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Minister's

Message

Given the speed with which this pandemic has changed our lives, I hesitate to write anything a week before this issue of the Bell is published. If I had written it just two weeks earlier, we would still have been permitted to engage in face-to-face worship! Who knows what will be happening the first week in April?

But I know a couple things that we can count on as the month of April unfolds. Easter will happen April 12. I have heard at least one political leader express his hope that our pews would once again be packed for Easter—as if that would rescue us from some malaise of suspended face-to-face worship. But that would be a misunderstanding of the Gospel. The Risen Christ was not stopped by the stone covering the tomb. The soldiers outside were not able to derail Easter. All the might and power of the Empire could not stop New Life from springing forth. Centuries of calamity, war, pestilence and plague have not diminished the promise of Easter. COVID-19 will not prevent Easter from happening. Nor will it prevent the church from being the church. Every day I hear new stories of how this community of faith is reaching out and reaching in to discover new avenues for service and spiritual growth.

Easter has not been canceled. Yes, we canceled the flowers. We canceled the special musicians; we suspended choir rehearsals. We postponed changing out some of our enhancements. But Easter will still happen April 12. In my career as a clergy person, I have never experienced an Easter when we did not gather face-to-face. This year will be different—but will still be Easter.

My hope is that you will join us for the online experiences of Holy Week. You'll find a Maundy Thursday worship and Easter morning worship on our web page and on Facebook. Our daily check-ins will continue, as will our daily

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(Minister's Message—Continued from cover page)

music meditations. And when it is safe to gather face-to-face, I suggest we celebrate a "Second Easter." We'll include our favorite Easter hymns, some special music and Easter flowers. And much later, we'll talk about that year when we had two Easters.

Here's the second thing that we can count on as the month of April unfolds. God will be with us. In all the anxiety and disruption, through the uncertainties and financial turmoil, God will walk with us through this wilderness. And we will witness new dimensions of care and giving. We will witness extraordinary acts of grace and sharing. Opportunities to be agents of grace and care and healing will be placed before us like they never have before. And much later, we'll talk about the year when we had two Easters—and the Church shined in an extraordinary way.

With Great Hope,
 Rev. Nathan Miller

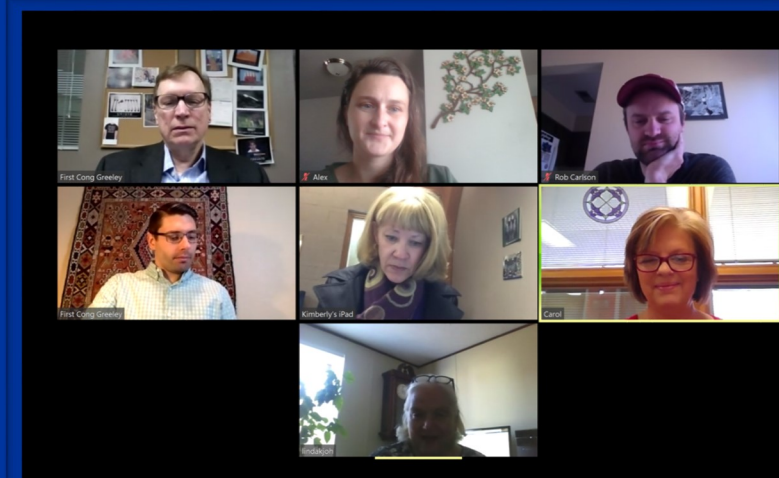


Registration is open for all Rocky Mountain Conference 2020 Summer Camps, including a few adult sessions. These opportunities are offered at La Foret Conference & Retreat Center. Dates and descriptions of each camp, age groups, and registration can be found here: rmcucc.org/news-events.

If you have questions about any of these opportunities, would like more information about the experiences at La Foret, or if a scholarship would assist your family in making them possible for you, please let Robbie know. We want everyone who has a desire to attend these transformational events to be able to do so.

Please note: Summer camps have NOT been canceled at this point, so please go ahead and register if you wish to attend.

To those who ordered Butter Braid pastries:
In the interest of everyone's health and safety, we will begin distributing Butter Braids to those who ordered them when we are able to join together in face-to-face worship again. Thank you for your support of our youth!



**"Physical Distancing"
 Staff Meeting
 March 31, 2020**

*(Yes, we do have
 staff meetings!)*

Church is not canceled—it just looks different

On March 25, Governor Polis ordered Coloradans to stay at home. Though churches are considered an essential institution and are exempt from the order, we are still required to adhere to the safe practices of social distancing. So your staff is working from home as best we can. Sometimes we come to the church building to produce social media content. But the church offices are now closed. We have made arrangements to receive mail, but the phones will probably go unanswered. The voicemail greeting will provide extension information for Carol, Nate and Ben. All of us can check our phone messages from home. Our Financial Secretary, Linda Johnson, will be in once a week to do our banking and pay bills. She will check her messages weekly.

