



The Church Bell

Volume 81, Issue 2

Next Issue: April 7, 2026

Submission Deadline for Next Issue: April 1, 2026

Submit articles using the announcement request form at
firstconggreeley.org/announcements

Living Beyond Labels

Rooted in God's Love

Staff Retreat

In February members of the FCC staff had the opportunity to gather in Estes Park for a multi-day staff retreat. Thanks to the wonderful work our Cabinet did on the calendar in January, the staff had time to dig into some strategic visioning work around volunteer training and engagement, an innovative approach to our New Member Lunches, and ways to bring spiritual depth to our community gatherings. Look out for signs of these exciting changes in the coming months!



A Note from Michelle Heiny about a Special Congregational Meeting: March 29

Hello Faith Family and Friends —

Have you noticed a change? I certainly have, and it fills me with excitement and gratitude. Each Sunday morning, I take my place in one of the front pews, just as I have for nearly 30 years. I once sat there as the mother of three young children; today, I am privileged to sit there as Sawyer's friend. And from that familiar place, I have noticed something beautiful unfolding.

Children — so many of them. It truly warms my heart to see them come forward for the Children's Moment. And there's more: after the sermon each week, I've watched our youth head out of the sanctuary to continue the conversation and reflect more deeply together. Seeing our young people engaged and involved in the life of the church is deeply meaningful. Some of my own children's fondest memories were formed at church events, where they felt welcomed, supported, and safe. This growth is no accident. Others have noticed it too. Behind the scenes, Tammi Van Drunen and Brooklyn McBride have been working with great care and dedication to nurture and grow this vital part of our congregation. In response, a discernment group has been formed to explore moving both Tammi's and Brooklyn's positions toward ordainable calls.

This group includes Aron Flynn, Mary Hulac, Sandy Magnuson, Maya Turn, and myself. Over the coming weeks, we will review Tammi's and Brooklyn's professional materials and meet with each of them individually to learn more about their journeys and their openness to being called to ordained positions at First Congregational Church. While much of the work they are doing will continue, these called positions will also acknowledge their ministerial gifts and allow them to participate more fully in administering sacraments, preaching, and pastoral care in their program areas.

At this time, both Tammi and Brooklyn have completed all the necessary steps to accept an ordainable call. They have finished seminary, served faithfully in ministry for many years in a variety of roles, and successfully passed their ecclesiastical councils — the stage at which other churches, clergy, and the Rocky Mountain Conference recommend them for ordination, pending an official call. After our meetings, our group will bring a recommendation to the Cabinet regarding whether to move forward with these positions as ordainable calls and whether to name Tammi and Brooklyn as candidates. Compensation decisions will be handled by the Trustees in collaboration with the Personnel Committee, Rev. Ben, and Rev. Tamara. Based on our group's recommendation, the Cabinet will then decide whether to bring this matter to a congregational vote.

Please stay tuned. Calling ministers requires a congregational vote and in anticipation of such, *the Cabinet has called a Special Congregational Meeting for Sunday, March 29 at 11:30 a.m.* Please join us then to affirm the ministry Brooklyn and Tammi are already doing with and for our congregation!

With hope and gratitude,
Michelle Heiny



Tammi and Brooklyn leading children & youth

Left: Brooklyn leading sermon discussion.

Right: Tammi reading a story in the sanctuary.



Learn More about Tammi and Brooklyn's Calls into Ministry

I have had the privilege of watching the enormous investment of time and energy both Tammi and Brooklyn have put into the UCC's process of ordination: Tammi, while she has served as our Children's Minister for the past five years and Brooklyn, first as she served as the Director of Christian Formation for Children & Youth at Plymouth UCC in Fort Collins for four years, and for the past year as our Communications Coordinator and Youth Minister. One of the final steps of the UCC's ordination process is creating a "Marks Portfolio" that provides details about one's journey into ministry. We hope you will take some time to look through Tammi's Marks (tinyurl.com/TammiMarks) and Brooklyn's Marks (brooklynmcbride.blog/portfolio) to learn more about these two remarkable emerging leaders for our local church and for the wider United Church of Christ.

