



The Church Bell

First Congregational Church, UCC
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Advent: A Season of Listening

Advent (the 4 weeks leading up to Christmas) is a liturgical season of waiting and an opportunity to practice spiritual listening. Year after year, the Church waits and wonders, even though waiting is hard (counter-cultural, even). As the days grow shorter, there is an invitation to slow down, to make room for God to birth a new thing within us and within our community. And so we wait for the rebirth of light, the rebirth of love, the rebirth of hope into our lives.

This year has seen a lot of change at FCC. January started with online worship, the celebration of Rev. Nate's ministry with the church, and welcoming my family into the community. We have worshipped in the parking lot, on the lawn and in the sanctuary. We have seen the conclusion of the ministry of beloved staff members: Kim Pace, Robb Carlson, Wanda Vasquez-Garcia, and Alex Rodriguez.

At the same time, we have rejoiced in welcoming Dr. Keenan Boswell, Tammi VanDrunen, Brady Ross, Whitney Janzen-Pankratz, and Kathy Azari. We have also delighted in watching Rev. Ben, Dr. Derek Chester, and Shona Royle-Grimes expand their roles with the church. And if all that is not enough change, in the midst of this global pandemic, we had the audacity to dream into an unknowable future, raising over a million dollars (and a lot of excitement) for our *In Greeley for Good* capital campaign.

After such a year, Rev. Ben and I are taking the call of Advent to heart. During this season, we are committed to slowing down, making space, listening for the wisdom of the spirit through the voices of our community. We will be hosting a series of Quaker-style listening and discernment sessions and we invite you to come and speak what the Spirit has laid on your heart. How do you see God at work in this church? What brings you joy at FCC? Where do you feel anxiety or concern? What questions do you have? We want to hear from you! Please watch the weekly announcements for upcoming listening sessions. We look forward to entering this time of deep discernment alongside you, and listening for God's still speaking voice.

Welcome Kathy & Shona

We are delighted to have Shona Royle-Grimes move into the role of Genesis and Jubilation Choir Director. We are also thrilled to announce that Kathy Azari is our new Rainbow Choir Director. We are incredibly blessed by the musical gifts Shona and Kathy bring to our church family!

Meet A Choral Scholar: Tessa Espinoza

Tessa Espinosa, a Louisiana native, moved to Colorado in 2013 to complete a Masters in Voice Performance from UNC. She is now a doctoral candidate, working on a Doctorate of the Arts in Voice Performance and Music Theory. She is currently on the voice faculty at Front Range Community College in Fort Collins where she directs the chamber choir while tirelessly writing her dissertation on Cajun folk song.



Neighbors in Need

The UCC's Annual Neighbors in Need offering supports the Council for American Indian Ministry and the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries. Gifts to the Neighbors in Need offering can be made online, sent to the church office, or put in the offering box on Sunday mornings through November. Please mark Neighbors in Need on the memo line.

LaForet Youth Retreat

We had eight youth and three adults attend the recent fall retreat at LaForet! It was a weekend packed full of fun, connection, and deeping. Thank you to Liz Mock-Murphy, Nick Janzen-Pankratz, and Brady Ross for making this trip possible for our youth!

Guadalupe Community Center

Join a group from the church in serving a meal at the Guadalupe Community Center on the 4th week of each month from 4-6pm. For more information, or to sign up click [here](#), or contact Nate Pierot: ntapeo22@gmail.com or (970) 415-6928.

A Note from Community Coordinator, Whitney Janzen-Pankratz

I am very excited about having the privilege to serve First Congregational Church as your Community Coordinator! I have seen this congregation do rich and meaningful work together, and I am confident we will continue to embody God's love in Greeley going into the future. My new role is focused on helping enhance our capacity to accomplish the important work we are called to as the body of Christ.

To lay a foundation for this, I am starting my work by compiling a database of people interested in different volunteer opportunities within our congregation and the broader community. Keep an eye on your email inboxes over the next couple of months for a survey from me about ways you may feel drawn to serve.

I realize that discerning where to engage our gifts is not always easy, and changes throughout seasons in life. I do believe that service can be a powerful tool for spiritual growth in our lives as individuals and as a community. I want to help you find the right fit. To that end, I invite you consider these questions with prayerful curiosity:

Rooted: I feel connection with God, community, and self when I...

Nourished: I feel restored or nourished by God when...

Growing: I am inspired to meet _____ with curiosity and wonder.

Children's Update

The kids' ministry has moved upstairs to our new space! What was the former library/lounge area has been transformed into an airy and beautiful children's space. We are so grateful to have a space to worship in a child-appropriate way! Feel free to peek your head in before or after church to see our space. Want to join us? We're always looking for a few new faith companions! Please reach out to Tammi to get connected.

In Greeley for Good Capital Campaign

We are thrilled to announce that, as of November 10, gifts and pledges totaling \$1,157,898 have been made to our capital campaign. Wow, what a remarkable outpouring of generosity and support towards our church's future for us to celebrate!

Gifts to the capital campaign support our vision for vibrant life and ministry for years to come. If you are still considering contributing to the capital campaign, pledge cards can be sent to the church office or put in the offering box on Sunday mornings. Gifts can also be made on Realm. If you need assistance making a pledge, please contact the church office.



