



The Church Bell

First Congregational Church, UCC
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November 3, 2023

UPAVIM Fair Trade Holiday Sale at FCC November 11 & 12

In 2023, Ten Thousand Villages Fort Collins closed permanently. We are excited to partner with UPAVIM to continue our long-standing support of a holiday fair trade sale!

Join us November 11 and 12 from 9:00 am - 1:00 pm for the UPAVIM Fair Trade Holiday Sale in Chadwick Hall. UPAVIM is a self-run cooperative of women in La Esperanza, Guatemala that provides leadership opportunities, greater economic independence and education for the members and their families. It represents a colorful beacon of hope and pride for many in La Esperanza. To learn more please visit: upavimcrafts.org.

Cold Weather Clothes Drive

Through the month of November we will be collecting donations of new adult hats, gloves, underwear and sports bras for the Housing Navigation Center. Donations can be dropped off in bins located in the church office and narthex.

Year-End Gifts

All year-end gifts must be received in the church office no later than 11:30 am on Sunday, December 31 to be reflected on your 2023 Giving Statement. To make an appointment to drop off your year-end gifts outside of office hours, please reach out to Laura Gurney, Lola Fehr, or Rev. Ben. You may also give online at firstconggreeley.com/give.

Jazz Sunday

Join us for Jazz Sunday on November 12 at the 100 am service featuring John Mills and an ensemble joining our own Chancel Choir!

Heath Giving Tree

We will once again be collecting donations to help support Health Middle School families this Christmas. Donations can be dropped off via cash or check in the church office or in the offering on Sunday morning. Donations will be used to buy gift cards that will be delivered to families through Health Middle School counselors.

Holiday Office Schedule

The Church office will be closed for Thanksgiving on November 23. The office is closed December 25-29, but Rev. Tamara and Laura will be available by appointment during this time.

Rocky Mountain Conference Nov. 28 Meeting

The Rocky Mountain Conference UCC will have a special-called meeting via Zoom to vote on our 2023-2024 budget, adopt the Conference-Wide Committee on Ministry Model that we have been experimenting with over the past two years, and provide updates on Conference Staffing. We invite you to watch for more information, including the Zoom information, coming in the bulletin & blast later this month.

Practicing Gratitude this November

As you come to the church building this November, we invite you to stop in Chadwick and add some leaves to our gratitude tree. We'd love to see the tree fill up with leaves by the beginning of Advent!

Are you a virtual FCC member? You're invited to email Tammi VanDrunen what you'd like on your leaves and we'll add them to the gratitude tree! Want to participate in the daily gratitude practice? [Here's the file.](#) Thanks for participating with us!

FCC Food Pantry

We are committed to providing food bags to anyone who comes through our doors requesting support. Through November, you are invited to contribute individually-packed trail mix, beef/turkey jerky sticks, and oatmeal packets. All donations can be placed in the basket outside of the Sanctuary.

We want you to join a Ministry Group on Sunday Morning!

Much of the work of our church is led by one of our four ministry groups; Outreach, Fellowship, Family Faith Formation, and Worship, Music, and Arts. We would love for you to consider being involved with one of these! Ministry Groups now meet on the second Sunday of each Month from 11:00 am - 12:15 pm. Nursery and childcare through 5th grade is available during this time. We hope you stick around after worship on Nov. 12 to check out one of the Ministry Group

Stewardship Campaign

The early results of our 2024 Annual Operating Budget Stewardship Campaign, *In Greeley for Good*, are in! As of October 25 (the date this article was written), we have 95 pledges for 2024 totaling \$267,805, which is $\frac{2}{3}$ of our goal (160 pledges totaling \$400,000)! Thank you to all who have pledged for the most successful stewardship kickoff in recent history!

Keeping La Foret Beautiful Award

A small group of our middle & high school students joined volunteers Josh Huntley & Liz Mock-Murphy at La Foret at the end of October. The high school team, led by Josh Huntley and including Sarah Hulac, won the Keeping La Foret Beautiful Award for picking up the most trash by weight! Thanks to all of our youth and volunteers for helping to keep this sacred space beautiful and clean!

A Place at the Table Announces a Christmas Progressive Dinner

Progressive Dinners are small groups that go home-to-home for each component of a dinner - a fun way to visit friends' homes and during the holiday season, see beautifully decorated homes. We have scheduled a progressive dinner for Sunday, December 3, beginning at 4:00 p.m. starting at the appetizer host home (to be announced). Hosts will be responsible for serving 10-12 participants to be determined on a first come basis. The final dessert course will be served in the Commons Area at the Village Cooperative. All attendees are asked to sign up to bring an appetizer, salad, entrée side dish or dessert to the designated host home.

If you're open to being a host home for the appetizer, salad, or entrée please let us know when you RSVP. For reservations/questions, text Jody Heatherly, (970-576-6270), or email jodytheatherly@comcast.net no later than November 26.

A History of Christianity in 6 weeks!