Rev. Ben

Prayer Vigil for Immigrant Justice

On February 1st, FCC hosted half a dozen clergy from a range of denominations, as well as more than 150 friends and neighbors for a Vigil for Immigrant Justice. The service started with Rev. Tamara sharing these words: "We gather today to remind ourselves and to remind the wider world that we are united in our convictions and in our commitments to care for those who have been marginalized and minimized by the ways of the world, but who are still beloved in the eyes of God." The service continued with powerful sermons, music and a labyrinth walk to carry light for those who are walking in darkness.



Ash Wednesday Photos

We had a beautiful Ash Wednesday service, including a fabulous Pancake Dinner. We are so grateful to everyone who came and made this evening possible. [Click here to see the whole photo album.](#)



Finishing A Decade with NGLI

For the past 10 years, I have participated in a leadership development program through the United Church of Christ called the Next Generation Leadership Initiative. Over the course of this time, I have been part of a cohort of 12 pastors from across the country that I have traveled with, attended numerous workshops with, and developed close friendship with. Last month, I spent two days in Arizona with my cohort for one final gathering as our time in the program concludes. I am incredibly grateful to the United Church of Christ's Pension Boards for making this experience possible and to FCC for offering me the time away over the past 10 years to make it possible for me to be part of this program.

Rev. Ben

Sunday Mornings: A Team Effort

Recently some of our staff made a list of everything on our plates on Sunday morning. It was an eye-opening exercise! Because of this, we quickly implemented a Sunday Morning Volunteer Coordinator team who takes a good chunk of those tasks off of staff plates so that we can focus more on connection and less on logistics! Now you'll see two people from that team in St. Drogo's every Sunday morning, ensuring that all of our volunteers have arrived and have what they need for the morning. Thanks to Amy Barendt, Carolyn Cooke, Lola Fehr, Carolyn Gattis, Judy Kron, and Barb Snider for jumping right into this work and helping the staff be more present for folks on Sunday mornings!

Faith in Action Day with Together Colorado

Rev. Ben, Rev. Tamara, and some of our FCC folks made it down to Denver today for faithful action and public witness, raising a moral voice against ICE opening a detention center in Weld County. At FCC, we deeply believe in the call to love our neighbors. "He enacts justice for orphans and widows, and he loves immigrants." — Deuteronomy 10:18a (CEB) See some of the news coverage:

- ["Colorado activists urge owner of empty Hudson prison to nix potential new ICE facility"](#) from Colorado Newline (article)
- ["People gather outside Denver apartment complex to protest ICE detention facility in Hudson"](#) from 9NEWS (video)
- ["Organizers Target CEO of the Real Estate Company That Owns Proposed ICE Jail"](#) from Colorado Times Recorder (article)
- ["Colorado faith communities rally around state's immigrants in face of ICE deportation push"](#) from the Denver Post (article)



FCC at the Faith in Action Day

Photo by Chase Woodruff/Colorado Newline

Night of Remembrance

On Thursday, February 19th, 14 members of our choir joined the city's Homeless Solutions department and United Way of Weld County to gather in remembrance of the community members' lives lost due to lack of housing. We had the profound honor of standing alongside our church's leadership in recognition of what has been an ongoing tragedy. We lifted our voices in song, and we lowered our heads in silence to mourn the losses of life. The night was cold, and it gave us a deep appreciation for the, perhaps previously assumed, luxuries of our warm coats, cars, homes, and beds. As the chill settled deep in my toes, I couldn't help but be struck by how deeply these beautiful fellow humans have been failed. It reminded me that our system is failing, that this is not just about hard times befalling a neighbor, but that there is an underlying, deep-seated system designed to create these very situations. I was also reminded of how strong our church is, how loving our congregants and leadership are. How unwilling we are to sit in the warmth while others shiver in the cold. While Thursday may have seemed simple in its execution, what rang true in those moments of quiet and dark was that this was not just an acknowledgement of the lives lost, but a declaration that we see what is happening. And we do not accept it, and we will continue to work for our community, in love and resilience. We remember, and we will not allow ourselves to forget.