Ten Thousand Villages

We are excited to partner with Ten Thousand Villages for our annual Christmas sale November 19-21! We invite you to help make this sale possible by volunteering to unload the truck, set up, host, or pack up. Feel free to sign up to volunteer [here](#) or email whitney@firstconggreeley.com. On Sunday, we will also offer crafts created by our kids to benefit Heifer International, a bake sale in memory of Carol Pepin, and a knitting sale for Habitat for Humanity. To donate baked goods to the bake sale please deliver them to the church kitchen by 4pm on Thursday, November 18th.

Habitat for Humanity Knitting Sale

Church and community knitters will hold a sale of their work on December 12. Proceeds from the sale will support the important work of Greeley-Weld County Habitat Humanity in our community.

Advent Concert Series

Our Advent Concert Series is back! We kicked off the series on Wednesday, November 10 with the UNC Ursa Music Consort's presentation of Handel's *Messiah*. All concerts are no charge and open to the public. We hope you'll join us!

UNC's Chamber Choir

December 5, 2pm

First Congregational Chancel Choir presents Handel's Messiah

December 12, 10am (during worship)

John Mills, Christmas Songs

December 15, 6:30pm (during Praxis)

Tim Coons, Family Christmas Concert

December 19, 2021, 11:45am (following 10am worship) in Chadwick
Light refreshments provided

Christmas Decorating

The Worship, Music & the Arts ministry group is happy to invite you to help decorate the church for Christmas! The decorating will take place on Sunday, November 27 from 9am-noon. We need everyone from ladder climbers to ornament placers. If you plan to help, please email Jane Weber at ajweberrn@yahoo.com.



Advent Activities

Please join us for one of our many Advent traditions this year! In addition to these offerings, please see the article about our Advent Concert Series above.

November 27: Christmas Decorating

December 5: Advent Workshop, 11:30am

December 8: Advent Traditions w. Dr. Derek Chester, 6:30pm (during Praxis)

December 12: Music Sunday - Handel's *Messiah*
December 19: Christmas Pageant during 10am worship

December 22: Blue Christmas Worship, 6:30pm

Sponsorship for Humanitarian Parole

The Outreach Ministry Group, in partnership with the Humanitarian Legal Assistance Project, is offering an opportunity to be a sponsor for Humanitarian Parole to Afghan Refugees. Since the U.S. embassy in Kabul has closed and there are no U.S. consulates operating in Afghanistan, it is impossible for many Afghan nationals to complete their visa applications. One of their only options to receive necessary travel documents to get to the U.S. is to apply for humanitarian parole.

Humanitarian parole is a temporary form of immigration relief that is granted at the discretion of a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) officer determining whether the applicant's parole into the U.S. would be a significant public benefit or is necessary due to an emergency.

At this time, humanitarian parole cannot be granted without a sponsor. A sponsor is a person or organization that financially guarantees the applicant (beneficiary) will not become a public charge while they are in the U.S. on humanitarian parole. Any individual in or outside the U.S. can sponsor humanitarian parole applicants, but U.S. citizens are by far the best sponsors in the eyes of a USCIS officer. To be a sponsor, individuals must meet 100% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines for their household. To learn more about becoming a sponsor or to meet with a representative from the Humanitarian Legal Assistance Project, contact Whitney in the office at whitney@firstconggreeley.com.

Jeannine Shadwick Memorial Gifts

A special thank you to Gerald Shadwick for directing the memorial gifts made in memory of Jeannine, totaling nearly \$5,000, to the purchase of A/V equipment that will significantly enhance our live streaming capabilities.

Annual Pledges for the 2022 Operating Budget: The gift that gives us life next year!

Pledges made to the annual operating budget support the daily life of First Congregational Church. Your pledges help your church leadership plan for the upcoming year's operating budget - which serves as the roadmap for our collective capacity for ministry in 2022. Pledge cards for the annual budget can be sent to the church office or put in the offering box on Sunday morning. Pledges can also be made on Realm. If you need assistance making an annual pledge, please contact the church office.

Giving from Your IRA

As you consider a pledge or capital gift, you can use your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from your IRA to make a difference and not pay taxes.

You can gift stocks, mutual funds, and cash directly from your brokerage IRA account to the church's investment account. Need more information? Please contact the church office.

Sound & Livestream Help Needed

We are building a team of folks to help with sound and livestreaming for worship, special events, and memorial services. Experience is not necessary! If you're interested in learning how to use the sound, projection, and/or livestreaming equipment to be able to help us, please reach out to Whitney in the office.

Women's Retreat at LaForet

Join us April 1-3 at LaForet for a women's retreat. The theme of the weekend is A Rhythm of Ritual: letting go of busy and embracing rest. We'll use ritual to create an environment where we embrace the idea of slowing down, caring for self, and connecting with Spirit. We invite you to art journal, hike, do tai chi, meditate, nap, and make s'mores with us. The cost will be \$175 and will cover food, lodging, and supplies for the weekend. To register, or to obtain a scholarship, please talk to Laura or Whitney in the office.