Your pastors remain available for pastoral care, though we cannot make any in-person visits. Rev. Nate's cell phone is 970-32409933. Rev. Ben's cell phone is 970-237-1246.

We look forward to the time when we will gather and visit like "the good old days" (i.e. last February!). In the meantime, we pray that these measures will minimize our risk and increase our joy when we reunite.

Donate to the Church and save on your 2020 taxes!

If you take money out of your Individual Retirement Account (IRA), it is all subject to income tax. But instead of taking money from the IRA, paying the taxes, and then making a donation, you can save that income tax and it all goes to the Church. If you're over 70 1/2 years of age, you will simply want to arrange for what is called a Qualified Charitable Distribution. This means that the money goes directly from your IRA to the Church. Which means you won't have to pay any income taxes on the withdrawal from that IRA. And this kind of a direct contribution to the church can even be used for your Required Minimum Distribution. You make a **larger** donation to the Church and **reduce** your taxable income. It's a WIN-WIN! Please check with your tax professional or attorney before making your gift.

A New Normal for Offerings

Back in the day, specifically March 11, 2020, we decided we shouldn't be passing the offering plates any more. It was a simple way to reduce our risk of spreading the virus. That was back when we thought we'd be in worship together on March 15. Even when we finally re-convene, we may not be passing the offering plates. But we still count on your financial support of the church.

Approximately one third of our families already use some form of automated or electronic giving. If you are not doing so, this is a great time to make that change! There are several options.

- Give through your online banking account. It doesn't cost you anything and the church pays no fees. You can set that up yourself and even make it a recurring gift.
- Visit our web page: www.firstconggreeley.com. There is a button that says "Donate Now." That page lists all the ways you can make a gift. The "donate" button on that page will take you to a PayPal page where you can complete your donation.
- Use your smartphone. Download the *Givelify* app on your smartphone. It takes less than 10 minutes to set up. After that it only takes a few seconds to make a gift that is charged to your credit or debit card.



FCC Member Garden Tour?

Ah, Spring. We are usually very excited about the prospect of getting out in our gardens and digging and planting. The last couple of years, spring has not been kind to our member garden tour. This year, we have another obstacle with the COVID-19 virus. If you would be interested in having your church friends visit your gardens later in the year—late August or September—please watch for a meeting when our "usual" is more what we're used to. You can also phone or email Judy Smith if you're interested: smith.jmwrh@gmail.com or 970-415-2205.



Weekly Schedule of Online Events

Along with Sunday morning web worship, there are many opportunities for spiritual nourishment throughout the rest of the week! Below is a list of online gatherings currently taking place. If you need tech assistance, please email Alex Rodriguez—alex@firstconggreeley.com.



Sunday Morning Web Worship

When: Released each Sunday at 8:00 a.m.

What: A time of worship that resembles our typical Sunday morning service, with music, sermon, prayers, etc.

Join us on our church website: www.firstconggreeley.com

Centering Prayer

When: Weekdays at noon

What: A time to take a break and rest in 20 minutes of silent prayer

Join with this ZOOM link: <https://zoom.us/j/233260640>

Sunday Morning Conversations

When: Sundays at 10:00 a.m.

What: A chance to connect, pray, and have a conversation, co-hosted by Heather Schulte and Rev. Ben Konecny

Join with this ZOOM link: <https://zoom.us/j/922808341>

Tuesday Evening Lenten Vespers

When: Tuesdays at 8:00 p.m.

What: A time for prayer, silence, scripture, and reflection at the end of the day

Join with this ZOOM link: <https://zoom.us/j/371679766>

Thursday Evening Lenten Vespers

When: Thursdays at 8:00 p.m.

What: A time for prayer, silence, scripture, and reflection at the end of the day

Join with this ZOOM link: <https://zoom.us/j/233260640>

Weekday Facebook Live Check-ins

When: Weekdays at 11:00 a.m.

What: Nate, Ben and Robbie host a short check-in time with any updates about church life as well as some thoughts for the day.

Join on our church Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/greeleyfirstcong/>

Saturday Facebook Live Centering Prayer

When: Saturdays at noon

What: 10 minutes of Centering Prayer with some guidance

Join on our church Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/greeleyfirstcong/>

Daily Music Meditations

When: Released each morning

What: A musical selection played by Kim Pace on the organ

Join on our church Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/greeleyfirstcong/>