Eli Schamane



FCC Choir at the Night of Remembrance

Living Beyond Love & Fellowship

Nourished on Our Spiritual Journeys

Community of Practice

This Lent, as part of our "Living Beyond Labels" series, we are inviting folks into a Lenten fast from the labels that we use as markers for one another. If you'd like to join us, and would like space and time to reflect on this practice in community with others, you're invited to join our Lenten Community of Practice. We will meet Monday nights from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the library beginning February 23 and running through Easter. Join us just once, or join us each week. No matter where you are in the practice, you are welcome here. Contact Laura with any questions (laura@firstconggreeley.org).

Upcoming Food Bank Opportunities

Join FCC folks at the Weld Food Bank!

- Tuesday, March 10th from 5 to 7 p.m.
- Saturday, March 28th from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m.

All are invited! Registration is required at vhub.at/FirstCongregationalChurch.

La Foret Spring Youth Retreat

March 13-15, we are taking our youth down to La Foret for the Spring Youth Retreat! I served as an adult leader during the Youth Planning Team retreat in mid February, where youth from the conference created a whole weekend based on the theme: "Shine." We will spend the weekend exploring ways we are invited to let our light shine inside and outside of camp, which is a beautiful theme to come after wrapping up our "Life Illuminated" series here at church. I am excited to see the ways our students dig even deeper into sharing light, goodness, and kindness with a world that desperately needs it.

Brooklyn

March 14: Labyrinth Theatre Does Shakespeare!

The Labyrinth Theatre is SO happy to announce that rehearsals are currently underway for our upcoming production: The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Abridged) [revised] [AGAIN] by Adam Long, Daniel Singer, and Jess Winfield, and it is going to be a HILARIOUSLY good time! Mark your calendars for the Ides of March(ish), 3/14 (performances at 2 and 7 p.m.) and get ready to join us for an absolute hoot of a production! Stay tuned by [following them on Facebook](#) for more information!

March 22: Welcome Lunch

We will be hosting a Welcome Lunch on March 22nd from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. A Welcome Lunch is an opportunity for those newer to the community to learn more about FCC from staff and lay leaders and meet others who have recently started attending FCC. Please contact Rev. Ben (revben@firstconggreeley.org) if you are interested in attending!

March 29: Beethoven in the Rockies

Join Beethoven in the Rockies on Sunday, March 29 at 2 p.m. in our sanctuary for the Beethoven Camerata with clarinetist Lauren Jacobson! View the program, meet Lauren, and purchase tickets [here](#).

March 31: Ryan's Voice Recital

Ryan Ostlund, a tenor in our Chancel Choir, will give his senior voice recital on Tuesday, March 31 at 5 p.m. in the sanctuary. Please join us as we celebrate Ryan's accomplishments and enjoy his music!



FCC Youth at La Foret

April 11: Greeley Philharmonic Youth Orchestra

The Greeley Philharmonic Youth Orchestra is presenting their spring concert, the first as a full symphony orchestra, on April 11th at First Congregational Church at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$5, youth 12 and under are free.



**The Labyrinth Theatre Company
rehearsing for *The Complete Works
of William Shakespeare (Abridged)*
[revised] [AGAIN]**

Legacy Luncheons

Curious about the basics of estate planning? Wondering about how you ensure that your estate plan reflects your values? Please join the Weld Community Foundation for their upcoming Legacy Luncheons! These luncheons are not sales events. Instead, they offer an open invitation to take a fresh look at your plans—whether you're creating them for the first time or revisiting and refining what's already in place. Each session is designed to provide clear, actionable guidance that helps safeguard the people you love and reflect the values you carry for your family and the community you've been part of for so many years.

The next session will be held on Thursday, March 26th from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Chadwick Hall. "Tax Implications in Estate Planning: What They Are And How You Can Avoid Them" is presented by Attorney Corey Moore, a law professional specializing in estate and financial planning. The event is offered at no charge. An RSVP to the Weld Community Foundation is required [here](#) or by calling Amy at (970) 304-9970.

