



The Church Bell

First Congregational Church, UCC
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January 6, 2021

THE CHURCH BELL (USPS 110-560) PERIODICALS MAILING

VOLUME 77, ISSUE 11, Thursday, January 6, 2022
THE CHURCH BELL (USPS 110-560)
Published once monthly by First Congregational Church,
2101 16th St., Greeley, CO
Periodicals Postage Paid at Greeley, Colorado
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE CHURCH BELL,
% First Congregational Church UCC
2101 16th St., Greeley, CO 80631

Soccer Without Borders Volunteer Opportunities

We recently welcomed Soccer Without Borders into one of our downstairs spaces and are excited not only to have them as renters, but also as community partners! Soccer Without Borders is an international nonprofit with 4 US locations and 2 international locations who has been in Greeley since 2012. SWB uses soccer as a vehicle of change to help refugee and immigrant students overcome obstacles to growth, inclusion, and personal success. They provide year-round soccer programming, combined with English language support, academic enrichment, and mentorship opportunities to students and their families. SWB currently serves middle school and high school youth from a diverse range of countries including Honduras, Guatemala, Burma, Eritrea, Republic of Congo, and Somalia.

We have a unique opportunity to partner with Soccer Without Borders to provide support for their work in the following ways:

- Excited about helping newcomer youth learn English and thrive academically? Volunteer with SWB as a tutor! Hours are mostly in the afterschool time but are flexible.
- Interested in working one-on-one with a newcomer and their family? Volunteer to be a Family Mentor and help participants and their families acclimate to their new community! Mentor activities could involve tutoring English, outings to parks or museums, sharing a meal together, and other activities to help the family navigate life in the United States. Hours are flexible with a minimum commitment of 9 months (2+ hrs/wk).
- Passionate about soccer, and want a chance to get out on the field with a group of equally passionate youth? Join SWB as an assistant soccer coach! Choose a weekday that works with your schedule, and join our coaching team! Hours: 3:30-6 or 4:30-7.

For more information, visit the new office in the basement of FCCG, or contact Senior Program Coordinator Sarah Stangl at 970-573-7970.

Support FCC by Shopping at King Soopers

King Soopers allows customers to link their rewards card to an organization of their choice who then receives a charitable contribution of 5% of the money they spent. Once you have signed up, everytime you shop you support the church! If you already have an online account with King Soopers:

- Login to your account at www.kingsoopers.com
- Go to the drop down menu under your name on the right hand corner of the page and select "Account"
- On the left hand side of your Account page, select "Community Rewards"
- In the "Find Organization" put "First Congregational Church of Greeley" and select "Enroll"

If you do not have an online account, or need assistance signing up, please call Whitney in the church office.

December Special Offering Updates

Weld Food Bank Backpack Program: We have collected \$6,800 for Weld Food Bank's backpack program this year!

Advent Memorial Gift Ornaments: Together we provided \$965 to the Weld Food Bank in honor and memory of our loved ones this Christmas season!

Heath Middle School Giving Tree: We continue to be grateful for and humbled by the generosity of this church. With your help we were able to support nineteen local families this holiday season with gift cards totaling \$3,100. Thank you!

2022 Annual Pledge Campaign Update

We are so grateful for all of the pledges that have been made to the 2022 annual operating budget! Pledges to the operating budget are instrumental in sustaining the daily ministry of our church. Please call the church office if you would like to make a pledge or would like more information about pledging. Thank you for considering a financial commitment in support of First Congregational Church in 2022.

Capital Campaign Update

To date \$1,269,983.59 in gifts and commitments have been made to our *In Greeley for Good Capital Campaign*. Wow! We are excited to begin making plans to start work on capital campaign projects. Updates regarding capital campaign projects will be shared in the Bell and on the church's website. Thank you for investing so generously in a vibrant future for our church!

One Parent's Reflection on the Christmas Pageant

"That was one of the loveliest pageants we've ever attended - it was so joyful and inclusive - I saw so many small acts of kindness going on, from letting baby Jesus' mom sit on stage to make sure that was not a scary experience for her little one to the narrator picking up and comforting her younger sibling during her reading. I loved the star with one arm out of his costume so he could hang onto his pretzels and the other star's spontaneous dancing and wiggling with delight. I grew up in the church mindset of 'make everyone sit still and do it right!' which led to less messiness but also significantly less joy and, most importantly, less love. It was a privilege for my child to have the opportunity to practice prioritizing demonstrating kindness and love (for another child) over worrying about whether her costume fit perfectly - that to me is the true meaning of Christmas!"



Update on Staff Transitions

Goodbyes: In December we said our goodbyes to Brady Ross (Youth Minister) and Jackie Russo (Financial Secretary). We are so grateful for Brady and Jackie's time with us. Brady has returned to Minneapolis and Jackie and her family have made the move to Pennsylvania. Please keep them in your prayers as they get settled into this next chapter in their lives.

Shift in current staff roles: Laura Gurney, our Church Administrator, will assume many of the financial responsibilities previously covered by Jackie Russo. We have extended the hours of Whitney Janzen-Pankratz, our Community Coordinator, to cover portions of Laura's administrative duties to make room for her new financial responsibilities.

Current Job Searches:

Pastoral Care Associate: This is an 8-10 hour per week position that will help Rev. Ben and Rev. Tamara meet the pastoral care needs of our community.

