



The Church Bell

First Congregational Church, UCC
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March 6, 2024

THE CHURCH BELL (USPS 110-560)
PERIODICALS MAILING

Church Photo Directory Update

We are beginning the process of updating the photos in our church directory! If you have a photo that you would like to use for the directory, you may email it to laura@firstconggreeley.com by the end of March. If you'd like to have a new photo taken, please watch for an opportunity to do so in April!

Special Easter Offering

The Outreach Ministry Group has decided to direct this year's special Easter offering to two mission projects:

-Assisting members of our congregation who are serving as a support team for the Hosting Asylum Network. The Hosting Asylum Network is a local organization that pairs volunteer teams with families seeking asylum in the US due to the threat of violence or discrimination in their home country.

-Supporting our Share the Joy Easter Egg Hunt Gifts to the Special Easter Offering can be made in the church office, Sunday morning offering, or through the giving page on our website. (<https://onrealm.org/firstconggreeley/give/no> w) Select Easter in the dropdown.

One Great Hour of Sharing

One Great Hour of Sharing is one of four special mission offerings of the United Church of Christ. This Lenten Offering supports the disaster, refugee, and development ministries of the United Church of Christ. OGHS will be collected Sunday, March 10. Gifts can be made in the OGHS envelopes in that week's bulletins, by marking OGHS on your memo line, or online by selecting the fund One Great Hour of Sharing.

Special Celebration Gifts

At the Annual Meeting we extended an ongoing invitation for you to celebrate or give thanks for special events, accomplishments, or gratuities via celebration gifts to the church! You can find the envelopes for these special gifts in the pews or in the church office. This month we celebrate:

Lola Fehr's many contributions to the church, a gift of Karen Inglis.

Yvonne Zack's time as Moderator & Past Moderator, a gift of Lola Fehr.

Ron Brinkman's work on our landscaping, a gift of Lola Fehr.

A Special Lenten Wednesday Night Live

During this season of Lent, strengthen your awareness of the Sacred. Join Rev. Tamara and Spiritual Director in Training, Dr. Sandy Varley, as we focus on listening to our lives as the place where God is still speaking. We'll use Parker Palmer's book *Let Your Life Speak* as the guide for our exploration together. Reading the book is not required, but if you would like to, it is available both new and used in many places or Rev. Tamara is happy to share her copy. The audiobook can be accessed on the hoopla library app [HERE](https://www.hoopladigital.com/audiobook/let-your-life-speak-parker-j-palmer/10026215). <https://www.hoopladigital.com/audiobook/let-your-life-speak-parker-j-palmer/10026215>

Silver Circle: Understanding Water--A two part tour

Water is Life...and it is an increasingly precious resource in our area. The Silver Circle (60+) will be diving deep into the waters of our daily lives with a two part offering this spring and summer. On April 18th you are invited to tour the Wastewater Treatment and Reclamation Facility in Greeley. We will meet at the church at 12:30 to travel there by van. On June 27th the Silver Circle will head to the Boyd Lake Water Treatment Plant for a 10am tour. Ability to walk stairs will be necessary for this event. Please be at the church by 9:15am to travel by van. The cost for each trip is \$10 and will include lunch. Please let Rev. Tamara know about any dietary restrictions when you RSVP. Space is limited. Reserve your spot by emailing revtamara@firstconggreeley.com.

Update & Thanks from Laura

My family has recently entered a season in which we have invited hospice care for one of my grandfathers. I will be spending extra time with him in the coming months and I am grateful to the staff - especially to our Intern, Maria - for allowing me the flexibility to do so. My availability may fluctuate through this season; I will respond as soon as I am able. Please feel free to reach out to other staff members if I'm unable to respond to an urgent need. Thank you to each of you who has checked in, sent a card, or held my family in prayer in this season. -With Gratitude, Laura Gurney

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Holy Week Community Celebration and Worship

On Wednesday, March 27th from 5:15 - 7:15 pm we will have our Holy Week Service. As in years past, we will share a mediterranean style meal at table, as Jesus did with his disciples, followed by a ritual of handwashing for all ages. After the meal, there will be gym games for the children, while in the sanctuary we will offer a more traditional Tenebrae (extinguishing of the lights) service, which will also be available online. Members of our congregation have described this as "the most evocative service of the year" for the ways it moves through the highs and lows of the last week of Jesus' life, while also offering rich time for community connection.

Our Fellowship Team will provide the meal (\$3 per person/\$9 per family). However, this year, we invite you to bring a bottle of sparkling cider or wine (of your choice) in the weeks leading up to the service, to help defray the cost of this community celebration. Donations can be made in our church office.

In Loving Memory

Please hold the loved ones of the following in your prayers as they grieve:

Susanne Miller

May 13, 1940 - March 3, 2024

Service details will be announced soon.