Rev. Ben will co-lead a 6-week class with Rev. Dr. Mark Lee covering some of the major moments in the history of Christianity. For many years Rev. Mark was the Director of Adult Education at Plymouth in Fort Collins. Mark earned his Doctorate from Iliff School of Theology and has been privileged to study and pilgrim in Turkey, the Holy Land, and Iona in Scotland. Mark brings a lifelong fascination with theology and believes that it should be understandable to anyone. This class will meet from 6:00-7:15 on Wednesday evenings through November 15.

Class Recordings Available

Rev. Dr. Mark Lee has packed a lot of fascinating information in his first four sessions - like 1500 years of Christian history! If you have not been able to attend, but would like to watch recordings of the sessions, please contact Rev. Ben for a Zoom link.

Welcome Our New Choral Scholar!

Michael Kirkpatrick (he/him)

"Hello, my name is Michael Kirkpatrick, and I am a student at UNC - studying English and Music. I have been singing in choirs almost my entire life, and what I love about choir is the community that can be created within them. I can't wait to see how this year will be with this congregation!"



Advent & Christmas Schedule

Advent Workshop - Dec. 3 after 10:00 am service

Music Sunday - Dec. 10 during 10:00 am service, No 8:00 am chapel service

Christmas Pageant - Dec. 17 during 10:00 am service, traditional worship at 8:00 am in chapel

Blue Christmas Service - Wed, Dec. 20 from 6:00 - 7:00 in chapel

Christmas Eve - Sunday, Dec. 24

- No 8:00 am chapel service
- 10:00 am worship in sanctuary, no livestream
- 4:00 pm Christmas Eve candlelight worship in sanctuary, livestream and nursery care available
- 7:00 pm Christmas Eve candlelight worship in sanctuary, no livestream

Christmas Gathering - fellowship, food, and carols - Dec. 25, 10:00 am in Chadwick Hall.

A Note From Whitney

Thank you all for your generosity as we welcomed Zachary into the Janzen-Pankratz Family. You have shown up for us in so many ways; through gifts, meals, hand me downs, stories, sharing our joy, and providing listening ears. We are grateful to have each of you with us on this journey!
-Nick, Whitney, Theo & Zachary

In Loving Memory

Please hold the families of the following in your prayers as they celebrate the life of their loved one.

Richard "Dick" R. Bond

December 1, 1927 - October 26, 2023

Services to be held Thursday, November 16 at 11am in the Sanctuary. A reception will follow at the Poudre Learning Center.

Patricia "Pat" Ann Best

January 6, 1943 - November 1, 2023

Services will be announced at a later date.

Capital Campaign Update

It's hard to believe, but we are two years into our In Greeley for Good Capital Campaign. The generosity from the congregation has been incredible! Through your gifts, we have already been able to complete many of the projects on our that will contribute significantly to upkeep, sustainability, and beauty of our building and grounds. We are pleased to report that in October our new security system was installed. We know have a number of additional cameras in our building and sensors on all of our external doors (and there are lots of them!). In November we anticipate having our new sound system installed!



The Youth Group has a howling good time at Meow Wolf in October.

A Budget Fairy Tale

Once upon a time First Congregational Church of Greeley was able to cover budget deficits with earnings from their investment accounts. That led to a comfort level with many years of adopting deficit budgets.

In 2022 the downturn in the market required withdrawal from the investment principal to cover the deficit. That trend is continuing in 2023. Where has the fairy tale world gone?

Lessons from 2023

The Trustees and Cabinet spent many hours developing a realistic budget for 2023. But, budgets are plans and plans do not always work out. Income from mineral royalties which has been dependable for many years dropped to half of what was expected in 2023. The market has not recovered as hoped and withdrawals from the principal in investments have continued, reducing the amount for future earnings when the market recovers.

On the expense side, the utility bill for gas is more than double what was planned in the budget. Insurance on the building and property increased more than we had hoped, even with a raise in the deductible. A sewer blockage between the building and 15th street required an \$8,000 emergency repair. There have been other unanticipated expenses, not as large, but adding to the projected 2023 deficit .

Budget Planning for 2024

The Trustees believe expenses over which we have control can be held to the 2023 level for 2024. The solar panels will activate at the end of the year, offsetting our utility bills, but the price of gas is not likely to decrease. Some routine maintenance on the aging building has been neglected and, while some of that work has been done through the capital campaign, it is important that the building be maintained for appearance and safety. Attractive space also enhances the ability to increase revenue through facility space rental. The Trustees will be looking at responsible planning for building maintenance, including adequate insurance coverage.

"In Greeley for Good"

This phrase means First Congregational Church is here for the foreseeable future. We are not going away. It also means the church is here to do good, in our local community and the world beyond. The Trustees want to assure that the value of community and global financial support is continued and, hopefully, increased for 2024.

Creating The Happy Ending

The budget story can have a happy ending. Thank you to those of you who have turned in your pledges for 2024. Every one of those gifts contributes to being "In Greeley for Good". We also appreciate those of you who are still considering your pledge for the coming year. Please consult a member of the Board of Trustees or the Treasurer if you have any questions about the path to the happy budget ending.

With gratitude,

Lola Fehr, Treasurer