



The Church Bell

First Congregational Church, UCC
2101 16th St. ▪ Greeley, CO 80631
970-353-0828

www.firstconggreeley.com

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Hi-Five Friends



Recently one of my friends, who has devoted much of his career to children and youth spiritual formation, shared an important number that has stuck with me. Studies show that the number five is one of the greatest indicators for whether children will remain involved in church through adolescence and into adulthood. And no, it's not having five donuts on Sunday mornings! Just like the sugar, donuts' impact on keeping kids around church *eventually* wears off!

Instead, five refers to the number of adults at church—who aren't pastors, staff, or their parents—who kids feel known and cared for by. Simply put, if a kid has five people like this they feel connected to, they are much more likely to have a lifelong tie to the church.

It's awesome how "at home" our kids feel at church. But after hearing this research, I'm convinced there is more we can do! Therefore, we are asking for adult volunteers willing to be part of a new initiative we are calling "Hi-Five Friends." The idea is as simple and straightforward as the results of the studies. Adults who are part of Hi-Five Friends will be paired up with a few kids at church and are asked to simply say "hi" by name when you see them and help make sure they feel noticed and cared about. Please contact Robbie if you are willing to be part of this important new initiative in our church!

Rev. Ben Konecny

Welcome to Alex Rodriguez

Last month our Personnel Committee and clergy staff made a shift in our office staffing, eliminating the position of Office Receptionist. This means Carolyn Stuart is no longer employed by the church. Carolyn served us faithfully for many years; we appreciate her dedicated service and we wish her well.

Please welcome Alex Rodriguez as our new Communications Specialist. Alex recently moved to Greeley with her husband, Daniel, and son, Anthony, from Waukegan, Illinois, where she was the contemporary music director at St. Paul's Lutheran Church. Along with many years of experience working at her church, she also has 15 years of executive administrative experience. For the last eight years, Alex has been working with nonprofit groups to help establish their online presence, IT support and training, as well as serving as president of WAGS, an animal rescue auxiliary group in Waukegan.



Alex and her family joined our church in May, and she is very excited to be able to share her gifts. Alex brings a wealth of experience in social media platforms and office management. In addition to managing our communications, Alex will be stationed at the receptionist's desk to greet visitors, direct phone traffic, and cross-train with our Office Administrator, Carol Thompson. Please welcome Alex next time you drop by the office!

Habitat Guatemala Presentation

On Wednesday, September 11, our Guatemala team will prepare dinner and present a program thanking our congregation for supporting our 2019 mission trip to Solola, Guatemala. We built eight smokeless stoves, eight latrines, and worked on the foundation of a house. We are returning to Guatemala in June of 2020 to continue our work. We will ask for a free will offering at the dinner to defray the cost of a brick-making machine that costs \$1700 and will be used by the families to make bricks for their smokeless stoves.



Summer Camp at La Foret
July 2019



Fun at Water World
August 2019



We begin our Wednesday Night Live activities on September 4. Children's choir rehearsals and youth groups start that same day. Dinner is at 5:30; the programs begin at 6:30.

During the first Adult Ed time on September 4, Rev. Nate and Rev. Ben will talk about what to expect in the year ahead. In particular, they will share plans for a church-wide visioning process to begin the period of transition as we move toward Rev. Nate's retirement (take a breath and remember that it is still a year and a half away!). As our church enters this new season, we hope to create a process of collective conversation, prayer, and imagination as we discern how to continue being rooted, nourished, and growing as a vibrant faith community.

On September 11, the Habitat Guatemala group will serve dinner and report on their trip to Guatemala last summer.

Beginning September 18, we will offer two programs. The Praxis Project will meet in the Hope Room with Rev. Ben Konecny. Rev. Nate Miller will resume "Praying the News." Each person is invited to bring a news story that relates to our faith or moral structure.

Help prepare Wednesday Night Live dinners! Our wonderful WNL head chef, Barb Murphy, is cooking for another year—but she can't do it alone! If you would like to learn more about assisting with meal prep, please contact the church office.



