



The Church Bell

First Congregational Church, UCC
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MINISTER'S message

This Sunday will mark the halfway point of the Lenten journey. Last year at this same time, we were enjoying our final weeks of pre-pandemic life. We could scarcely have imagined the year ahead, the changes to routine, the collective losses, the loneliness and longing for face-to-face connection. This year, the journey toward Easter feels different. Resurrection has taken on a new meaning as members of our community receive their vaccinations and begin to tentatively plan visits with grandchildren, friends, and family. Signs of new life are beginning to emerge, not unlike the fragile shoots of clover in your Lent at Home kits. But while hope is on the horizon, the journey is not yet over. It may take years to fully integrate what we have been through. And that grappling with life and death, reminds me of a recent event in the life of the church.

Just a few weeks ago, as we kicked off the Lenten season, forty members of this community gathered at Linn Grove Cemetery. Some of the participants had only journeyed around the sun a few times, others more than 80 times. But regardless of age, everyone came to acknowledge their mortality and the preciousness of life. After collectively building an altar on the ground, each of us went out into the cemetery looking for a grave that “spoke” to us. We noticed names, dates and family relationships. And then, filled with curiosity and reverence, we imagined the lives of the deceased. Some of the stories shared were funny, others tragic, all were a reminder that someday our own stories will come to an end—living on only in the memories of those our lives touched. Toward the end of our gathering we mixed ashes and glitter to anoint one another’s heads.

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(Minister’s Message, continued from cover page)

The ashes were a reminder that from dust we were formed and to dust we will return. The glitter was a reminder that, no matter how brief our lives, we have the opportunity to shine our light. Strangely, though death can be a sad or even scary topic, as we went our separate ways there was a lightness in the air. Yes, we are mortal. We are finite. But today, we are also alive. Which means there is still time to let the sun shine on our faces. To hear the wind in the trees. To bless one another... and to be blessed. And perhaps, for now, that is enough.

-Rev. Tamara



Vacation Bible School

Vacation Bible School returns this summer, June 28 - July 2! Our theme is *Come to the Table*. Watch for more details coming soon.



La Foret Summer Camp

Summer camps are happening (likely in person) this year at La Foret! Capacity is extremely limited and COVID-safe procedures are in place. Save the dates!

July 11-17:
Pioneer Camp (entering grades 2-4)
Explorer Camp (entering grades 4-6)
Voyager Camp (entering grades 6-8)

July 18-22:
MADD: Music, Art, Drama, Dance Camp (entering grades 9-12)
Register now to secure your spot!
<https://www.laforet.org/ucc-camps>

Scholarships are available! Please see Robbie for more information.

Lenten Trail Walk

We invite you and your family to join us for a contemplative trail walk at the Poudre River Trail to celebrate the spring equinox. On Sunday, March 21st at 6:00pm, we will gather at the Signature Bluffs Natural Area (red barn) on the river corridor off of 71st Ave to observe this occasion on which the hours of light and dark are in balance. Bring warm layers, water, and a small notebook and pen. We’ll plan to walk about a mile and a half. We hope you’ll join us!

Thrivent Choice Dollars

If you are a Thrivent Financial Member, you have through March 31st to distribute your Thrivent Choice Dollars. First Congregational Church, along with other local charities, are registered with Thrivent to be able to receive Choice Dollar contributions.

In-Person Easter Worship

This year we will be offering a variety of Easter Worship opportunities. We will have a full online service available on YouTube for those who feel safest (and warmest) continuing to worship from home.

In addition we will have two outdoor, in-person, masked services at 9am and 11am in the west parking lot. The 9am service will be slightly shorter. The Family-Friendly 11am service will include a Children's Message. If weather permits, we will worship outside in chairs (parking will take place at Heath Middle School and in the rear lot). In case of rain or snow, we will worship from our cars.

Please call or email the church office to sign up for your spot (970-353-0828, ext. 25 or laura@firstconggreeley.com). Space is limited.

In addition to worship, we will have a distanced Easter Egg Hunt on the lawn immediately following the 11am service (around noon). No matter the weather or where you enjoy the service, we look forward to celebrating the resurrection with you!

Maundy Thursday

The Maundy Thursday service continues to be a powerful and meaningful service for our community. While we hope to be able to return in-person next year, this year, we will release our Maundy Thursday service on April 1 at 5pm. You will be able to access it online via Facebook or YouTube in the same way you access Sunday worship.

Thank You from the Cronin Family

On behalf of our entire family, thank you for your calls, cards, and prayers following John's passing. Thank you, also, to each of you who has given so generously to the memorial fund in John's name.

-Polly Cronin & Family

One Great Hour of Sharing

The UCC's One Great Hour of Sharing special offering is being collected through March 14. OGHS is used to support the UCC's charity and justice work globally. You can drop a check by the church with OGHS in the memo line, or give on our website under the Giving tab.

A Note from Rev. Nate

Last month I received a very generous gift, which I understand is an aggregate of many cash donations to recognize my retirement. I have been deeply touched by the many cards and good wishes. Soon I intend to use the money from this large gift to fund a fitting celebration of this milestone. Thank you all!

With profound thanks,
Rev. Nate Miller



Thanks from Rev. Tamara

Thank you to all who attended my drive-thru welcome at the beginning of the month. I look forward to continuing to meet more of you in the coming months!

Easter Lilies

In lieu of Easter Lilies this year, we will receive \$10 donations for the Weld Food Bank and plant a bulb in honor and memory of your loved ones. You can send a check to the office marked "Food Bank" or give online using our website, and changing the fund to "Easter Lily." Be sure to include a note with the name of the person(s) you wish to remember or honor. We are grateful for the ways the food bank continues to serve our community.

Robbie's Departure

We received the bittersweet news that at the end of the program year, Robbie Carlson will be moving to Salt Lake City. While Robbie will be greatly missed at FCC, we are excited for him to be moving to be with his fiancée, Sara. We are so grateful for the ministry that Robbie has shared with us and for the significant impact he has had in the lives of so many in our community. More information on ways to say goodbye to Robbie will be forthcoming.

Giving from Your IRA

You can use your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from your IRA to make a difference and not pay taxes. How? By gifting it to the church toward your pledge and/or the church capital campaign.

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.



Ash Wednesday

We began the Lenten Season on February 17 with an opportunity for the imposition of ashes in the parking lot. While we look forward to participating in this important ritual in our sanctuary next year, we are grateful that many church members were able to start their Lenten journeys this year with this ancient ritual experienced in a new way.

Outreach Opportunities

Centennial BOCES

Centennial BOCES works directly with immigrants and refugees to provide support and resources to families in need. We are currently collecting laundry detergent and feminine hygiene products, which are not eligible for purchase with EBT or SNAP benefits. You can drop off these items during regular church hours or send a check to the church office indicating "Immigrant & Refugee Care" on the memo line.

Colorado Safe Parking Initiative

The Colorado Safe Parking Initiative is a program that seeks to provide a safe parking lot for individuals in our area using their cars as temporary shelter. We are exploring the possibility of hosting a Safe Parking site at our church. Please contact Rev. Ben if you would like to be included in these conversations.



Special Thanks to Polly Cronin

Polly Cronin recently donated her beloved 1953 Steinway baby grand piano to the church. Last month it found its new home in our chapel, where John and Polly were married in 1959. We are grateful for this special gift and for the music it will bring to our church for years to come.