Director of Youth Ministries: This is a 6-8 hour per week position that will be responsible for organizing weekly gatherings for our middle and high schoolers. This position will also help lead retreats and mission trips.

Job descriptions for both positions are available on our website or upon request.

Youth Ministry Update

The face of Youth Ministry at FCC is changing, and we are excited about this new look! Our ministers recognize that youth thrive with consistency and connection. With that in mind, the Revs. Ben and Tamara will be stepping into a leadership role with our Youth Ministry program. They will alternate leading the group on Sunday mornings during the 10am worship service and Rev. Ben will lead the Wednesday Night Live gathering each week at 6:30pm. We hope to hire a part-time Director of Youth Ministries to work with us and act as a support for our youth programming. While we are still hammering out details around Confirmation (more to come soon!) we are eager to deepen our connection with the wonderful youth of this church.

In Memory

Please hold the families of the following people in your prayers as they grieve and celebrate the life of their loved ones:

Ray LeRette

March 19, 1939 - November 28, 2021
Services will be announced later

Cindy Ott

November 3, 1957 - December 18, 2021
Services will be announced later

Don Jetter

September 24, 1942 - December 2, 2021
Services were held December 9

Annual Meeting Announcement

The 152nd Annual Meeting of First Congregational Church is scheduled for Wednesday, January 26 from 6:30-8pm. For the sake of safety and accessibility, the meeting will be held on Zoom. A link will be emailed to you on Monday, January 24. We hope you can join us as we prepare for another year of faithfully living into God's calling for our community.

Updated COVID Precautions

As COVID cases increase significantly in our community we are committed to keeping our gatherings as safe as possible. We are grateful for your compliance with the following guidelines:

- KN95 masks to be worn in the building at all times (they are available at each entrance)
- Coffee fellowship hour will be temporarily suspended
- 8:00 chapel service will be held in the sanctuary through the end of January
- WNL changes: Dinner and kids choirs temporarily suspended, Praxis moved online
- If you or someone in your household has had a COVID infection, please join us virtually until your CDC recommended quarantine period is over

Epiphany: Visioning Sessions

Just as Advent is a season of waiting, Epiphany is a season of discernment. During Epiphany we celebrate the manifestation of God in Jesus, and of the risen Christ in our world. Christians are invited to consider how Jesus lived into his calling and how we can continue his work in the world today. As such, the Revs. Tamara and Ben plan to continue our listening sessions, but this time we will shift our focus to values and visioning. Who are we called to be as a church? How do we embody that call? How and when do we experience the sacred in our collective life? When do we experience a sense of place/belonging? What are our values and how do they shape our vision for where we are headed? Once again, we will be listening for the wisdom of the spirit through the voices of our community. Please join us for one of our remaining sessions:

- Monday, January 10 at 10am in the Library
- Thursday, January 13 at 7pm via Zoom

Praxis Project in the New Year

Mark your calendars for an all-new Praxis offering! From January 12 - February 23 we will be exploring a Theology of Embodiment, discovering new ways to encounter the Holy as it dwells within our BODIES. Over the course of six weeks (we will skip 1/26 for the annual meeting), we will do gentle yoga with Rev. Tamara, try Tai Chi with Whitney Janzen-Pankratz, practice intuitive eating with Cindy Dallow, and explore radical self-love through the work of Sonya Renee Taylor, as led by Kate Norris. Instead of making (and breaking) another resolution, we invite you on a spiritual journey of self discovery. While ALL BODIES AND ABILITIES ARE WELCOME, we will ask that after the first week new folks not join the group without first contacting Rev. Tamara.

La Foret Spring Retreat

Save the date: La Foret's Spring Retreat for youth will be held March 18-20! Registration opens on January 17 at laforet.org. If you need help registering or if you would like to take advantage of a camp scholarship, please contact Rev. Ben or Rev. Tamara.

Guest Preacher this Month

We are excited to welcome the Rev. Dr. Anthony Scott as our guest preacher on Jan. 23. Dr. Scott serves as the Associate Conference Minister for our Rocky Mountain Conference. Dr. Scott is a passionate preacher, leader, and activist. He received a BA in Religion from Wartburg College (2010) and received an MDiv from Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis, MO (2013). Following years of active ministry, Anthony earned the DMin from United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio (2020). Please join us in welcoming Dr. Anthony Scott to Greeley later this month!

Resolutions that make a difference for your church!

There are MANY ways you can get involved in the life and mission of FCC that will make a BIG difference. If you haven't already, please take a moment to fill out an Interest & Engagement Survey to let us know what types of things you may enjoy doing. Surveys can be picked up in the church office or you can be filled out online by [clicking here](#). This month we're focused on finding and training people for the following tasks:

- Welcoming people and answering phones in the church office
- Creating The Church Bell and preparing it for print
- Creating the weekly projection used during worship

If you are interested in learning more about our most immediate needs or to volunteer, please reach out to Community Coordinator Whitney Janzen-Pankratz (970-353-0828 or whitney@firstconggreeley.com)

We want YOU to sign up for Realm!

Realm is our secure online site that gives church members easy access to all sorts of important things like the church directory, your confidential giving information, and updates about what is happening around the church. Our New Year's resolution is to get all church members set up on Realm! It is quick and easy. To sign up on your own, follow the link in the email sent to you on January 5th from notifications@onrealm.org. To get help signing up, call the church office. Laura is happy to assist you!