Fellowship of the Grape (FOG)

Our next FOG gathering is Friday, September 13, at 5:00 at the home of Gerald and Jeannine Shadwick, 1720 37th Ave. in Greeley. Bring your favorite beverage and a snack to share. Everyone welcome!

Annual Brat Fest

Come join us on Sunday, September 15, at 11:00 for our annual bratwurst and hot dog festival to celebrate the start of our fall programs! All are welcome in Chadwick Hall. It's free! Vegetarian hot dogs and gluten-free options will be available. Come join the fun!



The Nicavangelists are coming!



We will host the Nicavangelists October 14-17. The mission of the Nicavangelists is to help at-risk youth in Managua with food, housing, clothing, education, and the chance to develop skills in performance arts. The Nicavangelists seek to create a bright future for youth by giving them opportunities to share their hope, talents, and culture with the world. While in Greeley, this group will perform and share their stories about the challenges faced by people from Central America currently seeking asylum in the United States.

Scripture Seminar Resumes

Thursdays 12:30-1:30 in the Hope Room



Join us as we read through the Bible, engaging methods of biblical study which offer historical and literary context that help deepen our insight into our ancient and oftentimes bewildering sacred texts. The hope of our time together is to become literate, but not necessarily literal, readers of scripture.

Get Ready for Sunday School

We could use your help getting ready for Sunday school! On Saturday, August 30, we will clean out Sunday school rooms and prepare them for the upcoming year. Drop by any time between 9:00 and 3:00.



Thank You to the Social Media Team

A big shout-out and thank you to our social media team! For the past several years, our social media presence has been led by an incredible team of volunteers. Heather Schulte, Jessica Pinney, Kate Norris, and Laura Gurney have been instrumental in helping our church have some space in cyberspace. Because of the growing significance of having an online presence, our recently hired communications specialist, Alex Rodriguez, will devote much of her time to this work. Thank you to Heather, Jessica, Kate, and Laura for their faithful and tech-savvy contribution to our church's life and witness!

Rainbow Storytime

We are excited to host Rainbow Storytime, put on by the High Plains Library. The focus of this storytime is to provide a welcoming and safe space to read stories and create community that supports and celebrates inclusivity and diversity. Rainbow Storytime is geared for families with children kindergarten through 2nd grade. Gatherings will be held 10:00-11:00 a.m. on October 5 and 19 and November 2 and 16.



Weld Food Bank Backpack Program

The Backpack Program provides food for children who are at risk for hunger over the weekend. The Food Bank works with school counselors and teachers to identify students who are in great need of food and provide them with shelf-stable milk, juice, a high protein meal, and three or four snacks to take home on Fridays. A \$100 donation supports one student for the school year. Our goal is to support 100 students again this year! Donations of any amount can be dropped off in the church office.



Learn more about Archway Housing

Archway Housing, an affiliate of the United Church of Christ, builds affordable housing in partnership with local church communities. Representatives of Archway will be with us September 22 after worship to give us more information about their work and ways we could consider being involved.



Rosebud Adult Mission Trip

You've asked for it—we're making it happen! We're taking a mission trip to the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota for adults and any interested high schoolers this fall. Join us October 10-14 to experience a taste of the transformation that can happen on the Rez while participating in service projects that help bring hope to the Lakota people. We'll leave the evening of the 10th and return the evening of the 14th, which coincides with the District 6 fall break. For more information or to register, visit the church website or email Laura Gurney, gurney.laura08@gmail.com.



First Congregational Gardeners Meeting

Sunday, September 8, 11:15 a.m., Church Library

If you are interested in being part of a group of gardeners who want to make a difference in keeping our landscape neat and pretty, please come to our meeting on September 8. Get in on the ground floor by deciding what you'd like to see and do. Can't make the meeting but interested in participating? Contact Judy Smith: smith.jmwrh@gmail.com or 970-415-2205.



Celebration Gifts

From Richard and Jean Hoffman, in appreciation of the faith and fellowship they feel in this church and in gratitude for the love of family as they celebrate their 64th wedding anniversary August 7