Welcome New Members

We are excited to welcome the following new members to First Congregational Church:

The Muscato Family

Chris and Kristin Muscato have joined us with their 4 year old children Mayson and Meander. They come to First Congregational from Waypoints Church which was previously in the Armory in downtown Greeley. The congregation did not make it through covid, but Chris and Kristen had been a part of that congregation since college. They appreciated how at Waypoints their focus, money, and time went to things that mattered like being in community with the unhoused population, and those with addictions. After Waypoints closed they were drawn to First Congregational because they saw rainbow fish on the side of the building when driving down 16th Street. Once they visited they have stayed for the children's programming, way the older kids care for the younger kids, sense of community welcome, and sermons. Chris was raised in the Methodist Church and was very involved in youth group growing up. He and Kristen met in marching band during High School in Castle Rock CO. In day-to-day life Kristen is a lawyer and Chris cares for Mayson and Meander. Chris previously worked as a History professor at UNC.



Kristin, Mayson, Meander & Chris



Barb Hines



Desirae, Benjamin & Vicky

Vicky Solomon, Desirae Kapas & Benjamin

We are thrilled to officially welcome Vicky, Desirae and their son Benjamin to First Congregational! They originally came to First Congregational Church because Benjamin asked a lot of questions about his spiritual life, and their old church wasn't a good fit. When they saw the rainbow fish near the west door they read more about First Congregational online. After their first visit they were moved to tears, especially by hearing us all say "you are welcome here." They shared, "It felt like home right off the bat. The way that things are shared here allows so many open ended conversations. The services give us something to talk about on the way home and chew on throughout the week." The family is kept here by the sense of community connection and that everyone can be involved. At their past church Vicky and Desirae were asked to serve behind the scenes as a same sex couple raising a child. At First Congregational they feel people are really welcome as they are. They have observed that "there is heart change, and growth, and contributing to that sense of community." As a family they love being outdoors, visiting the library, and going to festivals and community events. Benjamin asked to share with us all that he has two houses with 4 moms and 5 siblings.

Barbara Hines

Barbara Hines originally visited First Congregational, and has chosen us as her church home because "the church is welcoming to everyone, with no contingencies." She has lived in Greeley since 1983, when she moved here to work for Hewlett Packard. Currently Barb is a HOA manager working for 365RPM. Barb also enjoys being a member of Kiwanis Club of the Rockies, and a member of 100 women.

Share the Joy Easter Egg Hunt

Kids from babies - 5th grade are invited to join us for Family Faith Formation's "Share the Joy!" Easter Egg hunt on Easter morning, March 31, after the 10 am service. Kids will collect eggs with "Share the Joy" money inside. They will be able to donate that money to three different ministry partners. Our Outreach team will convert that to real money and send it to the ministry partners! After the hunt, kids will receive a bag of Easter candy and toys to take home.

Want to help?

1) Donate snack size packages of any of these candies to give to us. Please only buy from this list: we are trying to stay allergy friendly! Individually packaged/Easter egg sized packages of:

- M&Ms
- Skittles
- Jelly Beans
- Hershey Egg Chocolates.

2) Volunteer: We'll need egg stuffers, egg hidiers, table monitors, and a clean-up crew.

If you can help in any ways, please contact Tammi VanDrunen, children's minister, at tammi@firstconggreeley.com.

Mental Health First Aid Training

Sandy Varley has worked with North Range Behavioral Health to bring the free one-day Mental Health First Aid Course to Faith Communities in Greeley. Just as CPR helps you assist an individual having a heart attack, Mental Health First Aid helps you assist someone experiencing a mental health or substance use challenge or crisis. It takes the fear and hesitation out of starting conversations about mental health or substance use by improving understanding and providing an action plan that teaches you how to safely and responsibly identify and address a potential issue. The training will take place on Friday, March 22 from 9:00 am - 4:30 pm at the Caring Legacy Building (2105 Clubhouse Drive in Greeley). For more information and to register Email shawna.cramer@northrange.org.

Adjustable Bed Needed

Do you have an adjustable bed in good condition that is no longer needed? If so, please reach out to Rev. Ben as it could make a huge difference for a member of our congregation!

A Bulletin Experiment

We're experimenting with the bulletin and we welcome your feedback! In an effort to communicate more details about upcoming events and activities in the bulletin each week, we will be trying a one-month experiment in which we print only basic order of worship information to expand the space available for announcements, similarly to what we did pre-pandemic. We invite you to share your feedback with Laura (laura@firstconggreeley.com) on this new format over the month of March!

Special Thanks From Rick Mawson and Wynne Levelle

The past three months have been very challenging for us. Following a series of falls, Rick spent a number of days in the hospital followed by a number of months in rehab at Fairacres Manor To put it mildly, this has been a trying time! Though it has been difficult, we couldn't be more grateful for the incredible support we have received from so many of our church friends at First Congregational. Thank you for all of your love, prayers, and care - it has made a huge difference for us!

Meet our New Choral Scholar

Akshay Ghiya is a baritone in the final semester of his degree in Vocal Performance at the University of Northern Colorado. He is an aspiring opera singer and future voice professor, having recently sung as Pierre Lafitte in Amy Beach's Cabildo, Lord Mountarat in G&S's Iolanthe, and set to sing Belcore in Donizetti's L'elisir d'amore. He has sung in choirs for 7 years, and is grateful to join the choir community at the First Congregational Church. When he is not performing, Akshay enjoys writing music, hiking, spending time with friends, and making new ones!

