharing, silence and prayer. Whether your losses are old or new, specific or a more generalized sense of sadness, you are welcome to join us. The group will meet the first and third Mondays of each month at 5:30pm in the memorial garden. **Please BYOC** (bring your own chair) and any water or snacks you will need.

"Deep grief sometimes is almost like a specific location, a coordinate on a map of time. When you are standing in that forest of sorrow, you cannot imagine that you could ever find your way to a better place. But if someone can assure you that they themselves have stood in that same place, and now have moved on, sometimes this will bring hope." -Elizabeth Gilbert