Holy Week & Easter

Holy Week Worship

Please join us for Holy Week Worship on Wednesday, April 1 at 5:30 p.m. This service begins with a mediterranean meal at table in Chadwick Hall as a remembrance of Jesus' last meal with his disciples (\$5/person or \$15/family). You're invited to bring a bottle of wine to share. Following dinner, we'll move into a service of tenebrae (extinguishing of the lights) in the sanctuary. This service is a powerful reminder of the last week of Jesus' life each year as we prepare for Easter.

Easter Services

Join us as we celebrate Easter on Sunday, April 5! We will have an outdoor sunrise service at 6:36 a.m. in the courtyard and services at 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. in the sanctuary.

After a Lenten season of living beyond labels, examining Jesus' life of authenticity and human connection, we are invited to live into divine transformation as we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus.

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 April 5, Easter, after the 10 a.m. service. Kids collect eggs with "Share the Joy" money inside, then donate that money to three different nonprofit ministry partners. Our Outreach team converts that to real money and sends it to the ministry partners! After the hunt, kids receive a bag of Easter candy and toys to take home. If you'd like to support these worthy organizations, we will also be accepting cash or check offerings to add to our gifts we send them.

We need Easter candy for over 60 kids! Help stretch our church budget by picking up a bag, no matter what size, of gummy candy or hard candy, and dropping it in the candy donation box in the narthex by March 29th. (we'll pick up bags of chocolate treats - never fear!) We'll pack treat bags during and after church on the 29th. Thank you!

Living Beyond Limits

Growing as an Inclusive Presence in Northern Colorado & Beyond

Welcome Sorin James Scott!



Welcome Odin Hollis Suess!



Partners Project: Joy for Unhoused Neighbors

Partners, our 4th-6th grade group of leaders, is working on a supply drive of art & sports supplies for our unhoused neighbors. The Guadalupe Center and the Cold Weather Shelter are eager to receive these supplies that will help their clients not only feel loved, but seen as full humans who still love to do art and play some games. [The supply list is available here.](#) Supplies can be brought to the children's check-in desk throughout March. Thank you!

One Great Hour of Sharing

On March 15, we will join denominations across the country in the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. For over 75 years, the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering (OGHS) has been helping Christians bring God's hope and healing to hurting people both in the US and around the world. OGHS's mission is to support domestic and international development, fight poverty and its consequences, bring aid and relief to communities torn by war or ravaged by national disaster, provide advocacy and resettlement assistance for refugees and displaced persons, and combat injustice in its many forms. OGHS provides funding and hands-on assistance in collaboration with local and international partners.

To give to OGHS, you may use the envelopes in your bulletins on March 15, including OGHS in your check memo, or [give online](#) by selecting One Great Hour of Sharing in the dropdown.

Meet our Women2Women Team

One of the organizations that we partner with to help meet emergency needs in our wider community is Women2Women. Women2Women provides one-time grants to women in Weld County for situations in which there are few other resources. We are so grateful to Josette Bond, Bob Lowenbach, and Sandy Magnuson who are now completing those applications, helping us process those and meet community needs more quickly and efficiently.

Thrivent Choice Dollars

It's time for Thrivent members to direct their annual Thrivent Choice Dollars to a nonprofit of your choice! FCC is always grateful to those who choose to use these micro-grants to support our ministry. Looking for more information or instructions for selecting your receiving nonprofit? Find it [here!](#)

Volunteering at Habitat for Humanity

Wendi, Colin, Niall, and Aron Flynn volunteered at the Habitat for Humanity ReStore. Aron has taken over volunteer coordination for Habitat from Rok Kron and is currently assisting Laura Jones at Greeley Habitat to make the volunteering process work better for Habitat and the volunteers they seek support from. If interested in volunteering, please contact Aron at flynn.aron@gmail.com, subject line: FCC Habitat Volunteer; or by phone at (970) 702-3673.